

Police foil another attack

DG KHAN (APP): Police on Sunday foiled another terrorist attack on the Lakhani border post near the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa border. According to police, this was the second attack in 24 hours and the third major assault in a week. Around 20 to 25 heavily armed terrorists, equipped with rocket launchers and advanced weaponry, launched the attack.

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# PM reviews training initiative for 300,000 youth with Huawei help

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting on Sunday to review the initiative of information and communication technology (ICT) training to 300,000 Pakistani youth, in collaboration with Huawei Technologies.

Stressing the critical role of young people in driving the digital revolution and advancing technology in the country, he reaffirmed the government's commitment to equip young individuals with modern skills.

During the meeting, the PM stated that the government was providing all possible support to ensure youth were prepared for the evolving digital landscape. He highlighted that Huawei's ICT training programme would not only enhance IT exports but also create employment opportunities for young professionals.

A delegation from Huawei Technologies attended the meeting, where various initiatives aimed at imparting digital skills and providing world-class IT training were discussed. The progress of agreements signed last year with Huawei Technologies in China was also reviewed.

Representatives of Huawei reaffirmed their commitment to launching an advanced training programme in Pakistan. Under this initiative, young individuals will receive specialised training in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cybersecurity, Cloud Computing, and other cutting-edge technologies.

The PM was told that 300,000 Pakistani youth would receive online training as part of the initiative. To facilitate the programme, PM Shehbaz would officially inaugurate the ICT Training Portal.

Officials also informed the premier that Huawei Technologies had already trained 20,315 students under the initiative, with the programme focusing on upskilling students, trainers, and the ICT professionals. Master trainers trained by Huawei would further impart knowledge at the local level to expand the programme's reach.

PM Shehbaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to ensure swift implementation of IT training projects and to maximise the accessibility of the ICT Training Portal across Pakistan. He also instructed that the initiative be extended to all provinces, including Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, to ensure that young people nationwide benefit from the program.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah

Tarar, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar, Chairman of the PM Youth Program Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, and other senior Government officials.

## 3 parliamentarians meet PM Shehbaz Sharif

Two members of the National Assembly, Azhar Qayyum Nagra and Abdul Ghaffar Wattoo, and a member of the Provincial Assembly, Fida Hussain Wattoo, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, here on Sunday.

During the meeting matters related to their respective constituencies and over all country's political situation came under discussion.

The premier directed the parliamentarians to remain in touch with the people and solve their problems.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting with regard to training of Pakistani Youth in field of digital technologies by Huawei Technologies.

## DPM meets FMs of Azerbaijan, Indonesia Agree to strengthen bilateral cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Indonesia Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday separately met Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov and Foreign

Sugiono on the margins of the Extraordinary meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC held in Jeddah. Recalling the recent visit of President of Azerbaijan to

Pakistan, both sides agreed to continue the upward trajectory of the bilateral relations and strengthen cooperation in areas of mutual interest, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

## Govt declares March 15 as ‘Day of Protection of Sanctity of Prophethood’

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has officially declared March 15, 2025, as the Day of Protection of the Sanctity of Prophethood (Yum-e-Tahaffuz-e-Namooos-e-Risalat Peace Be Upon Him).

According to the ministry's spokesperson Muhammad

Umar Butt, this initiative will curb the rising incidents of blasphemy and sacrilegious content on social media.

He said the ministry has issued directives to provincial secretaries of religious affairs and Awaqf departments in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir,

and Gilgit-Baltistan to launch an awareness campaign against blasphemous content.

Umar Butt said the country's leading religious scholars, including Nazim-e-Aala Wifaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia Maulana Muhammad Hanif Jalandhari, Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman, Allama Muhammad Afzal Haidari,

Prof Dr Sajid Mir, and Maulana Abdul Malik, have been urged to devise a comprehensive strategy for public awareness.

The observance of this day coincides with the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, underscoring Pakistan's commitment to safeguarding religious sentiments and promoting harmony.

## ‘Attack on Iran’s nuclear sites would contaminate Gulf water supply’

DOHA (Reuters): Qatar's prime minister has warned that an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities would "entirely contaminate" the waters of the Gulf and threaten life in the Gulf and threaten life in the Gulf and threaten life in the Gulf.

The three desert states, facing Iran on the opposite side of the Gulf, have minimal natural water reserves and are home to more than 18 million people whose only supply of potable water is desalinated water drawn from the Gulf.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani warned that an attack on Iran's nuclear sites would leave the Gulf with "no

water, no fish, nothing ... no life".

U.S. President Donald Trump has said he wants to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran and has suggested to Tehran that the two countries open talks. Trump has also reinstated a "maximum pressure" campaign that was applied during his first term as president to isolate Iran from the global economy and drive its oil exports to zero.

Sheikh Mohammed urged a diplomatic solution to avoid a military strike on Iran that would trigger a "war that will spread all over the region". "There is no way that

Qatar would support any kind of military step ... we will not give up until we see a diplomatic solution," he said in an interview with U.S. conservative media personality Tucker Carlson that was posted on Friday.

Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons and its supreme leader said on Saturday that Iran would not be bullied into negotiations. Qatar assessed several years ago that it was at risk of running out of potable water after three days in the event of an attack on Iran's nuclear sites, Sheikh Mohammed said.

The Gulf Arab state, where temperatures reach

50C in the summer, has since built 15 of the world's largest concrete water reservoirs to boost its emergency water supply. Qatar's prime minister specifically mentioned his country, Kuwait and the UAE, and said some of Iran's nuclear sites were closer to Doha than they were to Tehran. Iran's only operating nuclear power plant is on the Gulf coast at Bushehr.

Gas-rich Qatar is closely allied with the U.S. and hosts the biggest American military base in the Middle East, but it also maintains ties with Iran, with which it shares the world's largest known gas field.

## Senator Mushtaq’s brother killed

PESHAWAR (APP): Former provincial chief of Jamaat-e-Islami and Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan's elder brother, Shakeel Ahmad, was shot dead by a neighbor.

The incident occurred in the village of Ahad Khan Kalay, Sheikh Jana, Swabi. Shakeel Ahmad Khan was fatally shot outside his home.

District Police Officer (DPO) Swabi, Muhammad Azhar told media persons on Sunday that the suspect first killed his own father, and later shot dead Shakil

Ahmad for intervening in the matter.

The DPO added that the alleged killer is reportedly a drug addict and suffers from mental instability. Authorities have assured that the suspect will be arrested soon.

Expressing deep sorrow, former Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan condemned the killing of his brother, calling it an act of extreme brutality. He described his brother a beloved companion and a strong support in his life.

People from various

sectors have expressed grief over the tragic incident. Jamaat-e-Islami's chief, Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman, contacted Mushtaq Ahmad Khan to offer condolences and urged the government to ensure swift justice.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has also assured Mushtaq Ahmad Khan that the suspect will be apprehended soon. Meanwhile, a case has been registered at Kalu Khan police station regarding the murder.

## US Secret Service shoots armed man near White House

WASHINGTON (AFP): US Secret Service agents shot an armed man near the White House during the night, an agency spokesman said early on Sunday, while President Donald Trump was spending the weekend at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida. The man had been hospitalised, and his condition was "unknown", the spokesman said in a statement which did not specify whether the White House or Trump may have been the intended target.

No injuries to Secret Service agents were reported, according to the statement posted by spokesman Anthony Guglielmi on social media platform X.

The agents had been warned by local police of a "suicidal" man travelling to Washington from Indiana and around midnight found his parked vehicle near 17th and F Streets, the statement said — very close to the White House.

"As officers approached, the individual brandished a firearm and an armed confrontation ensued, during which shots were fired by our personnel," the statement said. "The suspect was transported to an area hospital and his condition is unknown," it said, adding that Washington police were investigating.

## Rubio to meet Ukrainian counterparts

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will visit Saudi Arabia over March 10-12 for talks with Ukrainian counterparts, a statement from the U.S. Department of State said.

Rubio will also have a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the statement from spokesperson Tammy Bruce said.

Rubio will then travel to Canada for the March 12-14 G7 foreign ministers' meeting, the statement added.

Rubio spoke with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiba on Friday and said President Donald Trump wanted to end the Russia-Ukraine war as soon as possible. Trump has paused military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine after a White House clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on February 28.

Zelenskyy has said that he will also visit Saudi Arabia for a Monday meeting with Mohammed bin Salman, and that Ukrainian diplomatic and military representatives would meet with the U.S. team on Tuesday.

## Syria's Sharaa scrambles to contain deadliest violence

DAMASCUS (Reuters): Syrian leader Ahmed Sharaa scrambled on Sunday to contain some of the deadliest violence in 13 years of civil war, pitting loyalists of deposed President Bashar al-Assad against the country's new Islamist rulers.

The clashes, which a war monitoring group said had already killed 1,000 people, mostly civilians, continued for a fourth day in Assad's coastal heartland.

The top commander of a Syrian Kurdish armed group, whose forces are in a separate battle with Turkey, blamed Turkish-backed Islamist factions for some of the most disturbing violence: the reported executions of civilians belonging to Assad's Alawite sect. Turkey did not immediately respond to the allegation.

Interim president Sharaa's office said it was forming an independent committee to investigate the clashes and killings by both sides. Syrians have circulated graphic videos of executions by fighters. Reuters could not immediately verify the videos.

A Syrian security source said the pace of fighting had slowed around the cities of Latakia, Jabla and Baniyas, while forces searched surrounding mountainous areas where an estimated 5,000 pro-Assad insurgents were hiding.

Sharaa, who faces the challenge of ruling a country fraught with factional tensions, urged Syrians not to let sectarian tensions further destabilise the country.

"We have to preserve national unity and domestic peace, we can live together," Sharaa said at a mosque in his childhood neighbourhood of Mazzah, in Damascus.

"Rest assured about Syria, this country has the characteristics for survival ... What is currently happening in Syria is within the

expected challenges."

### US CONDEMNS VIOLENCE

Rebels led by Sharaa's Sunni Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group toppled Assad's government in December. Assad fled to Russia, leaving behind some of his closest advisers and supporters, while Sharaa's group led the appointment of an interim government and took over Syria's armed forces.

Assad's overthrow ended decades of dynastic rule by his family marked by severe repression and a devastating civil war that began as a peaceful uprising in 2011.

The war - in which Western countries, Arab states and Turkey backed the rebels, while Russia, Iran and militias loyal to Tehran backed Assad - became a theatre for proxy conflicts among a kaleidoscope of armed factions with different loyalties and agendas. It has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions of Syrians.

Since Assad's overthrow, Turkish-backed groups have clashed with Kurdish forces that control much of northeastern Syria. Israel has separately struck military sites in Syria, and is lobbying the U.S. to keep Syria weak, sources have told Reuters.

Syria's infrastructure is meanwhile decimated by the war and Assad-era U.S. sanctions remain in place, compounding the challenge of stabilising the country.

The U.S. urged the Syrian authorities to hold to account the "radical Islamist terrorists" that have killed people said it stood with the country's religious and ethnic minorities. U.N. human rights chief Volker Turk also called on the interim leadership to bring the perpetrators to account.

After the relative calm following the ousting of Assad, violence has spi-

ralled as forces linked to the new Islamist rulers began a crackdown on a growing insurgency from the Alawite sect in the provinces of Latakia and Tartous.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based war monitor, said on Saturday more than 1,000 people had been killed in the two days of fighting. It said 745 were civilians, 125 members of the Syrian security forces and 148 fighters loyal to Assad.

Rami Abdulrahman, the head of the observatory, said the civilians included Alawite women and children.

Abdulrahman said on Sunday that the death toll was one of the highest since a chemical weapons attack by Assad's forces in 2013 which killed some 1,400 people in a Damascus suburb.

Syrian security sources said more than 300 of their members had been killed in clashes with former army personnel owing allegiance to Assad in coordinated attacks and ambushes on their forces that began on Thursday.

Syria's state news agency SANA reported on Sunday that a mass grave had been discovered near Qardaha, Assad's home town, containing the bodies of recently killed security forces.

The attacks spiralled into revenge killings against Alawites when thousands of armed supporters of Syria's new leaders from across the country descended to the coastal areas to support beleaguered forces of the new administration.

Alawites, who belong to an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, became associated with Assad's wartime atrocities against Syria's mostly Sunni Muslim population because of their religious group, which counted among his most ardent supporters.





LAHORE: President Isteqam-e-Pakistan Party & Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan called on by MPA Ghazanfar Abbas Cheena. —APP Photo

## I have no conflict with the Sindh govt: Governor

KARACHI (APP): The Governor of Sindh Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori arrived in Shah Faisal Colony for his eighth Sehri, where he received a warm welcome from the local residents. He mingled with the people, listened to their concerns, and took selfies with them. The Governor also had Sehri with the locals at a nearby hotel.

Talking to the media afterward, The Governor said that he enjoys being among the people, listening to their issues, and sharing moments with them. He expressed happiness over having Sehri and Iftar with the public, which has earned him the title of a "People's Governor."

He announced that 50,000 students are receiving IT training at Governor House and offered IT courses to the youth of Shah Faisal Colony without any entry test. Additionally, he stated that 9.5 lakh (950,000) ration bags have been distributed, and arrangements have been made for Iftar dinners for 1 million people.

Every night after the Iftar dinner, a plot and an Umrah ticket are awarded through a lucky draw.

Addressing the people of Shah Faisal Colony, he said, "If anyone troubles you, tell them that your brother is the Governor, and for the elderly, I am your son. The doors of Governor House are always open to you." He added that he is not a

Governor who remains silent on public issues but will continue to raise his voice for the rights of the people and the city's problems.

The Governor of Sindh also mentioned that the Prime Minister of Pakistan is making tireless efforts to improve the country's economy, and once the economy stabilizes, its benefits will reach the people.

In response to a question from the media, he highlighted that Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, China, UAE, and other countries are bringing investments into Pakistan, which will further strengthen the economy. When asked about his relations with the Sindh government, Governor Sindh clarified, "I have no conflict with the Sindh government. They should fulfill their responsibilities accordingly."

### Renowned scholar Dr Zakir Naik attends iftari at Governor House

The seventh Itihad Ramzan Iftar and Dinner at Governor House was graced by the presence of renowned scholar Dr Zakir Naik as a special guest. Addressing the participants, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori expressed his pleasure at Dr Zakir Naik's visit to Governor House and mentioned that, upon request, Dr Zakir Naik offered special prayers for the oppressed Muslims of Indian-

occupied Kashmir.

A large number of citizens and students from various universities, including NED, Habib, UIT, KIET, and Metropolitan University, attended the Iftar/Dinner. Governor Sindh warmly welcomed the students and guests upon their arrival at Governor House. Many participants took selfies with the Governor, and he spent time interacting with them, listening to their concerns. Students shared their experiences, stating that having Iftar and Dinner with the Governor was a unique and memorable moment for them.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Zakir Naik urged attendees to maximize their worship during Ramazan, highlighting that a single act of charity in this holy month is rewarded 700 times. Later, Dr Zakir Naik conducted the lucky draw for the Umrah ticket and the 120-yard plot. The Umrah ticket was won by Muhammad Shahid, son of Abdul Rasheed, who expressed his joy, stating that performing Umrah was his long-standing wish and he had been praying for this opportunity.

The 120-yard plot was awarded to Maria Afaq Ahmed, who shared that she had been struggling to find a rented house but, by Allah's grace, now owned her own plot. Moreover, cash prizes were distributed among the participants through further lucky draws.

## Human Appeal hosts Iftar for hundreds of villagers

F.P. Report

DADU: The social welfare organization Human Appeal Pakistan organized an Iftar program in various flood-affected villages of Dadu district, providing meals to hundreds of men and women to break their fast.

According to Human Appeal representatives Azhar Sajid and Irfan Ali, the organization is actively working for the welfare of underprivileged communities across different countries. As part of this mission, Iftar programs are being arranged in several districts of Sindh, including Dadu and Shaheed Benazirabad, during the blessed month of Ramadan. This initiative will continue throughout the month.

Local villagers, including Muhammad Bakhsh Babar, Imdad Mallah, and Koro Khan Laghari, expressed their gratitude to Human Appeal. They acknowledged the organization's crucial support during the devastating 2022 floods, when it provided essential rations and continued assistance through various relief projects. The villagers stated that they are deeply thankful for the generosity of those who support such initiatives, particularly during Ramadan, and pray for their prosperity.

## PFC to offer free training for convicts in Punjab jails

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) has announced a free specialised training programme for convicts in Punjab jails to produce highly skilled woodworkers.

The initiative was discussed during a meeting between PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq and Inspector General of Prisons Punjab Mian Farooq Nazeer, on Sunday.

Mian Kashif stated that Pakistan is currently facing a severe shortage of skilled woodworkers. To address this issue, the PFC has decided to train convicts using modern techniques to meet market demands. He also assured that upon successful completion of the training, the convicts would be offered employment in furniture manufacturing factories with attractive salary packages.

Dr Waqar Chaudhry, advisor to the PFC, suggested that the council might consider providing a reasonable monthly stipend to trainee convicts to encourage maximum participation. The training program will initially include a six-month course in the central jails of Lahore, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi.

The PFC will deploy top-class trainers and organise special lectures on the importance of planting more trees to combat climate change and meet the country's wood requirements. Inspector General Mian Farooq Nazeer appreciated the PFC's goodwill gesture and formed a high-level committee to assess the feasibility of launching the training courses.

## CM orders amending labour laws to benefit workers

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the authorities concerned to amend the labour laws to ensure welfare of workers across the province.

Chairing a special meeting on labour rights here on Sunday, she said: "Hardworking people are friends of Allah; we cannot neglect them. We are determined to make Punjab an exemplary province for workers."

The CM reaffirmed the government's responsibility to provide fair wages, medical treatment, better employment, and housing for workers. Approving several key welfare projects, she instructed

Provincial Labor Minister Faisal Ayub Khokhar to submit a comprehensive plan for labor reforms.

CM Maryam Nawaz stressed that no worker should go to bed hungry or suffer hardship. She announced better higher education opportunities for the children of laborers and directed strict enforcement of the minimum wage of Rs. 37,000 per month across Punjab.

To further support workers, the CM called for the construction of labour colonies and ordered for revamp of social security hospitals across the province. She also announced the establishment of Maryam Nawaz

Wellness Centers in Lahore and Rawalpindi/Islamabad, where workers will receive pre-screening health checkups before being referred to major hospitals for further treatment.

The CM also approved two major healthcare projects. A 200-bed Rehmatul-ul-Alameen Cardiology Center on Lahore Defense Road for workers. A 50-bed Social Security Hospital in Rahim Yar Khan.

Punjab Labor and Human Resources Minister Faisal Ayub Khokhar, Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Chief Secretary Zahid Aktar Zaman attended the meeting.

## 17 FIRs filed against drivers for over-speeding

LAHORE (INP): Motorway Police registered first information reports (FIRs) against seventeen drivers for violation of allotted 150 kilometer per hour speed limit on Motorway.

Motorway police officials said that they started a campaign to impound vehicle whose driver will violate allotted speed limit on Motorway while a separate case will also be registered him. A traffic violation case and e-challan will also imposed on the driver.

Motorway police officials said that most of penalties were imposed on drivers on M-4 and M-6. They further vowed that this campaign already underway on all the motorways.

Earlier, on March 6, 2025, in a historic first, a speeding case has been registered against a driver for exceeding 173 km/h on the

Multan Motorway (M-4). The reckless driver has been arrested.

The Motorway Police spokesperson, Syed Imran Ahmad, stated that the incident occurred near Multan, where a vehicle was caught violating the legal speed limit of 120 kilometers per hour (km/h) and travelling at an alarming speed of 173 km/h.

The offender driver named Rahim Khan has been booked under charges of negligence and reckless driving at Budhla Sant Police Station, Multan.

The driver was taken into custody by the motorway police and then handed over to the local police for further legal proceedings against the charges of over-speeding.

Spokesperson Syed Imran Ahmad reaffirmed that strict actions against over-speeding will continue to ensure public

safety on motorways.

This development comes just a week after the 24NewsHD TV Channel reported that the Motorway Police have intensified their crackdown on high-speed driving.

According to the new directives issued by the IG Motorway Police, drivers exceeding the 120 km/h to 150 km/h limit will face heavy fines, while those crossing 150 km/h will not only be fined heavily but also have their vehicles impounded.

The Motorway Police have launched a special campaign to enforce these strict regulations and prevent road accidents.

It is important to note that the prescribed speed limit on motorways for cars is 120 km/h, while for public service vehicles, it is 110 km/h.

## Healthcare sector needs urgent attention

KARACHI (PPI): Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor said today that the crucial healthcare sector requires immediate government intervention as resourceless patients struggle with expensive private treatment and deteriorating public hospital facilities.

He highlighted that diseases are increasing due to factors such as malnutrition, pollution, and poor sanitary conditions. When illnesses escalate, hospitalization becomes a nightmare for patients and their families. He emphasized that private-sector hospitalization is unaffordable for most, making it essential for the government to enhance medical services in public hospitals.

Shakoor urged the government to upgrade all district-level hospitals into teaching hospitals, ensuring at least one public teaching hospital in every district of Pakistan. He also called for incentives to establish pri-

vate teaching hospitals and medical colleges, as many Pakistani students pursue costly and substandard medical education in Central Asia. Expanding medical education within the country would not only accommodate these students but also improve healthcare standards.

Addressing poor sanitation as a major cause of disease spread, he criticized the lack of enforcement of municipal laws against littering. He urged authorities to penalize individuals who dump garbage in streets and public spaces. Additionally, he pointed out that smoking in public areas and outdated, pollution-emitting vehicles contribute to worsening health conditions.

He expressed concern over the ongoing road construction in Karachi, which creates dust and air pollution. Contractors fail to follow safe engineering practices, while the Pakistan Engineering Council and

the government remain inactive. He demanded immediate corrective measures to protect public health.

Furthermore, he blamed uncollected garbage and overflowing sewage for spreading diseases, urging municipal departments to fulfill their responsibilities diligently. He stressed the need for improved emergency services in government hospitals, the maintenance of medical and laboratory equipment, and better training for doctors and paramedics.

Shakoor noted that Punjab has made consistent progress in healthcare, whereas Sindh lags behind. He urged Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Health Minister Dr. Azra Pechoho, and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto to take immediate action to bring Sindh's healthcare sector on par with Punjab's, ensuring better medical facilities for patients.

## Car riders open fire on TikTok in Lahore

LAHORE (INP): Renowned TikTok star Shamsheer Bhatti received serious bullet wounds when some accused who were travelling in a car opened fire on him in the Shera Kot area of Lahore. Hospital sources said that Shamsheer Bhatti received gunshots on his chest and arm, while his companion Sagheer also received bullets on his head.

Soon after the incident, heavy contingent of police led by Superintendent of Police Bilal Ahmed reached the spot and shifted the injured persons to Jinnah Hospital. SP Bilal said that condition of both injured persons out of danger. SP Bilal further said that police already filed a first information report (FIR) against Ibrar, Raja Kami, Yasir Butt, and Farooq. Later, all the accused managed to escape from the scene after the incident. The SP said that the police team was conducting raids on different locations to apprehend the accused.

## Steps taken to check digital harassment against women: Azma

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said the Punjab government is taking concrete measures to protect and uplift women, ensuring equal opportunities in all walks of life.

Speaking at a press conference at Alhamra Arts Council, the minister highlighted the challenges faced by working women and stressed the urgent need to eliminate gender discrimination in society.

Addressing online harassment, the minister stated that the Cyber Wing is being strengthened to ensure swift action against digital harassment and cyber-crimes targeting women.

She also pointed out that in Punjab, rape suspects are arrested within 24 hours to provide immediate justice to vic-

tims. She said when the Punjab chief minister took office, she made it clear that violence against women would not be tolerated under any circumstances, and the government was strictly implementing this policy.

The minister said that the launch of the "Pink Button" service, allows women to report any form of violence against them without fear.

Additionally, she stated that the government had ensured immediate action within 24 hours in cases of acid attacks and other forms of violence against women.

She said that working hostels and daycare centres are being established across Punjab to support working women, so they no longer have to worry about childcare while

pursuing their careers.

She also mentioned the "Dhee Rani Programme", under which 1,500 marriages have already been facilitated, with the second phase of the program set to begin soon.

Discussing women's education and mobility, Bokhari highlighted that female students in Punjab have excelled academically, and to further support them, the government has introduced e-bikes for girls.

Additionally, a special quota for women has been allocated in electric buses to make transportation safer and more accessible.

She reaffirmed the Punjab government's commitment to maximum facilities to women with more initiatives on the way to ensure their safety and empowerment.



KARACHI: People offering prayer before break their fast during the holy month of Ramadan. —INP Photo

## Profiteers fined as actions intensified in city, 6 shops sealed

KARACHI (APP): The campaign against profiteering was underway in the city during holy month of Ramadan on Sunday as three more shopkeepers were arrested while 6 shops were sealed for violation of government directives.

According to statement issued by the Commissioner's Office, a strategy was devised to auction off seized food items from shopkeepers who violate official prices.

The Deputy commissioners have termed this strategy as a practical effort to provide relief to consumers which has been appreciated by the public.

For the further step, citizens have been asked to report their complaints against profiteers to the Commissioner's Office control room at 02199205634 and 02199203443 helpline number 1299 and through the portal developed for the purpose. According to the report, on the eighth day of Ramadan, 159 profiteers were challaned, imposing fine of Rs 1.99 million.

In the last eight days, 1,324

profiteers were challaned, and a fine of Rs 24.3 million was imposed against them.

Assistant commissioners conducted auctions of food items at official prices for 40 shopkeepers. In 4 days, auctions were held for 191 shop-

keepers.

Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi, said the administration's campaign against profiteers will continue. He directed deputy commissioners to continue providing relief to citizens.

According to the details, in the South District, a fine of Rs 6.82 lakh was imposed, in East district (Rs 6.71 lakh), West (Rs 37,000), Central (Rs 64,000), Malir (Rs 3.8 lakh), Korangi (Rs 40,000) and Keamari (Rs 47,000).



**PAKISTAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA REGULATORY AUTHORITY ISLAMABAD**

**EXTENSION IN DATE**

**INVITATION TO APPLY FOR CABLE TV LICENCES AT DISTRICT LEVEL IN THE PROVINCE OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA**

Reference advertisement published in national dailies on 09<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 regarding invitation of applications for grant of Cable TV Licences at District Level in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under Section 19 of PEMRA Ordinance 2002 as amended by PEMRA (Amendment) Act 2023. Last date for submission of applications has been extended till 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2025 (1700 Hrs). Other details as per advertisement dated 09<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 with terms and conditions will remain the same.

**Director General (Licensing Distribution)**  
**PEMRA Headquarters**  
 Sector G-8/1, Mauve Area, Islamabad  
 Tel: +92 (51) 9107178, +92(51)9107131, Web: www.pemra.gov.pk



# Kundi assures full support for Kurram affectees

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday assured that the victims of Kurram will never be forgotten and every possible effort will be made for their well-being.

He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony at the Governor House, where Ramadan relief packages were distributed among the affected families.

Red Crescent KP Vice Chairman Farzand Ali Wazir also addressed the event, highlighting the Red Crescent's efforts in supporting the Kurram affectees.

Governor Kundi appreciated the role of Red Crescent KP in providing aid, saying that their work

is being widely acknowledged.

He mentioned that relief efforts, supported by the Sindh government, local councils, and philanthropic organizations, are being delivered in phases to the victims. He said PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's keen interest in ensuring relief reaches those in need. Farzand Ali Wazir commended the Governor's commitment to humanitarian efforts, saying that Hilal-e-Ahmer teams have been actively working under his guidance since day one.

He praised Governor Kundi's personal engagement with donors and welfare organizations, calling it a testament to his dedication to the poor and marginalized.

**PPP USA leader discusses minority rights with Governor Kundi**

James Cyprian, Vice President of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) New York, USA, met with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House here on Sunday.

During the meeting, Cyprian praised PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for upholding Q u a i d - e - A z a m Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision for minority rights.

He highlighted the party's efforts, including appointing a Christian as Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly and a woman from the underprivileged Hindu community as a senator.

Governor Kundi emphasized his commitment to minority rights, saying that, for the first time, minority community events were held at the Governor House.

He mentioned his visits to churches, temples, and gurdwaras and ongoing efforts to resolve issues related to cremation grounds.

The meeting also discussed Edward College Peshawar, with the Governor stating that restoring its past glory is a priority.

He advocated for upgrading the college to university status and appointing a foreign principal. Plans were also shared to establish Edward College campuses in Hazara Division and southern districts of KP.

# 3700 drug addicts rehabilitated in KP



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The provincial government's measures against drugs will prove to be historic. In three phases, the rehabilitation of 3,700 drug addicts is part of the world's largest rehabilitation program.

Under this initiative, 2,400 individuals who

were either separated from or expelled by their families have successfully completed treatment in two phases and have been reunited with their families.

Additionally, around 1,300 recovered individuals will be handed over to their families this week by the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali

district of Mohmand to spread awareness about the dangers of drugs.

These views were expressed by Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mahsud, during a meeting with volunteers of the Asghar Mohmand Foundation.

Under the chairmanship of Commissioner Peshawar Division, certificates of appreciation were distributed among the volunteers of the foundation.

Commissioner Riaz Khan Mahsud also appealed to other welfare organizations to play their role in raising awareness against drug abuse and to support the provincial government's initiatives in this regard.

He further announced the government's full support for all welfare organizations working against drugs.

# Mohabat Khan Mosque A masterpiece of Islamic architecture renovated

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar has been remained a strategic city where invaders constructed worship places to freely perform religious obligations and use its peoples' strong bonds with religion in their favour to prolong their rule.

Being a gateway to the subcontinent and central Asian states (CARs), Peshawar was always a strategic city where kings, warriors and invaders constructed mosques, churches and gurdwaras at prime locations to worship in accordance with their faith besides molding public opinions after conquering it before extending their influence to the subcontinent.

The Muslims commanders and kings of different dynasties passed through the historic Khyber Pass from Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Afghanistan stayed first at Peshawar where they constructed scores of mosques and worship places for Muslims and minorities to promote interfaith harmony and bring people of all faith closer.

"From recent Gorkhatri excavations, it was made clear that Islam had first spread in the border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan after Sabuktigin, a Turkic slave commander laid the foundation of the Ghaznavi dynasty in 977 AD in Central Afghanistan," said Bakhtzada Muhammad, senior research officer of the archeology department KP while talking to APP.

Following an untimely death of Sabuktigin and a revolt against his son Ismail, Mahmud Ghaznavi gained control over the Ghaznavi kingdom and extended his influence to Punjab after defeating Raja of Jaypala of the Kabul Shahis at the battle of Peshawar in 1001 AD," he said.

Resultantly, Islam had gained roots in Bannu, Waziristan, Khyber and other border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where construction of large and small mosques started.

"An inscription in Arabic engraved on a black marble

was found in 1984 on the slopes of the hill below the castle of Raja Gira, which authenticated the foundation of the historic Odigram Mosque in Swat (also known as Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi mosque constructed in 1048 CE on the order of General Amir Nustagin of Ghaznavi, which attracted worshippers in droves in Ramadan.

He said the construction of small and big mosques including the historic Yakagund mosque in Mohmand district, Sheikh Habib mosque in 1650 at Bala Manari and Gunj gate mosque alais Khawja Maroof mosque some 600 years ago established at Peshawar by the Muslim rulers of various dynasties, resultantly Islam got flourished in these regions.

After conquering Peshawar, the Mughal rulers started construction work of the iconic Mohabat Khan mosque in 1660-70 by the then Peshawar's Governor Nawab Mohabat Khan.

An amalgamation of Islamic and Mughal architecture, he said Mohabat Khan's small portion was constructed by Mughal emperor, Shah Jehan and a major portion by King Aurangzeb Alamgir with beautiful white marble.

The mosque was finally completed in 1680 and later renovated in 1898 after the vandalism of the Sikh rulers," he said.

The British took over Peshawar's control in 1949;

the mosque was renovated and handed over to the people of Peshawar for worship. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the refugee tribal elders congregated in the mosque to forge unity amongst Afghans against the Soviets invaders.

The fortune turned positive when the KP government declared Mohabat Khan mosque a historical site in 1982 and took its administrative control to the Auqaf Department.

Built on a high mound at Andar Sher bazaar near historic Chowkyadgar at Peshawar City, the worshippers enter its 30,155 square feet vast open courtyard with capacity to accommodate about 30,000 worshippers at a time besides a centrally located ablution pool and a single row of rooms lining the exterior walls with two tall minarets, which further magnified its look. The prayer hall's facade is also capped by six smaller decorative minarets that flank the mosque's five arched entryways, with an additional two minarets and its prayer hall capped by three awesome domes that draw visitors' attention.

The mosque's ceiling was embellished with elegant red frescoes in geometrics and floral motifs while its exterior was decorated with Mughal frescoes that amplify its beauty.

"Mohabat Khan mosque is the identity of Peshawar due to its unique architecture and glorious ancient history. For the last 15 years, I regularly came to this historic mosque of Peshawar for Jumma prayer, Namaz e Tarveh and Mahfil-e-Shabina of Ramadan ul Mubarak as its spiritual environment take the worshippers to a new world," said Haseeb Khan, a resident of Peshawar.

Mohabat Khan's mosque architecture was a jewel of Peshawar, attracting tourists and archeology lovers from across the country."

The shopkeepers, who had been rented shops by the Auqaf department, increased the size of their shops by many feet by digging more small cabins and encroaching on the entrance and surrounding area of the mosque which negatively impacted its exterior outlook. He said the construction of illegally built large plazas and shops around the mosque has adversely affected its exterior architecture and demanded the demolition of all these illegal structures to restore its original grandeur and architectural designs.

The mosque has recently undergone heavy conservation work especially on minarets, domes, ablution area, and other portions without compromising on its architectural designs.

The conservation work has enhanced its outlook, facilitating thousands of worshippers during Ramadan.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah chairing meeting on projects of Peshawar Development Authority.

# PDA briefs provincial leadership on Peshawar's development initiatives

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister Meena Khan Afridi, MNA Asif Khan, and Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah were briefed by the Director General of the Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) on ongoing and planned development projects aimed at transforming the provincial capital. The meeting focused on key initiatives, including the removal of traffic bottlenecks, beautification efforts, land utilization, and the development of Hayatabad and Regi Model Townships. As part

of the traffic decongestion plan, seven major locations—Board Bazar, Islamia College, University of Peshawar, and University Town—have been identified for interventions to improve traffic flow.

Officials also provided an update on the long-awaited Ring Road missing link, which will connect Warsak Road to Nasir Bagh Road, along with the development of a new bus terminal at the Motorway junction.

The meeting was informed that the Chamani Park and Ride facility had been completed, while a

# Developemnt of society not possible without women education: Qasim

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Development, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, in his statement on the occasion of International Women's Day, said that March 8 is celebrated worldwide as International Women's Day.

The development of any society is not possible unless its women are educated, strong, and independent.

The Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa government is fully committed to the advancement of women and the protection of their rights.

He stated that various initiatives are being taken for women's training in the province.

Previously, only traditional skills such as sewing and embroidery were taught, but now training will also be provided in modern fields like e-commerce and artificial intelligence (AI).

Soon, an e-commerce and AI school will be inaugurated in Peshawar, and in the future, this facility will be extended across the province.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur, significant steps are being taken to empower women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Parents should educate their daughters and provide them with proper training so that they can become independent.

The government will fully support all women who face challenges on the path to progress. The day is not far when every woman



# Beggars overrun markets Iftar shopping becomes struggle for Peshawarties

PESHAWAR (APP): The swarm of professional and nonprofessional beggars arrived from different cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Peshawar have started irritating people in the holy month of Ramadan.

In spite of begging has been declared illegal under the country's laws, the beggars' influx including male, female, children and persons with disabilities are being witnessed in the jam-packed crossing points, mosques' gates and mostly frequented public places and food outlets in the city and cantonment areas mostly before Aftar, irritating people during shopping.

These bidders have occupied key places at Hashtnagri, Gantagar, Firdus, Nothia, Tehkal, Gulbahar, Faqirabad, Meena Bazaar, Karimpura, Shafi Market, Saddar Road, University Town, City Tower, Jawad Tower and Deans Trade Centre.

Most professional beggars employ various tricks to exploit human nature and religious sentiments by crying, weeping and chasing people in public places while wearing miserable attire. They stayed at shopping malls, mosques, road signals, bus terminals, railway stations, traffic squares and streets at Peshawar, making shopping difficult ahead of Iftar.

The unchecked trained beggars are pestering iftar shoppers in markets or running after them or behind their cars to collect

maximum alms in the name of Zakat, Sadqa and Khairat.

Some beggars roaming with exposed wounds keep on holding and touching customers when they come out of their vehicles, which may expose them to contagious diseases and viral infections including TB, flu and chest related infections.

It has been witnessed that some beggars were emotionally blackmailing people by carrying medical prescriptions and disability certificates.

"Alms" seekers can also be seen in city markets asking for charity in the name of construction of mosques while many beggars were resorting to lame-duck excuses like seeking treatment of their ailing family or lost jobs.

"Begging has emerged as a major social evil in recent years to the nuisance of Peshawarties," Professor Sundas Amin who was irritated by beggars for Iftar shopping at Pabbi bazaar Peshawar.

Besides bazaars and shopping arcades, he said the shoppers were facing great inconvenience at traffic signals, food restaurants, bus terminals, railways stations, mosques, hospitals, markets and public places due to swarms of beggars in Peshawar.

"It is heartbreaking to see young girls' and boys' beggars carrying wipers in hands often start cleaning car windows on traffic signals without permission in order to get

money," she said.

He said some beggars come with flowers, garlands, caps and rosary to give an impression that they are selling it, but actually they beg for money without an intention of selling anything.

Faraz Khan, a resident of Nowshera said he was busy shopping for Iftar along with his family at Qissa Khwani where a teenage beggar with black colour in hand rushed towards him, asking for money or otherwise his clothes would be made dirty.

"In order to save my clothes, I immediately offered him Rs50, which was refused. On several requests, the beggar accepted Rs 100 and started running towards other shoppers by using the same technique that was intolerable in a civilized society.

He demanded the KP government to take instantaneous action against swarms of beggars in the city so that people could take a sigh of relief and do Iftar shopping with ease.

"Beggary has been declared illegal under West Pakistan Loitering Ordinance 1958," said Noman Bukhari advocate.

Unfortunately, he said this law had not been fully implemented, which resulted in an increase of beggars especially during Ramadan. The central and provincial laws such as Control of Narcotics Substance Act 1997, West Pakistan Vagrancy Ordinance 1959, Pakistan

Employment of Children Act 1991, KP Child Protection and Welfare Act (KPCPWA) 2010 and KP Orphanage Supervision and Control Act 1976 had been promulgated to check drug addiction and streets begging.

Similarly, KPCPWA was enacted in 2010 to protect rights of women and children, but it has not been fully implemented on ground, resulting in swarms of beggars in Peshawar.

He said the role of Child Welfare Commission (CWC) was important to provide protection to child beggars in KP. The KP government imposed a ban on child beggars in the Sindh province and directed the social welfare department to pick child beggars from markets, roads, traffic signals, streets and rehabilitate them at their welfare centres.

The spokesman of the social welfare department said that special drives were launched to shift drug addicts and beggars to rehabilitation centres for treatment. Besides treatment, he said these beggars were being provided vocational education and training to make them useful citizens of the society.

He urged well off people to donate alms and charity to their known poor deserving people and reputable organizations having clean service records so that their alms could be used for a noble cause.





## In brief

### Pacha Bazaar cabins rebuild F.P. Report

**BUNER:** With the support of Rising Youth Organization, seven cabins affected by the fire in Pacha Bazaar were rehabilitated and the poor cabin owners started their business again. The central chairman of the organization Atiqur Rehman Basikhel and his comrades Iqbal Jilani Sher Bhader Raj Wali Khan Inaam advocate Faisal Khan and Farhad Khan and the president of Pacha Bazaar Syed Wahid Khan relaunched business activities in the rebuild cabins on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion RUO chairman told It was the aim to fully support the suffering of our people and thanks to God the Rising Youth has taken up the task. He added, there are clear proofs in the field of action that among the twenty cabins that were damaged by fire in Pacha Bazaar, seven cabins of the very poor owners have been restored and business has started again and the poor are earning halal livelihood, which will further provide employment opportunities and the process of development will advance and bring prosperity and peace.

### Int'l Women's Day celebrated

**LODHAN (APP):** A special ceremony was held at Sanatkar Lodhran to commemorate International Women's Day, organised by the Social Welfare & Bait-ul-Mal Department in collaboration with the district administration. Deputy Commissioner Dr Lubna Nazir attended as the chief guest and presented honorary shields to individuals for their outstanding contributions in various fields. The event was participated by prominent officials, including Chief Executive Officer Health Dr Faisal Waheed, Assistant Commissioner Lodhran Iram Shehzadi, Deputy Director Social Welfare Nazia Sharif, Sanatkar Manager Nabila Yasmeen, Dr Tahreem Khan from the Population Welfare Department, and psychologist Fatima Sheikh, among others. In her address, DC Dr Lubna highlighted the crucial role of women in society's progress, praising their achievements across diverse sectors. She also acknowledged the support of men in empowering women and added that Punjab's chief minister, being a woman, underscores the importance of women in leadership roles. Deputy Director Social Welfare Nazia Sharif related women's active contributions to societal development. She assured that the Social Welfare Department was committed to improving the lives of women, children, and persons with special needs.

### 61 held for profiteering

**MULTAN (APP):** Price control magistrates arrested 61 profiteers, sealed three shops, and registered three cases against violators for selling essential commodities at exorbitant rates. According to official sources, over 9,000 inspections were carried out across the district, resulting in Rs 128,000 fines imposed on various outlets. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali Bukhari stated that strict monitoring was being carried out from wholesale markets to retail shops to maintain a stable supply chain. He emphasized that the administration was issuing daily price lists to regulate market rates effectively. The supply of sugar at Ramadan bazaars has been doubled to meet public demand during the month of Ramadan, he added.

# Muqam-led committee visits Chilas

## F.P. Report

**GILGIT-BALTISTAN, CHILAS:** A special committee led by the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam, visited Chilas, Gilgit-Baltistan. The delegation included Federal Minister for Water Resources Muin Wattoo, Chairman WAPDA General (Retd.) Sajjad Ghani, Federal Secretary Zafar Hassan, along with the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan, Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmad, Additional Chief Secretary, and other senior officials from Gilgit-Baltistan.

During the visit, the delegation met with the Jirga of the Diamer Basha Dam affectees. Addressing the

gathering, Federal Minister Amir Muqam stated that the current government has made the rehabilitation of the affectees of Basha Dam and Dasu Dam, as well as the development of the region, its top priority. He assured the affectees that the government is working on a priority basis to resolve issues related to the Chulha Package, resettlement programs, health, education, and infrastructure. He also promised to make a special recommendation to the Prime Minister for the establishment of a Danish School in Chilas.

WAPDA also announced the doubling of sessions at the WAPDA College for affectees and financial support for medical and engineering students' tuition fees.

The Federal Minister directed WAPDA officials to ensure the construction of 23 schools under CBM (Confidence-Building Measures) and the timely payment of land compensation.

During the Jirga, the affectees presented their concerns, following which immediate instructions were issued to the technical committee. The Additional Chief Secretary and Commissioner Diamer were directed to compile recommendations on these issues and forward them to the federal government.

Federal Minister for Water Resources Muin Wattoo, Chairman WAPDA General (Retd.) Sajjad Ghani, and Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan also addressed the Jirga.

## BISE Bahawalpur sets up 274 centres for matric exams

**BAHAWALPUR (APP):** The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Bahawalpur has established 274 examination centres to conduct the first annual matriculation examinations in the Bahawalpur region.

According to a press release issued on Sunday, all arrangements have been finalised to ensure smooth and transparent

examinations. The 9th-grade exams are scheduled to commence on March 25, 2025.

A total of 113,107 candidates, including 92,385 regular students and 20,722 private candidates, have been registered for the 9th-grade examinations. Similarly, for the 10th-grade exams, 91,622 candidates have registered, comprising 68,345

regular students and 23,277 private candidates.

To oversee the examination process, the BISE Bahawalpur has appointed 602 superintendents and deputy superintendents, along with 3,149 supervisors, at the examination centres. Additionally, fool-proof security measures will be implemented to ensure a fair and secure examination environment.

## Hemnani visits PPRP houses in Ghotki

## F.P. Report

**GHOTKI:** Spokesperson for Government of Sindh, Sukhdev Assardas Hemnani visits village Azeem Menak in Ghotki and meets the beneficiaries of Peoples Poverty Reduction Programme.

Celebrating women's day with PPRP beneficiaries, Hemnani inaugurated newly-built houses and a mega scheme of Village Improvement Programme under which the model village has been developed by women-led community using the grant of up to Rs. 10 million.

Addressing media, Sukhdev Hemnani stated that Sindh government is working on poverty alleviation through the People's Poverty Reduction

Programme (PPRP), a transformative initiative that has uplifted up to 1.5 million families from below the poverty line across 24 districts of Sindh.

Sukhdev Hemnani highlighted that Sindh government took up this initiative through Sindh Rural Support Organization in 2009 and has since expanded it into a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

Shedding light on the advancements under PPRP in Ghotki, Hemnani underlined that 1500 low-cost houses have been constructed in the remote areas of the district so far. He shared that only in the initial phase of PPRP that focused on 8 districts, so far 170,441 women have

received interest-free loans; 45,000 households are benefiting from income generational grants; individuals from 45,090 families are being provided vocational trainings; 103 villages are being restored and developed under village improvement programme; and 12,408 climate-resilient houses have been built, with ownership rights given to women.

A core focus of PPRP is women empowerment, as most of its interventions target women beneficiaries. Beyond PPRP, the Sindh government has taken several initiatives to introduce Pakistan's first women-only Pink Bus service, with plans for electric scooters and taxis for women.

## 15 held for stealing electricity

**SARGODHA (APP):** The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) Sargodha Circle caught 15 power pilferers and got registered 19 cases during the current drive against power pilferage.

A spokesman said here on Sunday that the task force raided various areas of the circle and caught power pilferers including Saleem, Naseer, Bashir, Majeed, Khaleel, Abdur Rehman, Aslam, Aqib, Ahmed and others.

He said that during the last 24 hours, the authorities caught one pilferer from Sargodha City, booked three consumers from Shahpur area whereas arrested five power thieves red-handed while stealing electricity through main electricity lines and meter tampering.



**CHILAS:** Federal Minister for KAGB & SAFRON, Engr. Amir Muqam, led a federal committee meeting with dignitaries in Chilas to address the issues of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam affectees.

## Man killed; wife, daughter shot at injured

**BUREWALA (APP):** A man was killed while his wife and minor daughter sustained bullet injuries here on Sunday.

According to police, veterinary doctor Naemat, had contracted marriage to Iram Qadir, the mother of two children, few days ago. The family was going to somewhere by a car when two armed persons on a motorcycle opened fire at the vehicle near Mujahid Colony bridge, Lahore road. As a result of which, Naemat, his wife Iram and nine-year-old daughter sustained critical bullet injuries. The victims were rushed to a hospital where Naemat succumbed to his injuries.

Iram had got divorce from her ex-husband Umer Farooq due to his drug-addiction.

It was revealed that Naemat had also been married before and had four children from his first marriage.

A case has been registered against the suspect. City police were investigating.

## 1632 cases of violence against women reported

**HYDERABAD (INP):** Hari Welfare Association (HWA) has revealed that over 1632 cases of violence reported against women and girls in Sindh, mainly in rural districts. In a report issued on the occasion of International Women's day revealing that remarkably, Sanghar (160) and Khairpur (147) have the highest numbers, followed by Dadu (116), indicating that violence against women is notably predominant in the rural districts of Sindh. Karachi also reported a great number (107), but this is lower compared to these rural areas. On the other hand, Kashmore (30), Thatta (33), and Tando Muhammad Khan (31) reported the fewest cases, yet these are alarming.

## Ministers distribute minority cards

**SIALKOT (APP):** Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif, alongside Provincial Minister for Human Rights and Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora, distributed minority cards to 1,547 families in Sialkot district.

The ceremony was held here on Sunday, where the defence minister praised Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's efforts in promoting equal rights for religious and ethnic minorities. Khawaja Asif emphasised that a healthy society ensures equal rights for minorities without discrimination. He called for national unity, stating that loyalty to Pakistan must transcend religious affiliations. He highlighted that in a truly just society, minorities not only enjoy equal rights but are also provided additional support and protections.

The defence minister noted that Sialkot is home to a significant number of Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs who have lived there freely since the establishment of Pakistan. He expressed pride in the religious harmony of the city and acknowledged the increase in the Sikh population — from just 10 in 1947 to over 100 today — attributing this growth to initiatives by the Punjab government.

Khawaja Asif also announced that the sacred pond of Gurdwara Babay De Beri had been reclaimed from land mafia and assured that the remaining area would soon be restored to the Sikh community. He added that Sialkot is now an international destination for the Sikh community, demonstrating the city's commitment to religious unity and harmony.

Condemning incidents of violence against minorities, the defence minister described them as a source of national shame. He stressed that every citizen, regardless of their faith, has the right to live freely in Pakistan. He concluded by stating that the true measure of a nation's tolerance

is reflected in its treatment of minorities, a principle that the Punjab government is committed to upholding.

Provincial Minister for Human Rights and Religious Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora, while addressing the gathering, highlighted the Punjab government's commitment to minority rights. He quoted Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's inaugural speech, where she referred to minorities as the "crown of her head" and assured them a life free from fear. He also cited former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's stance of no distinction between majority and minority communities in Pakistan.

Ramesh highlighted the success of the minority card initiative, launched by CM Maryam Nawaz on January 22, 2025. Through the programme's portal, 93,000 non-Muslim households in Punjab registered, of which 50,000 households with a poverty score below 45 qualified for the minority card. The minister announced that the initiative aims to benefit 75,000 households next year.

Expressing gratitude on behalf of the Sikh community, the provincial minister thanked Federal Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, M Mansha-Ullah Butt, Faisal Ikram, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain Langrial, and Additional Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Iqbal Singhira for reclaiming the historical pond and land of Gurdwara Babay Di

Beri from land mafia. During the event, the reclaimed pond was formally handed over to the Gurdwara management.

Ramesh Arora also underscored Pakistan's distinction as the only country in the world where Sikh marriages are registered under the Sikh Marriage Act. In contrast, India, with a Sikh population of 25 million, registers Sikh marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act.

He revealed that the Punjab government allocated Rs. 4 billion for the construction and renovation of minority places of worship, boundary walls for cemeteries, and various development projects in minority communities. Additionally, a comprehensive project worth Rs. 1.4 billion has been prepared to restore 46 closed gurdwaras, 25 churches, and temples across Punjab.

The minister further announced that a PC-I for restoring the historical pond at Gurdwara Babay Di Beri is in progress, with work set to begin soon. He also disclosed that the Minority Affairs Department has developed a five-year strategic plan to safeguard and restore minority sites in the province.

Ramesh Arora praised the leadership of CM Maryam Nawaz for taking historic steps to uplift minority communities, making the Minority Affairs Department a leader in performance and commitment to inclusivity.



## Malam Jabba: A home to skiing lovers

**MALAM JABBA (APP):** With the skiing season nearing its seasonal end, the winter beauty of snow covered and picturesque Malam Jabba, marks the arrival of spring season in Swat Valley after receiving another snowfall of winter last month.

The breathtaking landscape, accompanied by the chirping of birds amidst the pine forests and wildlife, sets the perfect stage for adventure with the snow sports enthusiasts enjoying the thrill of skiing.

As the sun rises over the snowy peaks of Malam Jabba at Koh-e-Handukash range, the valley comes alive with the sound of excitement, as families and tourists besides immature skiing lovers take to the snowy slopes till evening.

Malam Jabba, Miandam, Matiltan, Utror, Gabral, and Loyal Sar resorts in Swat draw tourists from across the country. At an altitude of 2,804 meters, Malam Jabba is renowned for its skiing runs, ice hockey, snowboarding and curling on its two tracks, which stretch over 800 meters, making it the largest skiing slope of Pakistan.

The region's winter

sports, combined with the picturesque scenery, make it a unique destination for adventure sports enthusiasts. In addition to skiing and snowboarding, the region is also known for river rafting, trekking and the magnificent snow-clad mountain peaks besides scores of archeological Buddhist sites offering great opportunities for tourists to explore.

Swat motorway further increased the accessibility of Malam Jabba, making it an ideal destination for winter tourism and adventure sports in Pakistan.

Manzoorul Haq, former Ambassador holds this sports destination as unique across the world with its mesmerizing beauty and sports and tourism opportunities.

"I have visited many countries but could not find such distinctive tourism features together as being found in Swat especially at Malam Jabba," he said. "Malam Jabba is my favorite winter hilly station due to its diverse features, easy accessibility, pollution free cool weather and trout fish amid snowfall with high velocity.

"No hill station carries



more natural and mountainous beauty in the world than this valley", he said and commenting, it is right time to take advantage of digital technology and showcase these hidden treasures before the world through short videos on social media platforms."

Waris Khattak, a visitor from Karak district also spoke highly of Malam Jabba's winter beauty especially snowfall and skiing sports that he found to be even more intense than that of Murree and Chitral.

He enthusiastically described the experience of

enjoying fresh trout fish with his family while enjoying the charm of Malam Jabba, Kalam and Mahudhand lake. "Beyond natural attractions, Malam Jabba and Swat also attract those interested in the region's historical and archaeological significance."

Saqib Raza, Assistant Director Archaeology and Museums Department, highlighted Swat's importance in Buddhist history, with key sites like Saidu Sharif Museum and Buthkara Buddhist Monastery, attracting

tourists, monks and scholars across the world. "These historical landmarks should be promoted on digital platforms to draw more international visitors to bolster economy and alleviate poverty in rural areas of northern KP."

An economist Dr Naeem Khattak remarked that Pakistan tourism's revenue was increasing with each passing year as he claimed it reaching US\$1.3 billion in 2023 that is 2.15 times more than previous year.

Similarly, he said, Pakistan's tourism revenue is projected to reach \$4.26

billion this year while from 2025 to 2029, it is expected to grow 6.75% annually and forecast to reach US\$ 5.53 billion by 2029.

"To achieve these ambitious targets, we need to use digital and social media tools to highlight Malam Jabba's like destinations to attract foreign tourists," he suggested.

To further enhance Malam Jabba's tourism appeal, Shad Khan, Spokesman of the Culture and Tourism Authority mentioned to developing various projects to make Swat winter capital due to seven unique features including paragliding, river rafting, trout fish, swat expressway and snowfall.

"New tourist spots in areas like Sola Tanar, Puchar, and Jargo valleys besides initiatives like ecotourism walking tracks are being developed in Swat," he said. "New camping pods at different destinations are also being established to minimize load on existing tourists' zones in Kalam and Malama Jabba."

Omar Khattak, General Manager KP Tourism and Culture Authority said, different plans were chalked

out for linking Malam Jabba, Bahrain and Kalam with the Swat Expressway. "Development of ongoing Integrated Tourism Zone at Mankyal Swat under World Bank's Integrated Tourism Project would help promote sustainable tourism. It is set to boost sustainable tourism and adventure sports in Swat."

Besides these initiatives, tourism Police has been deployed at key spots across Swat especially in Kalam and Malam Jabba to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience for visitors, Omar said. "To provide affordable accommodation to tourists and ice skinning lovers, host tourism project was launched in KP, offering loans up to Rs three million to locals to create safe and comfortable lodging for tourists."

As Malam Jabba continues to evolve into one of top tourism destinations for winter tourism in Pakistan with its unique tourism features, the experts underscored the need for proper projection of these tourism destinations across the world to promote soft image of Pakistan as well as tourism to earn more and more revenue.





# Panama releases dozens of detained deportees from US into limbo

PANAMA CITY (AP): After weeks of lawsuits and human rights criticism, Panama on Saturday released dozens of migrants who were held for weeks in a remote camp after being deported from the United States, telling them they have 30 days to leave the Central American nation.

It thrust many like Hayatullah Omagh, a 29-year-old who fled Afghanistan in 2022 after the Taliban took control, into a legal limbo, scrambling to find a path forward.

"We are refugees. We do not have money. We cannot pay for a hotel in Panama City, we do not have relatives," Omagh told the Associated Press in an interview. "I can't go back to Afghanistan under any circumstances ... It is under the control of the Taliban, and they want to kill me. How can I go back?"

Authorities have said deportees will have the option of extending their stay by 60 days if they need it, but after that many like Omagh don't know what they will do.

Omagh climbed off a bus in Panama City alongside 65 migrants from China, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Nepal and other nations after spending weeks detained in poor conditions by the Panamanian government, which has said it wants to work with the Trump administration "to send a signal of deterrence" to people hoping to migrate.

Human rights groups and lawyers advocating for the migrants were waiting at the bus terminal, and scrambled to find the released migrants shelter and other resources. Dozens of other people remained in the camp.

Among those getting off buses were migrants flee-

ing violence and repression in Pakistan and Iran, and 27-year-old Nikita Gaponov, who fled Russia due to repression for being part of the LGBTQ+ community and who said he was detained at the U.S. border, but not allowed to make an asylum claim.

"Once I get off the bus, I'll be sleeping on the ground tonight," Gaponov said.

Others turned their eyes north once again, saying that even though they had already been deported, they had no other option than to continue after crossing the world to reach the U.S.

The deportees, largely from Asian countries, were part of a deal stuck between the Trump administration and Panama and Costa Rica as the U.S. government attempts to speed up deportations. The administration sent hundreds of people, many families with children, to the two Central American countries as a stopover while authorities organize a way to send them back to their countries of origin.

Critics described it as a way for the U.S. to export its deportation process.

The agreement fueled human rights concerns when hundreds of deportees detained in a hotel in Panama City held up notes to their windows pleading for help and saying they were scared to return to their own countries.

Under international refugee law, people have the right to apply for asylum when they are fleeing conflict or persecution.

Those that refused to return home were later sent to a remote camp near Panama's border with Colombia, where they spent weeks in poor conditions, were stripped of their phones, unable to access legal council and were not told where they were going

next.

Lawyers and human rights defenders warned that Panama and Costa Rica were turning into "black holes" for deportees, and said their release was a way for Panamanian authorities to wash their hands of the deportees amid mounting human rights criticism.

Upon being released Saturday night, human rights lawyers identified at least three people who required medical attention. One has been vomiting for over a week, another deportee had diabetes and hadn't had access to insulin in the camp and another person had HIV and also didn't have access to medicine in detention.

Those who were released, like Omagh, said they could not return home.

As an atheist and member of an ethnic minority group in Afghanistan known as the Hazara, he said returning home under the rule of the Taliban — which swept back into power after the Biden administration pulled out of the country — would mean he would be killed. He only went to the U.S. after trying for years to live in Pakistan, Iran and other countries but being denied visas. Omagh was deported after presenting himself to American authorities and asking to seek asylum in the U.S., which he was denied.

"My hope was freedom. Just freedom," he said. "They didn't give me the chance. I asked many times to speak to an asylum officer and they told me 'No, no, no, no, no.'"

Still, he said that leaving the camp was a relief. Omagh and other migrants who spoke to the AP detailed scarce food, sweltering heat with little relief and aggressive Panamanian authorities.

In one case, Omagh and others said, a Chinese man went on a week-long hunger strike. In another, a small riot broke out because guards refused to give a migrant their phone. The riot, they said, was suppressed by armed guards.

Panamanian authorities denied accusations about camp conditions, but blocked journalists from accessing the camp and cancelled a planned press visit last week.

While international aid organizations said they would organize travel to a third country for people who didn't want to return home, Panamanian authorities said the people released had already refused help. Omagh said he was told in the camp he could be sent to a third country if it gives people from Afghanistan visas. He said that would be incredibly difficult because few nations open their doors to people with a Afghan passport.

He said he asked authorities in the camp multiple times if he could seek asylum in Panama, and said he was told that "we do not accept asylum."

"None of them wants to stay in Panama. They want to go to the U.S.," said Carlos Ruiz-Hernandez, Panama's deputy foreign minister, in an interview with the AP last month.

That was the case for some, like one Chinese woman who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity, fearing repercussions from Panamanian authorities.

Upon getting off the bus, the first thing she wanted to do was find a Coca-Cola. Then, she'd find a way back to the U.S.

"I still want to continue to go to the United States and fulfill my American dream," she said.



LONDON, ENGLAND: A member of the public throws roses into River Thames at The National Covid Memorial Wall on Sunday in London, England. Five years ago on 11th March, the World Health Organisation declared the outbreak of Covid-19 a worldwide pandemic. A recent report by The Observer newspaper has shown Britain performed worse than most other developed nations in its response to the pandemic.

# Canada Liberals to announce Trudeau's successor in midst of US trade war

OTTAWA (Reuters): Canada's Liberal Party will announce Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's successor on Sunday as both party chief and head of the country's government in the midst of a trade war with the United States that could cripple the Canadian economy.

The next prime minister will have to negotiate with U.S. President Donald Trump as he threatens additional tariffs on Canada and may soon face opposition Conservatives in a general election.

Trudeau announced in January that he would step down after more than nine years in power as his approval rating plummeted, forcing the ruling Liberal Party to run a quick contest to replace him.

"Is it ideal in a circumstance of bilateral crisis for us? I suppose not," said Drew Fagan, a professor at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. "But on the other hand, the process is playing out domestically as it should."

Former central banker Mark Carney is the front-runner, with the most endorsements from party members and the most money raised among the

four Liberal candidates. Around two-thirds of Trudeau's cabinet publicly back Carney, and a Mainstreet poll in late February showed Carney with 43% support among Liberals compared to 31% for his main rival, former Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland.

Freeland has touted her experience negotiating with Trump during his first term but has struggled to differentiate herself from Trudeau after being one of his most loyal supporters for years.

She left his government in December after Trudeau tried to replace her, and she criticized his government's spending policies.

Around 400,000 Liberal party members were eligible to vote, and the results will be calculated in a ranked ballot of voters in each of the 343 parliamentary constituencies, also known as ridings.

The party is due to announce the first round of results at about 6:30 p.m. (2230 GMT).

A victory for Carney, 59, would be the first time an outsider with no real political background has become Canadian prime minister.

Carney has said his experience as the first per-

son to serve as the governor of two central banks - Canada and England - meant he was the best candidate to deal with Trump.

During the campaign, Carney said he supported dollar-for-dollar retaliatory tariffs against the United States and a coordinated strategy to boost investment. He has repeatedly complained that Canada's growth under Trudeau was not good enough.

The prospect of a fresh start for the Liberal Party under Carney, combined with Trump's tariffs and his repeated taunts to annex Canada as the 51st U.S. state, led to a remarkable revival of Liberal fortunes.

At the start of 2025 the party trailed by 20 or more points but is now statistically tied with the official opposition Conservatives in several polls.

"There is a rallying-around-the-flag moment that we would never have predicted a year ago," said University of British Columbia politics professor Richard Johnston. "I think it's probably true as we speak that the Liberals have been saved from oblivion."

Regardless of who wins, the next prime minister has important decisions to

make right away. The minority Liberal government may face a confidence vote when Parliament reconvenes at the end of March, potentially triggering an election.

He or she may therefore decide to call an immediate election, avoiding the trouble of having to put together a cabinet. An election must be called no later than October 20.

The Globe and Mail newspaper reported on Saturday that Carney would call an election before Parliament is due to reconvene at the end of the month, meaning voting could take place either April 28 or May 5. Carney's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Polls indicate that neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives would be able to form a majority government.

Carney could legally serve as prime minister without a seat in the House of Commons but tradition dictates he should seek to win one as soon as possible.

In 1984, John Turner was not a legislator when he became prime minister after winning a Liberal leadership race.

# Portugal braces for a possible 3rd election in 3 years

LISBON, Portugal (AP): Portugal could be headed for its third general election in three years after parliament on Friday scheduled a confidence vote on the center-right minority government, which has been under pressure for weeks over the business ties of Prime Minister Luis Montenegro.

A large majority of opposition lawmakers say they will vote to remove the government from power.

The government, made up of the Social Democratic Party and its smaller ally the Popular

Party, has just 80 seats in the 230-seat legislature. It has been in office for less than a year.

The government asked for parliament to schedule the confidence motion, saying it was needed to "dispel uncertainty" about the government's ability to put its policies into practice.

The two largest opposition parties, which together hold 128 seats, have said they will vote against the government in next Tuesday's debate. Other smaller parties say they will join them.

The political crisis could consign the European Union member state of 10.6 million people to months of uncertainty amid continental challenges to security and the economy. The government is also in charge of distributing more than 22 billion euros (\$24 billion) in EU development funds to Portuguese investment projects.

Political tension has gripped the country for weeks amid questions about potential conflicts of interest in the business dealings of the prime minister's family law firm.

Montenegro, who plans to stand for reelection, has denied any wrongdoing. He said he placed control of the firm in the hands of his wife and children when he became Social Democratic leader in 2022 and has not been involved in its management.

But opposition parties have called for more detailed explanations of the firm's business. Most recently, it emerged that the firm is receiving monthly payments from a company that has a major gambling concession granted by the government.

# Erdogan ally warns of PKK 'affiliated groups' must disarm as well

ANKARA (AFP): A key ally of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Sunday that all "affiliated groups" of the Kurdish militant group PKK must disarm as well, as part of a historic ceasefire deal with Ankara.

Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), had last month called on his group to disband and end more than four decades of armed struggle against Turkey.

But Ankara also wants all PKK fighters disarmed wherever they are, notably those in the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, the bulk of which is made up of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

The SDF leadership welcomed Ocalan's call on February 27 to disband, but

said it did not apply to its forces.

"The PKK terrorist organization and its affiliated groups must immediately and without preconditions lay down their weapons," said Devlet Bahceli, head of the hard-line nationalist MHP party. Bahceli is considered the key sponsor of the talks between Ankara and PKK, after he offered a surprise peace gesture if Ocalan rejected violence.

"The fact that the YPG and other similar terrorist groups claim to be exempt from this call ... is completely contradictory to the leadership of the organization," Bahceli said in a statement.

The PKK announced a ceasefire after the call by Ocalan, who has been imprisoned for the past 26

years, saying that "none of our forces will carry out any armed operation unless they are attacked."

Since 2016, Turkey has carried out three major military operations in northern Syria, targeting PKK militants, which it sees as a strategic threat along its southern border.

The PKK, designated a terrorist group by Turkey,

the US and the EU, has waged an insurgency since 1984.

Its original aim was to carve out a homeland for Kurds, who make up about 20 percent of Turkey's 85 million people. Since Ocalan's incarceration in 1999, there have been various attempts to end the bloodshed that has left more than 40,000 dead.



TOKYO: Himeji Castle in Hyogo Prefecture, western Japan, is lit up in yellow, to symbolize the mimosa flower, the symbol of the U.N.-designated International Women's Day, which is celebrated the same day.



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## Trouble worsens in Syria as clashes break out

**W**ITH the swift fall of the Bashar Al Assad regime in December, and the rather smooth transition to a government led by the anti-Assad forces, which is now led by Ahmed Al-Sharaa, it seemed that Syria was on the way to a period of peace and reconstruction.

One of the reasons for the assumption was that there was not much resistance from the Assad group, and the new government did not seem to look for enemies. The mood was one of reconciliation. It seems that the peaceful time has ended, and trouble erupted in the northwest region of Syria, which is dominated by the Alawite sect to which the Assads belong. The Syrian government says that violence erupted in the governorates of Latakia and Tartous.

The situation is delicate because it is not clear whether it is the pro-Assad forces that are fighting the government, or it is the Alawites as a sect who are fighting. If it is the pro-Assad forces, then they would be in a minority and they will not be able to sustain resistance.

But if it is a sectarian battle between the minority Shia sect of Alawites against the majority Sunnis, then it takes a different colour. It becomes a sectarian battle on religious lines, which would be more difficult to defuse.

Interim president Al-Sharaa has asked the Alawites to lay down arms. He said that it was an “unforgivable mistake” on the part of Alawites to have attacked the security forces. It is now reckoned that over 500 people have been killed, many of them civilians in the retaliation unleashed by the Syrian government.

The foreign ministries of Bahrain and Kuwait have condemned the anti-government forces in Syria for the violence. Kuwait News Agency cited a Kuwait foreign ministry statement saying, “Kuwait strongly condemns the crimes committed by outlaws in Syria and their targeting of security forces and state institutions.” Bahrain’s foreign ministry too condemned the attacks on government forces and described them as a bid “to destabilise security and civil peace”.

The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen said, “While the situation remains fluid and we are still determining the precise facts, there is clearly an immediate need for restraint from all parties, and full respect for the protection of civilians in accordance with international law.”

The new government in Syria had won support from many in the region. It has been restored its membership in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) after 13 years. It was suspended when civil war broke out in 2011.

The Syrian foreign ministry in its statement had said that the OIC’s decision “represents a vital step toward Syria’s return to the regional and international communities as a free and just state”. The post-Assad set-up wants to establish its credentials in the regional and global fora. So the clashes with the Alawite/pro-Assad forces come as a shocker.

The Alawite sources say that the government had been targeting the people in general of the Alawite community. So, the government has to tread the fine balance that the fight is not against the Alawites as such but against disruptive forces which are trying to attack the government.

Whatever the compulsions of the government as well as the Alawites, the Syrian people, including the Alawites, are looking for peace and stability. They do not want another round of futile violence. Both sides then have to reach out to each other, and come to an agreement. The Al-Sharaa government has not indulged in anti-Assad regime revenge moves. The complaint seems to be that the government had not talked to the Alawite leadership as it had with other minority groups like the Christians.

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## The future of KP and China’s relationship

Syed Ali Nawaz Gillani

**T**he recent meeting of the Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur about the scope of business opportunities in the province and toured KP’s Special Economic Zone (SEZ). During their talks, both leaders focused on ways to enhance business cooperation between the two sides, and they came to conclusion that KP and China could work together in many critical fields including agriculture, energy and mining. Worth mentioning that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has shifted the landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) through several flagship initiatives such as Peshawar-Dera Ismail Khan Motorway and Hazara Motorway (M-15), which enhance road and economic development integration. Urban infrastructure is advanced while agriculture is supported by the Chashma Right Bank Canal (Lift Irrigation) project. Renewable energy projects provide sustainable energy, and the Dera Ismail Khan to Zhob Road further promotes trade. There are additional projects in railways that will help further develop trade and movement of passengers. The sister-city relations with Urumqi and Kashgar reinforce cultural and economic interaction, making KP strategically important to the CPEC integration.

Chief Minister Gandapur made an appealing presentation to the Chinese delegation by recommending that industrial units be established in KP’s solar energy systems and minerals mining industries. “We have many opportunities available here and it would be fantastic if you could invest in our province,” he declared. He also called on the ambassador to consider setting up other factories particularly taking advantage of the investment opportunities that are abundant in the area of mining and energy. It is also important to note that KP is one of the most culturally rich and historically significant regions of the country.

The ambassador underscored that there are incentives to aid friendly environment companies, including cheap electricity, to encourage overall prosperity. “We are focusing on clean and green energy,” Gandapur said. “We want to help the environment and at the same time provide businesses with affordable electricity. Besides talking about big industrial projects, Gandapur also shared some of the KP government’s efforts to bring solar power to homes. He said that 130,000 families in the province are getting free solar systems. In some instances, these families are receiving these solar systems at subsidized costs or through simpler payment procedures. This is part of the effort to ensure that citizens save on their electricity expenses while taking advantage of clean energy sources.

The Chief Minister also talked about the government’s plans on solar projects. He said that, there will soon be more homes and businesses that are able to utilize solar energy and this will help not only the economy but also the environment by reducing the cost of electricity for all.

KP has mineral resources including gold, copper and marble. Gandapur told the Ambassador that the KP government is putting these resources to good use. He explained that the government made decision to incorporate a new mining company. The objective is to ensure that the people of KP enjoy these resources.

Gandapur ignored the worries and said, “We are trying our best to optimally utilize the available resources within the region.” “Our aim is to make sure that the citizens enjoy the optimum value from these resources,” he further noted. This holds great significance for KP concerning its status, proper mining has the potential to yield immeasurable wealth for the province, and with such approaches, these regions can greatly improve the living standards of a large segment of the top snowbound regions in KP.

Another thing that Gandapur said during his talk with the Chinese Ambassador focused on the

people’s health and wellbeing in KP. The chief minister was elated to tell the Ambassador about the Sehat Card Programme that grants medical treatment to all families in the province regardless of financial class. Every resident of KP has the Sehat Card that offers free medical services. “We are looking after the health of our people,” Gandapur said. “In case, someone is unwell, they should not have to pay out-of-pocket towards treatment.”

The KP government is concurrently working on launching a life cover plan for its citizen in addition to the above-mentioned healthcare scheme. This will safeguard individuals by offering insurance cover in the instances of accidents and other emergencies. Gandapur also shared some exciting news for the youth of KP. The government has started offering loans without interest to the youth who are looking to establish their businesses. This effort will provide Rs 15 billion in loans to youth allowing them to create self-employment opportunities and carve out a prosperous future.

To promote tourism, the KP government is also providing loans to people willing to set up home-based businesses like guest houses for tourists. They will receive Rs 4 billion in loans without interest to support their business endeavors. “Through these steps, we will enable youth to become business owners,” said Gandapur. “We want them to be successful and employ other people.”

Ambassador Jiang Zaidong paid close attention to the plans that Gandapur presented during the meeting. He commended the KP administration for its actions to lift the welfare of the people and expand the economy of the region.

He further noted that China is ready to cooperate with KP in many other areas including investments, energy, and even mining. “We are ready to work together,” said Ambassador Jiang. “It is in China’s delight to support KP’s growth and deepen

friendship.” He also said that he would like to see the thawing of relation between China and Pakistan in the future and how it may truly strengthen both nations.

This meeting marks the beginning of the relation between China and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All the stakeholders are enthused for further economic growth and development. The KP government is eager to turn the province into a business hub with ample opportunities and resources for investment. Together with him, The Chief Minister KP and the head of the Chinese Embassy are confident that they will be able to change Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the better. New industries will be established in the province along with providing cheaper energy and better services to the people.

The relationship between KP and China, while in its infancy, holds strong promise and optimism amongst both leaders. This partnership has the potential to significantly benefit both nations. The cooperation to improve industrial development, as well as diversify energy, mining, and agriculture, will definitely lead to new opportunities and prospects of economic development. However, most important in delivering optimal results in this partnership is the focus on peace and security foremost. The development of industries, job opportunities, and improved livelihoods in KP require stability and peace. In the absence of peace, no splendidous investment, projects, or initiatives can bring about any sustained success. The government of the province has to place the restoration of peace and order at the top of the agenda of its priorities. Only in a safe and secure environment can local businesses, as well as international investors flourish. KP, in its turn, has indicated its unconditional willingness to assist, but the provincial government has to take measures to guarantee safety and stability for all stakeholders. A peaceful environment will lead to more investments, sustainable development, and confidence from local and foreign partners.

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## Worrying echoes of the past in the Balkans

Luke Coffey

**R**ussia and Ukraine, Israel and Hamas, trade wars between America’s friends and foes — there has been no shortage of crises around the world. At times, it feels like several months’ worth of geopolitical events have taken place in just the past week alone.

But another potential conflict that is not getting much attention can be found in southeastern Europe in the Balkan country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina emerged from the aftermath of the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, followed by a very bloody inter-religious and inter-ethnic sectarian war. The Bosnian Muslim community was targeted mainly by the ethnic Serbian community. In 1995, a historic peace deal was signed in Dayton, Ohio, known now as the Dayton Peace Agreement.

This resulted in Bosnia and Herzegovina being formed by two sub-state entities. One was the ethnically Bosnian and Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the other was the ethnically Serb Republika Srpska. The current leader of the latter, Milorad Dodik, has long been an advocate for independence from the rest of Bosnia. He does this with rhetoric but also with actions. In recent years, he has taken steps to undermine the legitimate state structures and institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and has started the process of creating parallel state institutions inside Republika Srpska.

Dodik has long pursued independence for Republika Srpska and has actively worked to weaken the state institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The situation took a dramatic turn in January this year, when Dodik was sentenced to one year in prison and banned from holding public office for six years after refusing to comply with recommendations from the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Christian Schmidt. Even though Dodik was obligated to do so under the terms of the 1995 Dayton Agreement, he refused. If this was not enough to start a political crisis in Bosnia, this week Dodik signed into law legislation from the Republika Srpska parliament that banned Bosnia and Herzegovina’s police force and judiciary from operating inside Republika Srpska. This was viewed by many as an affront not only to Bosnia’s sovereignty but also to the Dayton Agreement, which has been the key factor in keeping the country at peace and together. Along the way, he is encouraged by his neighbor, Serbia, and also, by extension, Russia.

The situation in Bosnia is made worse by developments in neighboring Serbia. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, who has a close and supportive relationship with Dodik, is experiencing his own political difficulties. Since November 2024, when a roof at a train station collapsed, killing 15 people, he has faced mounting anti-government street protests. These demonstrations have expanded into a broader movement against corruption, culminating in dramatic scenes this week, when opposition MPs set off

smoke bombs and flares inside the Serbian parliament. Three lawmakers were injured in the chaos. Vucic is trying to find a way to solve his own domestic political challenges, and encouraging a crisis in Republika Srpska to divert attention might be seen as a solution to his problems.

There are numerous examples throughout history where geopolitical circumstances that seem to be regional or even local can have a global impact. The Balkans before the First World War is a great example. There is reason to worry that the region could serve as another flashpoint for a greater conflict, especially as relations between major global powers appear to be strained. As Russia continues to ramp up the pressure over Ukraine and apply more pressure on Europeans, it could well use its influence in Serbia and Republika Srpska to cause a diversion that Europe will have to address. If ever there was a “European problem,” then what is happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina is certainly one. It is highly unlikely that US President Donald Trump will repeat America’s response to a crisis in the region in the 1990s, when thousands of US troops were deployed as peacekeepers inside Bosnia to stop the killing, or when the US Air Force was used in 1999 to prevent genocide by Serbia against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

The Trump White House is focused on dealing with Russia, Ukraine, China, and Iran, along with the situation at America’s southern border. There will likely be little bandwidth to address the situation in southeast Europe. This week, Russia called for a closed-door UN Security Council meeting to discuss the political situation in Bosnia. It will be interesting to see how the US sides in this meeting. Will there be a repeat of the US siding with Russia at the recent UN General Assembly vote over Ukraine, or will the US stick to its more traditional position of supporting the Dayton Peace Agreement and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina? Russia may even try to use this issue as a bargaining chip in the bigger issue of peace negotiations over Ukraine.

With Europe focused on what it will do about Ukraine in the event that there is a ceasefire, there is likely to be a little capacity for any meaningful European response if war breaks out in the Balkans. While events in the Balkans may not be on the minds of Europeans, events in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region are certainly on the minds of the local leaders. Therefore, it would be incumbent on American and European policymakers not to ignore the region and to stay committed to the hard-fought peace won in the 1990s.

Even with everything going on around the world, from Eastern Europe to the Middle East to East Asia, policymakers must keep a close eye on the Balkans. The international community must remain vigilant and committed to preventing the kind of instability that led to war in the 1990s. As history has shown, tensions in the Balkans have the potential to ignite wider conflicts if left unchecked.

## UN Secretary-General’s timely visit to Rohingya camps

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

**I**n an announcement that underscores the gravity of the Rohingya crisis, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last week confirmed that he will visit the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, later this month. His visit comes at a pivotal moment, as funding cuts from the US Agency for International Development threaten to exacerbate an already dire humanitarian situation. Moreover, as Myanmar undergoes profound shifts in its internal power dynamics, Guterres’ visit is an opportunity to reinforce the necessity of including the Rohingya in any future political settlement.

The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are among the most vulnerable populations in the world. Since 2017, more than 1 million Rohingya have fled systematic persecution in Myanmar, seeking refuge in the sprawling and overcrowded camps of Cox’s Bazar. These camps are almost entirely dependent on international aid to meet

basic needs such as food, healthcare and education.

However, with USAID and other Western donors reducing their contributions, the Rohingya are facing an acute funding shortfall. The US government in January implemented a 90-day freeze on foreign aid, including humanitarian assistance to crisis regions. This has had an immediate and severe impact on the Rohingya, forcing aid agencies to scale back vital services. Food rations have already been reduced and, without urgent intervention, malnutrition rates will soar. Healthcare services, already stretched thin, may soon become inaccessible to thousands.

Bangladesh, which has commendably shouldered the burden of hosting the Rohingya, is in no position to compensate for these funding gaps. The country is grappling with its own economic challenges and its government has repeatedly stressed that it cannot indefinitely sustain the cost of sheltering the Rohingya

refugees without robust international support. This is why Guterres’ visit from March 13-16 is so critical: He must rally global attention to the funding crisis and push donor nations to step up their commitments.

At the same time, the situation inside Myanmar is evolving in ways that could have significant implications for the Rohingya. The Arakan Army, an insurgent group that has long fought for autonomy in Rakhine State, has made significant territorial gains. Today, it controls large parts of Rakhine, challenging the authority of Myanmar’s ruling junta. This shift presents both risks and opportunities for the Rohingya.

The risk is that a new power structure in Rakhine could continue to exclude and marginalize the Rohingya, maintaining the status quo of discrimination and statelessness. The opportunity, however, lies in the possibility of signaling to the Arakan Army and

other emerging power brokers that the Rohingya must have a place in any postmilitary political settlement. The UN has a crucial role to play in advocating for their inclusion and ensuring that their rights are enshrined in Myanmar’s future governance structures.

Guterres’ visit should not merely be an assessment mission; it must be an advocacy effort. He must use his platform to make it clear that the UN will not lend legitimacy to any new political arrangement in Myanmar that does not include the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities. The international community must send a strong message: Any government that seeks international recognition must commit to protecting the rights of all its people, including the Rohingya.

For too long, the Rohingya have been treated as an inconvenient problem — exploited, displaced and

ignored when politically expedient. Guterres has the chance to change that narrative. His visit must serve as a rallying call for world leaders to address both the immediate humanitarian crisis and the long-term political solution necessary to prevent further cycles of violence and displacement.

This visit follows a meeting in New York last month between Guterres and the special envoy of the Bangladeshi prime minister for the Rohingya issue. This diplomatic engagement signals that Bangladesh is actively seeking greater UN involvement and advocacy on this issue. The Bangladeshi government has consistently called for a durable solution — one that involves repatriation but ensures safety, citizenship rights and dignity for the Rohingya.

Guterres must leverage this momentum to push for concrete action. He must work to ensure that donor nations reinstate and increase their humanitarian contributions. He must also

engage with regional powers — particularly China and India, both of which wield significant influence over Myanmar — to push for a more inclusive political solution.

The secretary-general’s visit to Bangladesh and the Rohingya camps comes at a critical time. Without urgent international intervention, the humanitarian situation in Cox’s Bazar will deteriorate further, pushing one of the world’s most vulnerable populations into even deeper suffering. At the same time, Myanmar’s shifting political landscape presents an opportunity to advocate for a new governance structure that includes the Rohingya and other marginalized groups.

Guterres must ensure that the world does not turn its back on the Rohingya. His visit must be more than symbolic — it must be a catalyst for action, securing both immediate aid and a long-term commitment to justice and inclusion for the Rohingya people.



# West Bank must not become another Gaza

For a brief moment when the Palestinian-Israeli documentary “No Other Land” was announced as this year’s best documentary at the Oscars ceremony, the spotlight again shone on the daily hardships of Palestinians in the West Bank, which otherwise are generally neglected. For most of the past 18 months, for obvious reasons, the attention had been on the war in Gaza, at least as far as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned, and there have been many other headline-grabbing issues on a packed international agenda.

Nevertheless, if there is one thing decision-makers with an interest in this conflict should have learned from events in Gaza, it is that ignoring and neglecting this conflict comes at a price — a very heavy one. Throughout the current extreme hostilities on both sides of the Israel-Gaza border, as well as the Israel-Lebanon border, the security situation has also been deteriorating in the occupied West Bank, especially in its northern parts, and thousands of Palestinians have already been forced out of their homes, raising the fear not only of escalation, but also of Israeli annexation.

Israel’s playbook regarding the West Bank appears to be similar to the manner in which it is currently conducting its war in Gaza. It is not necessarily in the magnitude and intensity of the military operations, but in the disproportionate use of force in combating militants there while being insensitive to the lives and human rights of civilians. More recently, Israel has been increasingly keen to uproot the Palestinians from their houses without setting a time frame for their return.

To make things worse, if in Gaza the far right is still only fantasising about building Israeli settlements and resettling there, Israeli settlers are already scattered all across the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, and have an unquenched appetite for more land and new settlements. The more extreme among them are constantly provoking friction with the local population, either through violence or through their representatives in government and the Knesset who have been advancing policies and legislation that are further entrenching the occupation and leaving little hope for Palestinians to believe that one day they will be free and independent on their own land.

There is no denying that Israel is facing increased threats from militant groups in the West Bank, and this can be backdated to long before Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack, and comes mainly from relatively recently formed groups that are not affiliated with any of the more established political organizations. They are mainly composed of a youth that is frustrated by living under an oppressive occupation, that does not trust its own (Palestinian Authority) leadership and consequently has been radicalized and has turned to armed resistance. An Israeli government that was less fanatic, less dogmatic, and capable of more nuanced policies than those of the

Yossi Mekelberg

current leadership, would have done everything in its power to reduce tensions in the West Bank, as it is overstretched on a number of other fronts, with an unfinished war in Gaza, a fragile ceasefire in Lebanon, its efforts to establish a military presence deep inside Syria, and, it has been suggested, the plans it is hatching to attack Iran’s nuclear installations. But not this government.

It did not take long after the ceasefire with Hamas in mid-January came into effect for Israeli security forces to turn their attention

enough to stop them. What is of particular concern is that if in the past Israeli security forces’ operations in these areas were more limited in scope and duration, this no longer seems to be the case, which suggests that beyond counterterrorism there are other Israeli objectives.

Last month, Israeli tanks deployed to the West Bank for the first time since 2003, as the Israeli military announced that it was expanding its operations to include larger parts of the north of the territory. Meanwhile, Defense Minister Israel Katz admitted he had instructed the

**Israel’s playbook regarding the West Bank appears to be similar to the manner in which it is currently conducting its war in Gaza. It is not necessarily in the magnitude and intensity of the military operations, but in the disproportionate use of force in combating militants there while being insensitive to the lives and human rights of civilians.**

to the northern West Bank and focus on the towns of Jenin, Tulkarem, and Tubas, with many of their military operations taking place in the refugee camps there. Mind you, these towns are in Area A, and are supposed to be under full control of the Palestinian Authority and its own security forces — the very forces that have assisted Israel in preventing an enormous number of attacks against Israelis over the years. But this now counts for nothing, because Israel’s government is driven by an irrational ambition to somehow bring about the collapse of the Palestinian Authority and, by extension, its security forces, while still demanding that they keep the lid on militancy, and if such incidents should take place they are to blame for not doing

military to remain for at least the next year in West Bank refugee camps that they have taken over, preventing about 40,000 recently displaced Palestinians from returning to their homes. The displacement of those from three refugee camps — Jenin, Tulkarem, and Nur Shams — is putting extreme pressure on other locations in the West Bank that they flee to. This is happening at a time when the UN agency that provides humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has been recently outlawed and boycotted by the Israeli government and is suffering from an acute shortage of funds. Displacing people who have nothing to do with violence against Israel and Israelis is an illegal, cruel, and unjust action to begin

with, and the mere suggestion that it is only for a year is an insult to our intelligence, as we see their homes being leveled to the ground, the camps’ infrastructure being destroyed, and no one queuing up to rebuild them any time soon. It is more likely that similar operations will take place in other refugee camps.

As such there is not much new in the brutality of the occupation, only that it has gradually become worse the more it has become permanent, while the Israeli military has become subservient to the Israeli settlements and settlers scattered across the West Bank and particularly to the Jewish supremacists who have monopolized the settlement project. In the nexus of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s desperate need for the support of the elected representatives of the settlers in his coalition to stay in power; of his inability due to pressure from Washington to continue the war in Gaza; and his tactic of always keeping the security situation on edge to justify his claims that his appearances in court to give evidence in his corruption trial should become less frequent; and that this is not the time for a state commission to investigate the colossal failure of Oct. 7 — the West Bank is becoming the unfortunate arena of choice for Israel’s use of excessive force against both civilians and insurgents.

If this trend is not stopped, a de facto annexation is just a matter of time, followed by a so-called “legal” Israeli annexation. For the settlers, as for large parts of the current Israeli government, this, along with as few Palestinians as possible living in the West Bank, is their ultimate aim.

# International Women’s Day is for the few, not the many

Maryam Aldossari

bombed? Where was the outcry when Israeli snipers targeted women journalists, like Shireen Abu Akleh? Where were the boycotts when Palestinian girls were pulled from the rubble of their homes, killed by US-made bombs?

Time and time again, we see the same pattern: Feminist outrage is conditional, activism is selective, and solidarity is reserved for those whose struggles do not challenge Western power. Afghan women deserve support. But so do Palestinian women, Sudanese women, Yemeni women. Instead, their suffering is met with silence, suspicion, or outright erasure.

International Women’s Day, once a radical call for equality, has become a hollow spectacle — one where feminist organisations and politicians pick and choose which women deserve justice and which women can be sacrificed at the altar of Western interests.

Feminism has long been wielded by the powerful as a tool to justify empire, war, and occupation — all

**In the UK, in the run-up to this year’s International Women’s Day, an MP and feminist organisations have hosted an event on “Giving a Voice to Silenced Women in Afghanistan”, featuring feminists who had spent months calling for boycotts of the Afghan cricket team. Because, of course, that’s how you take on the Taliban — by making sure they can’t play a game of cricket.**

under the pretence of “saving women”. During the Algerian War of Independence, the French launched a campaign to “liberate” Algerian women from the veil, parading unveiled women in propaganda ceremonies while simultaneously brutalising and raping them in detention centres.

The French, of course, were never concerned about gender equality in Algeria; they readily restricted education and employment for Algerian women. Their actions under the guise of helping women were about domination.

This same narrative of the helpless brown woman in need of white saviours has been used to justify even more recent Western military interventions, from Afghanistan to Iraq. Today, we see the same playbook in Palestine, as well.

The West frames Palestinian women as victims — but not of bombs, displacement, or starvation. No, the real problem, we are told, is Palestinian men. Israeli officials and their Western allies rehash the same Orientalist trope: Palestinian women must be saved from their own culture, from their own people, while their actual suffering under occupation is ignored or dismissed.

The systematic slaughter of women and children is treated as an unfortunate footnote to the conflict, rather than its central atrocity. We see the same pattern again and again — concern for women’s rights only when it serves a political agenda, silence when those rights are crushed under the weight of Western-backed airstrikes and military occupation. This is not solidarity. It is complicity wrapped in feminist rhetoric.

So, who will actually

benefit from International Women’s Day this year? Will it be the women whose oppression fits neatly into Western feminist narratives, allowing politicians, feminist organisations, and mainstream women’s advocacy groups to bask in their self-congratulatory glow? Or will it be the women who have been silenced, erased, and dehumanised — those for whom “accelerate action” has meant 17 months of genocide and 76 years of settler colonial violence?

Is this just another “feel-good” exercise, where you can claim to support women across the world without confronting the fact that your feminism has limits? Because if this is truly about accelerating action, then after 17 months of bombing, starvation, and displacement, we should finally hear you stand for Palestinian women.

But we know how this goes. The speeches will be made, the hashtags will trend, the panel discussions will be held — but the women of Gaza will remain buried under the rubble, their suffering too politically inconvenient to mention.

As for me, I am joining the feminist movement’s march today — but let’s be clear, our agendas are not the same. I will march for every Palestinian woman who not only struggles to be heard but has been so brutally dehumanised that her suffering amid a genocide is being broadcast live to blind eyes and deaf ears.

I — along with countless other women who refuse to stay silent — will think of each mother cradling the lifeless body of her child, each daughter forced to become a caretaker overnight, each sister searching through the rubble with her bare hands. And we — women who believe in real feminist solidarity and reject selective outrage — will not just “hope” that this call to action means something; we will make sure it does.

We will make sure Palestinian voices are heard. We will make sure to boycott those who profit from Palestinian oppression. We will make sure to challenge every platform and every feminist who normalises Palestinian suffering, holding them accountable for their complicity.

To our Palestinian sisters: We feel your pain. We have carried your struggle in our hearts for the last 17 months, and we know your fight did not begin there — it has been 76 years of defiance, of survival, of refusing to disappear.

And know this: Next year, on March 8, we will not just mourn your suffering — we will celebrate your victory. Not your so-called “liberation” from your own men, as Western feminists like to frame it, but your liberation from settler-colonial occupation. We hear you. We see you. And we will not rest until the whole world does, too.

# Cairo plan a good start, but not a final destination

International analysts would be well advised to keep a close eye on what happens in Saudi Arabia over the next few weeks, as it seems some of today’s most pressing global problems might be resolved in the Kingdom.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is due to arrive in the Kingdom on Monday for meetings with the Saudi leadership, hopefully to officially kick-start a series of talks that might put an end to the devastating Russian-Ukrainian war.

This is no coincidence but rather the direct result of years of trust-building and back-channeling, at which Saudi Arabia has excelled. While Riyadh condemned the Russian aggression against Ukraine at the UN, it maintained, and despite criticisms, close and solid diplomatic relations with Moscow, not just to support the OPEC+ agreement, which guarantees oil market stability at a time of grave inflation, but because it knew that at some point the international community was going to need an adult in the room.

Shortly afterward, the Saudi approach resulted in two prisoner swaps, with both the Russians and Ukrainians thanking Riyadh for its successful efforts.

Now, building on the trust and strong relationship it built with President Donald Trump during his first term, Saudi Arabia is yet again the trusted and

impartial facilitator between Russia, Ukraine, and the US.

When it comes to an issue closer to home — Gaza — and given the rejection (albeit expected) by both Israel and the US of the Arab League proposal, the world might have to again turn to the Kingdom for a diplomatic solution.

Just to be clear, the Arab League plan has been endorsed by all the attending leaders, or their representatives, in Cairo. It has also garnered the support of the UN secretary-general and a number of European countries.

However, if the atrocities in the war on Gaza have taught us anything, it is that we should not forget to secure the buy-in of the elephant outside the room: the US. Trump has clearly signaled that he sees no place for Hamas, and says he still believes the Palestinians need to be moved out during reconstruction.

Meanwhile, Israel, being the unreasonable player that it is, has predictably rejected any role for Hamas, as well as any involvement by the Palestinian Authority or the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Now, with those conditions, it is futile trying to convince Israel. Its Prime Minister, or should I say, Occupier-in-Chief Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition of lunatics

Faisal J. Abbas

clearly want the status quo to continue till every last Gazan is either displaced or killed by weapons, malnutrition or illness. At the same time, Israel will continue its intimidation in the West Bank, which could result in the region reaching a boiling point, even during the holy month of Ramadan.

Trump, however, is a different political animal and — as unpopular as this sounds — a lot more straightforward to deal with. For instance, the US administration has already said it was open to ideas after the controversial Middle East Riviera plan was floated. The Americans also clarified that they are not putting boots on the ground, and have also made public that they are having direct talks with Hamas and are willing to talk to the Iranians.

With a bit of logic, Washington can be convinced that Gazans who want to stay in their land while it is being rebuilt can do so, and if provided with a face-saving exit, Hamas could hopefully opt to do what is best for Palestinians, not for themselves (this will also require serious talks with Hamas, perhaps by Qatar and Egypt). Meanwhile, as part of the rehabilitation of the Palestinian Police that Jordan and Egypt has proposed to do, perhaps the Arab League could also

help the Palestinian Authority rebuild its capabilities given that President Mahmoud Abbas has already signaled that an election can happen within a year.

We should also remember a few things. First, whether the Arab street likes him or not, Trump effectively has absolute power for at least the next two years, until the midterm elections. Second, that he can only serve four years in office, as US presidents cannot run for a third term. Third, Trump has kept the door open for further discussions to bring peace and prosperity to the region. This could include possible talks about a two-state solution, a longstanding condition placed by Saudi Arabia for normalization with Israel.

All of this means two things: Netanyahu can no longer claim that he calls the shots in Washington or bypass the president and address Congress directly. It also means that Trump is in a race against time to build a lasting legacy, and Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Arab world are in a good place to help when it comes to Gaza compared with Netanyahu, who most likely will let him down — no matter what Washington offers him.

In that sense, I believe Egypt and the Arab League deserve a round of applause, and that the Cairo proposal should be seen as

a good starting point rather than a final destination. To succeed, it will need further refining, ironing out wrinkles and, most of all, lots of glitter sprinkled over it.

People can ridicule Trump as much as they like, but the bottom line is that he is a businessman and, for him, it is all about the product, the pitch, and the profit.

With help provided by Riyadh when it comes to Russia and Ukraine, the continuing stabilization of oil markets, billions of dollars in trade deals and an ability to help Trump walk out of the White House as the man who achieved what no other president has done — a lasting peace in the Middle East — we do have a lot to offer in terms of the profit.

However, we need to act quickly in terms of the pitch and realize it will not be achieved by wishful thinking, but with political pragmatism, determined diplomacy and skillful salesmanship.

As for the product, if Trump wants to call it the Riviera of the Middle East, then so be it. I believe it is wrong to argue about packaging when it is the substance that matters. If this \$53 billion Arab Riviera is being built by Palestinians for Palestinians and as part of an agreed Palestinian state, then the only thing left to do is to ensure Israel does not destroy it again in a few years.

# A tribute to Um Adnan

Belén Fernández

I first met Um Adnan in 2006 in the south Lebanese village of Chehabiyeh, which lies not far from the border with Israel and regularly suffers accordingly. I was travelling in Lebanon shortly after the end of that summer’s 34-day Israeli assault, which had killed some 1,200 people and littered swaths of the country with unexploded ordnance.

Um Adnan was born in 1939, nine years prior to Israel’s violent self-invention on Palestinian land. She had married a Palestinian refugee from the vicinity of Nazareth, who had fled to Lebanon in 1948 as a child, separated from his family along the way. Her husband was already deceased by the time we met, but her son Hassan told me with a nostalgic chuckle that the

pair’s first encounter had been “like magic”.

Um Adnan bore eight children, two boys and six girls, three of whom died — one in a car accident and one during the Lebanese civil war of 1975-90. The third was accidentally shot by a cousin.

A robust? veiled woman, Um Adnan already had difficulty walking in 2006 when my friend Amelia and I turned up at her house — which unlike many other south Lebanese residences had managed to avoid irreparable damage during the summer’s assault. Amelia and I had been hitchhiking our way through the devastated landscape, and Hassan had been one of countless motorists to pick us up on the side of the road and cart us home to be stuffed with food and put up for the

night.

I returned to Lebanon alone in 2008 after taking the bus from Turkiye to Syria, where Hassan volunteered to retrieve me. I would then spend the better part of two months sleeping on Um Adnan’s living room floor beneath a colourful portrait of her late husband. Hassan slept on a mattress beside me, an arrangement that occasioned not so much as a batting of the eye from Um Adnan.

By this time, Um Adnan had even greater difficulty manoeuvring, and yet she could rarely be made to sit still, dedicating herself to an endless rotation of chores, gardening, and cooking. A vat of green beans was always on hand for me — as well as an array of other treats — and the fact that one had to pass through

the kitchen to reach the only toilet in the house meant that Um Adnan had plenty of opportunities to intercept me and plunk me down at the table for yet another obligatory feeding session.

Um Adnan had a smile for everyone, her stoic grace all the more notable given her life’s trajectory, which included surviving such episodes of mass slaughter as the Israeli invasion of 1982 that killed tens of thousands in Lebanon. The acute losses she had endured over the years — all against a backdrop of persistent torment by the state that had made her husband a refugee — made the mere act of getting up every morning one of fierce resilience.

Whether cooking, clean-

ing, singing or bellowing for one grandchild or another to make haste on an errand, Um Adnan embodied an everyday heroism that is denied in Orientalist discourse, which reduces the Arab/Muslim woman to a weak and oppressed figure. Never mind that, in Lebanon and Palestine, it is quite the opposite of weak to hold families together while contending with the ever-present existential Israeli threat.

During the brutal Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, which lasted from 1978-2000, Hassan had fought with the Lebanese resistance — meaning that Um Adnan never knew at what moment she might lose a fourth child. Now that she

had him at home, she held him close.

Though unfazed by the sleeping arrangement in her living room, Um Adnan welcomed Hassan’s announcement that he and I were getting married — part of a scheme we had devised while under the influence of too much wine. As per our wine-induced vision, Hassan’s marriage to me — a United States citizen — would eventually enable him to procure a US passport and travel to his father’s village in present-day Israel.

With my less-than-tidy ways and general uselessness in the kitchen, I was no doubt not the daughter-in-law Um Adnan had envisioned for herself, but she took it all in noble stride.

We were wed by a sheikh in the village of

Tibnine, and I was inserted as wife number one on Hassan’s identity document for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, a category to which he had been assigned by Lebanon’s law that barred Lebanese women like Um Adnan from passing their citizenship on to their offspring.

Needless to say, the passport scheme did not pan out, but Um Adnan showered us with good wishes upon our return from the sheikh and promised a proper party in the future.

I would later lose contact with Hassan for many years — and feared the worst — until one day in December 2022 he materialised in my WhatsApp messages with a series of emojis and a “Belennnnnnnnnn”. He was alive, but Um Adnan was not, having passed

away during the coronavirus pandemic. His voice cracked as he told me: “She broke my heart.”

Um Adnan’s house has since been converted to rubble along with much of the rest of Chehabiyeh — the handiwork, of course, of the Israeli military, which launched its latest invasion of Lebanon in the autumn of last year. Her family was able to salvage nothing from the ruins, leaving only memories of the place where Um Adnan had loved and lost and emanated strength in the face of adversity, day in and day out.

Today, March 8, is International Women’s Day. And as Israel continues to do its best to make earthly existence hell for countless international women, I’m thinking a lot about Um Adnan.



## جج بیٹکنگ کورٹ -۱ پشاور





In brief

Pakistan team reach Malaysia

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan team has reached Kuching, Malaysia, to participate in the ITF tournament (Davis Cup Juniors- Boys 16 & Under Category), scheduled from March 10 to 15. Pakistan has been placed in Group C alongside Turkmenistan and Iraq. The tournament is divided into seven groups, said a press release. The national squad for the tournament includes Shahzad Khan (Captain), Mikaeel Ali Baig, Abubakar Talha and Hamza Roman. A i s a m - u l - H a q Qureshi, President, Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), has extended his best wishes to the team. He highlighted the significance of the Davis Cup Juniors as an annual ITF event and expressed confidence in the team's abilities. "Our team is strong this time, with exceptionally talented players. We are hopeful of winning the tournament and qualifying for the next stage," he said. Col. (R) Zia-ud-Din Tufail, Secretary General of PTF, also expressed his best wishes, emphasizing that the team has undergone rigorous preparation and is expected to deliver a strong performance in the tournament. The matches will kick off on Monday.

Tim sprints to victory

LE PERRY-EN-YVELINES (AFP): Belgian cyclist Tim Merlier won the first stage of Paris-Nice on Sunday, sprinting to the line to take an early lead in the general classification. The Soudal Quick-Step rider clocked 3hrs 32mins 03secs as he comfortably outpaced his competitors in the final stretch of the flat 156.1km stage around the greater Paris region. Frenchman Arnaud Demare and Italian Alberto Dainese came second and third, respectively. "It's always nice to start a stage race and get a win. I'm very proud to win in Paris-Nice," said Merlier, 32. "It's not up to me to say if I'm the best sprinter in the world. I just try to win as much as possible and to take my opportunities. "We'll see what happens with the weather in the next days... If it's not too cold, like this, it's perfect." Last year's champion Matteo Jorgenson of the United States came 46th, but the Visma rider did manage to claim a time bonus in the finale.

Barcelona match postponed

B A R C E L O N A ( A g e n c i e s ) : Barcelona's La Liga match against Osasuna on Saturday night was postponed following the death of the Catalan club's first-team doctor Carles Minarro Garcia. The game was scheduled to start at 20:00 GMT but was called off about 20 minutes before kick-off. Fans had already arrived at Barcelona's Olympic Stadium as Hansi Flick's side prepared to extend their one-point lead at the top of La Liga against their 11th-placed visitors, before news of the postponement was announced on the big screen. "FC Barcelona is deeply saddened to announce the passing of first-team doctor Carles Minarro Garcia this evening," the club said in a statement. "For this reason, the match between FC Barcelona and CA Osasuna has been postponed to a later date. "The FC Barcelona board of directors and all staff extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time."

Inzamam reacts to Gavaskar's comment on Pakistan team

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former captain Inzamam-ul-Haq has expressed his displeasure over former Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar's comment on the Pakistan cricket team. Gavaskar irked Pakistan cricket fans following his criticism of the Men in Green over their performance in the Champions Trophy 2025. The former India batter asserted that Pakistan will find it hard to beat India B or C team. "I think a B team (from India) certainly (can give Pakistan a run for their money). C team, I am not too sure. But a B team will be very, very hard to beat for

Pakistan in their current form," Sunil Gavaskar said after Pakistan crashed out of the Champions Trophy 2025. His remarks did not sit well with former Pakistan cricket team captain Inzamam-ul-Haq, who urged Sunil Gavaskar to be careful before passing remarks on other teams. "Gavaskar sahab should see stats. He is an elder and senior; we respect him. But when talking about someone's country....your team has played well. You have the right to praise your team. But it's not right to say about another team like this. Please be careful with your words, I am saying this in a slightly harsh

tone," he said. Before Inzamam-ul-Haq, former Pakistan head coach Jason Gillespie also slammed Sunil Gavaskar over his comment. The former Pakistan coach called Gavaskar's comments 'absolute nonsense,' saying that the Pakistan cricket team can beat any side with the right combination. "I don't buy this rhetoric. I saw some comments from Sunil Gavaskar about the Indian B team or Indian C team would beat the Pakistan top team. That's nonsense, absolute nonsense," Jason Gillespie said during a recent interview.

First World Cup win for Truppe in Are



PARIS (AFP): Austrian skier Katharina Truppe won the World Cup slalom in Are, Sweden on Sunday, while Mikaela Shiffrin broke the all-time World Cup podium record by taking third place. The 29-year-old American was leading after the first run, 0.43 seconds ahead of German Lena Duerr, with Austria's Katharina Liensberger a further 0.09sec behind in third. It was Truppe, however, who burst through from sixth position, 0.91sec behind Shiffrin on first run, to post the third best time in the second run and claim her first World Cup victory. "I'm a little bit speechless because I was just so

nervous at the start. But I was much more nervous when I was sitting in the red chair," said the 29-year-old Truppe who has four previous podiums to her name. "It's just wow. When it was fixed that I was on the podium I thought 'oh God, yes'. But my first victory, it's crazy, I have goosebumps on my body. It is unbelievable." Truppe has shown a new confidence of late since producing an outstanding slalom run in Saalbach, which helped Austria take bronze in the team combined at the recent world championships. "It was a tough race. It wasn't easy, especially because the light was not so good, and the

slope, but I was fighting. "I will enjoy it and will soak up all this emotion." Truppe finished 0.05sec ahead of compatriot Liensberger with Shiffrin third, 0.19sec off the pace. It marked the American's 156th podium finish to give her the record outright, one more than the 155 she shared with Sweden's Ingemar Stenmark. Last month Shiffrin, who is battling back from an abdominal puncture suffered during a crash in Killington last November, became the first skier, male or female, to claim 100 World Cup wins. "There are so many discussions about different numbers," said Shiffrin, playing down the latest record. Neither of the two leading contenders for the slalom small globe, Croatian Zrinka Ljutic and Switzerland's Camille Rast, had a day to remember as they finished 10th and 11th respectively. Ljutic leads Rast by 41 points in the discipline standings, while overall leader Federica Brignone and second-placed Lara Gut-Behrami did not compete.

Getafe stun Atletico with Arambarri double

GETAFE (AFP): Atletico Madrid stumbled to a 2-1 defeat by Getafe on Sunday in a significant blow to their La Liga title ambitions. Diego Simeone's side, second, would have gone top with a victory after leaders Barcelona's match was postponed on Saturday, and they were on course for three points after Alexander Sorloth struck from the penalty spot after 75 minutes. However Atletico forward Angel Correa was sent off and Getafe midfielder Mauro Arambarri scored two late goals to snatch victory for the hosts. Later Sunday champions Real Madrid, third, host Rayo Vallecano and if they win will pull level with Barca. Simeone picked a strong side despite the Champions League last 16

second leg clash against Real Madrid on Wednesday on the horizon. However Getafe set out to frustrate the visitors and neither team was able to trouble the other significantly in the first half. The Atletico coach's son Giuliano Simeone probed down the right and was his team's most threatening player. Getafe came closest to opening the scoring when Christantus Uche directed a header straight at Jan Oblak, when well placed to score. Atletico midfielder Rodrigo de Paul suffered a knock in the first half and was taken off at half-time with the Champions League in mind. Simeone brought on Sorloth for Julian Alvarez and it was the Norwegian who opened the scoring, from the penalty spot after

Omar Alderete handled the ball. Sorloth drilled home his 10th league goal of the season, despite starting just nine times in 24 appearances. Atletico seemed comfortable with their lead until striker Correa, another substitute, was sent off for a high tackle on Djene Dakonam in the 87th minute. Moments later Atletico levelled through Arambarri, who collected a flicked-on free kick and rammed home. With 10 minutes of stoppage time added on and the wind in their sails, Getafe went for a winner and found one. Diego Rico's effort from distance was cleverly diverted home by Uruguay international Arambarri, who was just inside and snatched his team the three points.



DUBAI: Shubman Gill and Rohit Sharma struck up a century stand, India vs New Zealand Champions Trophy final.

Djokovic crashes out at Indian Wells as Alcaraz sails through

INDIAN WELLS (AFP/APP): Five-time champion Novak Djokovic tumbled out of the Indian Wells ATP Masters on Saturday, falling in his first match to lucky loser Botić van de Zandschulp as two-time defending champ Carlos Alcaraz advanced. "No excuses for a poor performance," 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic said after 37 unforced errors in a 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 defeat. "It doesn't feel great when you play this way on the court," he added. "But congratulations to my opponent -- just a bad day in the office, I guess, for me." Djokovic is just the latest in van de Zandschulp's string of superstar victims. He stunned Alcaraz at the US Open last year before beating Rafael Nadal in Davis Cup in what proved the Spanish great's last match. "I think I kept my cool during the whole match," said van de Zandschulp. "I know if I go into the match and lose my cool, especially against the big players, it's going to be a really tough day. That's always one thing I'm trying to do well." After 14 unforced errors in the first set, Djokovic cleaned things up in the second, grabbing a quick break on the way to a 3-0 lead. Djokovic pumped his fist after belting a forehand winner to the corner for his first break chance of the match and after consolidating the break nodded his head in satisfaction.

The rallies remained tense affairs and Djokovic's frustration was clear at times, but after he was broken when serving for the set he closed it out on his next service game, muscling a forehand winner to the baseline to level the match. It was only a brief respite. Van de Zandschulp kept the pressure on both from the baseline and at the net and Djokovic's errors began to pile up again. Van de Zandschulp took control with a break for 3-1, reeling off the last five games as Djokovic was unable to stop the bleeding. "The first three games, four games of the third set were quite close," Djokovic said. "Had my chances. Was just some awful mistakes." Djokovic, seeded sixth, joined world number two and top seed Alexander Zverev and fourth seed Casper Ruud in exiting in the second round. - Alcaraz relaxed and ready - With Zverev out and world number one Jannik Sinner serving a three-month drugs ban, world number three Alcaraz is the highest seed left in the men's draw. Alcaraz, trying to join Djokovic and Roger Federer as the only men to win three straight Indian Wells titles, eased into his defence with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over France's Quentin Halys. He admitted he was feeling some nerves to start the match, but they

evaporated amid a strong all-around performance. One early break staked Alcaraz to the first set, and he roared to a 4-0 lead in the second behind a formidable service display. He finished with seven aces and saved the only break point he faced, securing the win in 67 minutes. "I was nervous at the beginning of the match," he told a supportive crowd. "The first match is never easy so I was trying to be focused on my game. "I just tried to be relaxed, as relaxed as I can. Can always be better, but I'm ready for the (next) round and excited." Australian Open champion Madison Keys opened the day's action in the combined ATP Masters and WTA 1000 event, subduing hard-hitting Russian Anastasia Potapova 6-3, 6-0 in her first match since her maiden Grand Slam triumph. She showed no sign of rust as she dispatched Potapova in 63 minutes. Later world number one Aryna Sabalenka launched her bid for an elusive Indian Wells title against hard-hitting American McCartney Kessler. In other early matches, Americans Taylor Fritz and Coco Gauff both advanced. Fritz, the 2022 men's champion, defeated Italian qualifier Matteo Gigante 7-5, 6-3 while Gauff -- like Fritz seeded third in her draw -- clawed out a 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4) victory over Japan's Moyuka Uchijima.

FG and HN secure thrilling wins in 62nd National Open Polo C'ship

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): FG Polo and HN Polo registered hard-fought victories in the Bank Alfalah 62nd National Open Polo Championship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2025, thrilling polo enthusiasts at the Lahore Polo Club on Sunday. In the first clash of the day, FG Polo outpaced BN/Newage Cables with a commanding 10-7 victory. Raul Laplacette led the charge for the winning side, delivering a stellar five-goal performance. Raja Jalal Arslan and Nicholas Ruiz Guinazu netted two goals each, while Mian Abbas Mukhtar added one to the tally. Despite the defeat, Santiago Cernadas put on a remarkable show for BN/Newage Cables, scoring six sensational goals, while Hamza Mawaz Khan contributed one. The match remained fiercely competitive until the third chukker, with both teams displaying remarkable skills and determination. As the chukker con-



cluded, the scoreboard reflected a gripping 4-4 deadlock, setting the stage for an intense finish. However, FG Polo shifted gears in the fourth chukker, launching a stunning offensive onslaught. With five spectacular goals, they seized control of the game, while BN/Newage Cables managed just one, giving FG Polo a commanding 9-5 advantage. BN/Newage attempted a late resurgence in the fifth chukker, narrowing the gap with two well-crafted goals. Yet, FG Polo held firm, adding one more to their tally and sealing a

well-earned 10-7 triumph. HN Polo edge out Olympia/AZB in a thrilling contest The second encounter of the day was an intense battle, with HN Polo defeating Olympia/AZB 9-8 in a nail-biting finish. Hamza Mawaz Khan emerged as the match-winner for HN Polo, smashing four spectacular goals. Pelayo Berazadi and Haider Naseem contributed two goals apiece, while Ramiro Zavaleta added one to seal the victory. On the opposing side, Luis Manuel Aguirre led Olympia/AZB's fightback with five impressive goals,

while Ahmed Zubair Butt and Novillo Astrada chipped in with two and one goal, respectively. HN Polo got off to a flying start, scoring two back-to-back goals, while Olympia/AZB responded with one, closing the first chukker at 2-1. The second chukker saw a neck-and-neck battle, with both sides matching each other goal for goal. HN Polo, however, maintained their slight edge at 4-3. In the third chukker, HN Polo stepped up their game, netting two more goals, while Olympia/AZB managed one, extending HN's lead to 6-4. The fourth chukker mirrored the second, with both teams once again adding two goals each to their tally, keeping HN Polo ahead at 8-6. Olympia/AZB staged a resilient comeback in the fifth and final chukker, striking two impressive goals against HN's one. However, HN Polo held their nerve, securing a narrow yet well-fought 9-8 victory in this high-intensity encounter.

Tatum dominates as Celtics hold off Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AFP): Jayson Tatum scored 40 points as the Boston Celtics halted the Los Angeles Lakers' eight-game unbeaten streak with a statement 111-101 victory in their heavy-weight NBA showdown at TD Garden on Saturday. The latest instalment of the most iconic rivalry in basketball was billed as a potential NBA finals preview, pitting the defending champion Celtics against a resurgent Lakers line-up led by LeBron James and Luka Doncic. But after a closely-

fought first half where both sides went toe-to-toe before Boston edged into a four-point lead at the break, the game pivoted when the Celtics locked down the Lakers offense in a lop-sided third quarter. A disappointing loss for the Lakers

was compounded by an injury to James, who left the game in the fourth quarter and did not return with what was described as a groin problem. Tatum, who finished with 40 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists, said the return of Jrue Holiday had been pivotal for the Celtics. "We missed Jrue," Tatum told ESPN. "It was his first game back in a while, and we're a totally different team when Jrue's out there. "There's so many things he does at both ends that may not always show up on the stat sheet. But much better when he's out there." Tatum's fourth 40-point game of the season was backed by 31 points from Jaylen Brown, while veteran Al Horford finished with 14 points and Derrick White 10. The Lakers challenge meanwhile was led

by Doncic, the Slovenian star who finished with 34 points including five three-pointers. James added 22 points before his departure in the fourth quarter. After leading by four at half-time, the Celtics rapidly surged into a double-digit advantage, staunching the flow of Lakers' points with suffocating defense that forced a string of turnovers from the visitors. Warriors hold off Pistons At the other end, Tatum kept the Celtics score ticking over with 10 points in the third quarter as Boston pulled clear, outscoring the Lakers 29-13 to lead 87-67 heading into the final quarter. Doncic found his range and threatened to spark a remarkable comeback as the Lakers got to within four points at 99-95, but Boston responded with back-to-back three-pointers that

restored the Celtics 10-point cushion to effectively ice the game. Boston improved to 46-18 to remain second in the Eastern Conference, 7.5 games behind leaders Cleveland. The Lakers meanwhile dropped down to third place in the Western Conference with a 41-22 record. Elsewhere on Saturday, the Golden State Warriors extended their unbeaten streak to four games with a pulsating 115-110 victory over the Detroit Pistons in a game that was briefly interrupted by a fire alarm at the Chase Center. Stephen Curry scored 31 points while new recruit Jimmy Butler added 26 with nine rebounds and five assists. But it was the veteran Draymond Green who helped shepherd the Warriors to victory, draining a crucial 26-foot three-

pointer with 35 seconds remaining that put Golden State into a 110-108 lead. Curry then slammed the door with four straight free throws in the closing seconds as the Warriors improved to 36-28 in the Western Conference table. Detroit meanwhile dropped to 35-29 in the Eastern Conference standings. In other games, Paolo Banchero scored 29 points as the Orlando Magic took down the in-form Milwaukee Bucks 111-109 on the road, Giannis Antetokounmpo scoring 37 points in vain for the hosts. In Atlanta, Trae Young's 36 points helped the Hawks edge the Indiana Pacers 120-118. In Houston, Dillon Brooks scored 27 points with Alperen Sengun adding 20 as the Rockets pulverised the New Orleans Pelicans 146-117.







## In brief

### Road safety workshop held

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) organized a one-day road safety workshop at its driving school on Sunday. A public relations officer told APP that citizens attended the workshop, where experts delivered detailed lectures on road safety, traffic laws, and accident prevention. Participants were also briefed on safe driving principles for both professional and general circumstances. Following the session, practical driving tests were conducted to assess their driving skills, adherence to traffic regulations, and ability to handle emergency situations. SP Traffic stated that the objective of such training and awareness programs is to instill safe driving habits, ensuring the safety of both drivers and other road users. He further emphasized that the ITP will continue to conduct similar awareness initiatives to promote road safety and reduce traffic accidents.

### Fake currency near M1 seized

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant crackdown on illegal activities, the National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) intercepted a vehicle near the Colonel Sher Khan Interchange on M1 Motorway Sunday, recovering counterfeit currency worth Rs. 741,000. Four suspects were arrested and handed over to local authorities after patrolling officers noticed the vehicle being driven recklessly, said the spokesperson of the motorway police. Patrolling officers noticed a jeep being driven recklessly and signaled it to stop. The vehicle was brought to a halt safely, and upon searching it, officers found counterfeit notes. The suspects were traveling from Peshawar to Lahore. The arrested individuals were handed over to Misri Banda Police Station (Nowshera), where further legal action was underway. NH&MP has urged the public to report any suspicious activities to help curb illegal activities on national highways.

### 18 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 18 outlaws involved in different criminal activities and recovered drugs and weapons from their possessions on Sunday. A public relation officer told APP that the Islamabad Police Secretariat, Kohsar, Karachi Company, Golra, Shams Colony, Khanna, Humak, Phulgran, Bhara Kahu and Bani Gala police teams took legal action against accused involved in different criminal activities. He said police teams arrested 15 accused and recovered 3,055 grams hashish, 2,365 grams heroin, 300 grams ice and six pistols along with ammunition from their possessions. Moreover, three 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 is 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 top priority.

### Police arrest nine outlaws in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Rawalpindi Police on Sunday continued crackdowns against criminals across the district and arrested nine accused including two drug peddlers, four liquor suppliers and three illegal arms owners. According to the police spokesman, the Pirwadhai Police held the accused Zil Shah recovering 2.4 kilograms charas from his possession, while the Taxila Police nabbed the accused Imtiaz with 540 grams of the contraband item.



ISLAMABAD: People are waiting for the Maghrib Azaan to break their fast near Islamabad Expressway during the holy fasting month of Ramadan. —APP Photo

## Punjab to get world-class 'Cardiac hospital'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Board of Directors at PIC & a prominent cardiologist Dr. Farqad Alamgir Sunday stated that Punjab is rapidly upgrading its cardiac hospitals and expanding their capacity with state-of-the-art technology, in accordance with the Chief Minister's strict instructions.

In an exclusive conversation with PTV news channel, he said Punjab is implementing emergency measures to modernize cardiac hospitals and increase their capacity, adding, the upgrade is part of the Chief Minister's efforts to improve healthcare facilities in Punjab. Cardiologist also emphasized the importance of modernizing cardiac hospitals to meet the growing demand for quality cardiac care.

He further elaborated that two new cardiac hospitals are being inaugurated soon in Sargodha and another one at Jinnah Hospital. In Sargodha, the

Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cardiology is currently under construction on Khushab Road, he added.

Dr. Farqad Alamgir added that UK-based technology machines are being installed in these hospitals, with the Chief Minister personally monitoring the progress to ensure the provision of quality cardiac care to the people of Punjab. Alamgir stated that the number of cardiac patients is increasing annually and the Chief Minister is taking emergency measures to fulfill the growing demand for quality cardiac care in Punjab.

Responding to a query, Dr. Farqad Alamgir also advised the public to adopt a healthier lifestyle, incorporating regular exercise, controlling diabetes and obesity, and making other positive changes to reduce the risk of cardiac diseases.

Dr also stressed the importance of creating awareness among the public about the risks and pre-

vention of cardiac diseases.

He emphasized that adopting a healthy lifestyle, avoiding smoking, and controlling blood pressure and cholesterol levels can significantly reduce the risk of heart diseases. He also highlighted the need for regular check-ups and screenings to detect cardiac issues early on. Dr. Alamgir encouraged people to take responsibility for their heart health and seek medical attention immediately if they experience any symptoms.

Furthermore, Dr. Alamgir emphasized the importance of managing stress, getting adequate sleep, and maintaining a balanced diet to prevent cardiac diseases. He also advised people to limit their intake of processed foods, sugary drinks, and saturated fats. By promoting awareness and prevention, Dr. Farqad Alamgir aims to reduce the burden of cardiac diseases in Punjab and improve the overall health and well-being of its citizens.

### 450 cops ensuring security at Churches

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 450 police officials were providing security at the Churches to ensure the protection of worshippers on Sunday.

According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, effective security arrangements had been made to ensure the safety of the Christian community and special teams of the respective police stations, Elite Force and Dolphin Force were also performing patrol duties in the surrounding areas of the churches.

Senior officers remained alert to monitor that the strict security arrangements for the churches were in place and continuously check the presence of personnel at the place of their duty, the spokesman said.

### IG Islamabad reviews crime control strategy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, presided over a high-level meeting at Safe City on Sunday, focusing on crime prevention and security measures during Ramadan.

An official told APP that all divisional Deputy Inspectors General (DIGs), Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs), and Zonal Superintendents of Police (SPs) attended the meeting.

IG Rizvi received a briefing on actions taken against criminal elements, while DIG Islamabad, DIG Safe City, and DIG Security provided detailed updates on their respective domains. The performance of each division was thoroughly reviewed, with an emphasis on crime prevention strategies utilizing Safe City cameras.

IGP Rizvi directed the Investigation Wing, Anti-Vehicle Lifting Unit, and Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) to fully utilize all available resources. He stressed the need to enhance security across the federal capital, particularly during Ramadan, ensuring the protection of worship places, commercial centers, and other key locations.

IG Rizvi instructed officials to enhance the efficiency of Safe City cameras using modern technology, strengthen surveillance and monitoring systems, and improve e-challan, traffic management, and the Pukar-15 helpline services.

## Pakistan on path of economic stability: Aleem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has said that the economic development and strength of Pakistan is the true guarantee for our survival as the country is on the path to stability.

He made these remarks in a meeting with Members of the Punjab Assembly, said that the growing importance of Pakistan on the global level is a positive development and in future our country will continue to gain recognition in the international community, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

The minister further said that strengthening the economy brings numerous positive outcomes including relief for the common man a reduction in inflation and other favorable economic indicators all of which are made possible by a stable economy.

In his conversation, Aleem Khan stressed that making the country safe and eliminating terrorism is a top priority.

On the occasion, the minister was called on by Members of the Punjab Assembly including MPA & Vice Chairmen PHA Ghazali Saleem Butt and

Ghazanfar Abbas Cheena. They discussed the current national and political situation as well as developmental matters.

Member of the Punjab Assembly and Ghazali Saleem Butt consulted with the Federal Minister about the ongoing development projects in NA-117 and PP-146.

Aleem Khan emphasized the importance of implementing long-term and sustainable solutions for the problems being faced by citizens. He also highlighted the need for ensuring proper utilization of funds in development projects.

## Minister emphasizes national unity as key to prosperity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Religious Affairs Khail Das Kohistani Sunday urged opposition parties to play their constructive role in the nation's advancement and unity as collective efforts can drive the country towards progress and prosperity.

In an interview with PTV news, he emphasized that the country and nation yearn for political stability, which is essential for achieving progress and underscored the need for a proactive and sensible approach to address the

nation's challenges.

He criticised PTI's chaotic and uncivilized culture of politics, accusing it of misleading the youth and perpetuating a destructive approach to politics.

He emphasized negotiation is the best way forward to resolve issues, stressing the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding in finding peaceful and sustainable solutions.

Minister noted that Quaid PML-N Muhammad Nawaz Sharif maintained a close relationship with Maulana

Fazal-ur-Rehman, underscoring his dedication to democratic principles and opposition to instability.

He said he played a positive role whenever Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman came to Islamabad for a protest and even goes an extra mile for the peaceful conduct of protest, demonstrating his commitment to responsible and respectful civic engagement.

He asserted that he will never support any politics that undermines democratic values, compromises stability, or harms the nation's interests.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of flowers blooming on trees along the green belt at Faisal Avenue, marking the arrival of the spring season in the Federal Capital.

## PDMA urges public to stay vigilant

ISLAMABAD (APP): Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab on Sunday issued a high alert for heavy rainfall across the country from March 9 to 16.

While talking on a private news channel, the PDMA spokesperson cautioned the citizens to stay updated with the weather advisory available on media channels. He emphasized the importance of staying informed and taking necessary precautions in the current heavy rainfall to ensure safety during their travel plans.

Spokesperson also mentioned that PDMA DG Irfan Ali Kathia also had instructed commissioners and deputy commissioners across Punjab to be on high alert due to the anticipated heavy rainfall.

To ensure readiness for any potential emergencies, alerts have been issued to key departments, including WASA, Rescue 1122, Irrigation Department, Managing water resources, Livestock Department and for ensuring animal safety and well-being.

He said these measures aim to minimize risks and facilitate prompt responses to any situations that may arise. The department predicted that a system of westerly winds will enter the northern regions of the country tomorrow, with the system persisting until March 16, he added.

Chitral, Murree, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir are expected to experience rain from March 9 through March 16, he further mentioned. On Monday, rain is expected to lash the federal

capital, Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal, Peshawar, Charsadda and Mardan, with most cities of Punjab likely receiving rain from March 12 to 16, he said.

The national weather body has also predicted thunderstorms with rain in some parts of Balochistan on March 14 and 15. Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta may record some urban flooding due to the rains.

Meanwhile, upper regions of the country are anticipated to experience heavy snowfall, which could result in road blockages. He also advised fishermen, tourists and travellers to remain cautious and farmers have been advised to take necessary measures to protect crops from damage.

## 102 shopkeepers arrested in ICT price crackdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration have arrested 102 vendors for overcharging essential goods during Ramadan, according to a district report released on the seventh day of the holy month.

Officials conducted 397 price inspections, filed 8 legal cases, and imposed fines totaling Rs 87,000 to enforce government-set rates.

The Islamabad district administration has intensified efforts to control prices during Ramadan, targeting shops violating official price lists.

In this regard, price control magistrates carried out 397 inspections across markets, leading to 102 arrests and registered 8 cases against the accused. Meanwhile, fines worth

Rs 87,000 were issued to businesses for overcharging edibles like flour, cooking oil, and pulses.

A district helpline received multiple complaints about inflated prices, prompting immediate raids and penalties.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon said that 6 dedicated Ramadan bazaars and 20 subsidized "fair price shops" are operational to ensure affordable access to essentials. Special stalls selling sugar, ghee, and eggs at reduced rates have also been set up.

Shoppers can buy sugar and ghee at Rs 30 less per kilogram from these stalls compared to market rates, Memon added. At fair price

shops, 15 types of vegetables and fruits are being sold with government subsidies to further ease costs for families.

The deputy commissioner urged citizens to report violations via the helpline, emphasizing strict monitoring of markets. "No exploitation of consumers will be tolerated," he said, highlighting daily inspections by magistrates and administrative teams.

The ICT administration warned that legal action will continue against businesses ignoring price regulations, with daily reports to track compliance.

Citizens have welcomed the steps but demand stricter penalties for repeat offenders.



ISLAMABAD: A girl keenly watching colorful fish displayed by vendor on his motorcycle at G-7 sector in Federal Capital. —APP Photo



2 killed, 2 wounded in Ghor

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Two individuals have been killed and two others wounded in a traffic accident in Ghor, an official said on Sunday. Police spokesman Maulvi Abdul Rahman Badri said the accident took place in the Pozalich area of Ferozkoh city at 9:00 p.m. on Saturday night. He added that two individuals lost their lives and as many others were wounded after two motorbikes collided. Badri attributed the accident to reckless driving and bumpy roads.

2 Afghans freed from Iraq

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) says two Afghan nationals have been released from a prison in Iraq's Basra city and have returned to the country. In a statement, MoRR wrote the individuals had been arrested by Iraqi border police in Basra whilst attempting to illegally enter Iraq from Iran. The arrested individuals were imprisoned for three months in Basra prison and then returned to Afghanistan after their release, the statement added.

Farmers struggle as wild boars devastate saffron fields in Herat

HERAT (TOLOnews): Farmers in Zindajan district of Herat province reported that wild boars have destroyed hundreds of acres of their saffron fields. According to the farmers, these animals invade the farms at night, causing significant financial losses. Shah Wali, a farmer who owns 20 acres of saffron land in Zindajan, said that a large portion of his crops has been trampled by wild boars, uprooting saffron bulbs from the soil. He explained: "For several nights, boars have been attacking the fields. To prevent these attacks, we have hired two night guards. Two nights ago, a boar came and ate the saffron bulbs. We fired shots, and it ran away. But last night, four to five boars invaded the fields." Farmers estimate that wild boars have so far destroyed nearly 1,000 acres of farmland, including saffron fields and other crops. Mir Ahmad, another farmer from Zindajan, said: "Every night these boars enter the fields and destroy about an acre of land. Farmers are forced to hire guards to protect their crops." Abdul Qadir, another farmer in the area, said: "We have invested in saffron farming, but our investment is at risk. Every night, the boars attack and cause damage." Wahid Habibi, another farmer, urged authorities to take action: "When it comes to collecting taxes, officials are present and demand payment. But now that we are facing this disaster, why is no one stepping in to help us?" The Herat Department of Agriculture and Irrigation has announced plans, in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency, to mitigate the damage caused by wild animals. Bashir Ahmad Ahmadi, head of the Agricultural Extension at the department, stated: "In coordination with the Environmental Protection Agency, we have developed programs to protect saffron farms. These animals live in the region's dense forests, and measures must be taken to control them." Herat is Afghanistan's largest saffron-producing province, with the majority of its production coming from Zindajan district. Farmers fear that continued boar attacks could lead to more severe destruction of their fields and a significant decline in saffron production.

Three-day street book exhibition held in Herat



HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): A three-day street book exhibition dedicated to the Ramadan month has been launched in western Herat province to promote book reading culture in society. Ghulam Farouq Mahmoodi, organizer of the exhibition, said he was trying to hold such exhibition every month in high-traffic areas of city in order to promote the culture of reading and increase people's access to books. According to him, more than 3,000 volumes of special Ramadan books, including religious, historical, literary, and social science topics, have been displayed for sale at special discounts to encourage citizens to read during the holy Ramadan month. Residents and culturists consider holding such exhibitions a positive step towards promoting the culture of reading and institutionalizing the culture of reading. On the other hand, Maulana Hamidullah Ghiasi, Head of Culture and Arts at Information and Culture Department, welcomed the exhibition launched by young people. He voiced support for holding of book exhibitions in the city and expressed hope that the street book exhibition would help grow book reading the culture on a continuous basis. On February 27, a seven-day book exhibition was held in Deh-Afghan area of Kabul.

Freedom of Speech House urges support for female journalists

KABUL (Khaama Press): On International Women's Day, the Freedom of Speech House called for support for female journalists in exile and those remaining in Afghanistan. In a statement issued, the organization expressed its commitment to supporting female journalists who have faced significant challenges under the Taliban's rule. The Freedom of Speech House further added that since the Taliban's return to power, 86% of female journalists have either lost their jobs or had their media activities severely restricted. The organization urged the global community to take concrete actions to support these women and amplify their voices in the face of mounting adversity. Female journalists in Afghanistan have been subjected to severe restrictions following the Taliban's resurgence, including job terminations, mandatory face coverings, and bans from attending press conferences. These measures have not only silenced their voices but also marginalized their participation in the media landscape. The Taliban have repeatedly claimed that they have provided women with rights in accordance with Islamic Sharia law, according to their interpretation of Islam. The plight of Afghan female journalists highlights the ongoing challenges to freedom of expression and women's rights in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime. It serves as a stark reminder of the importance of global solidarity in protecting the rights of women in oppressive environments. As the international community continues to advocate for Afghan women's rights, it is crucial to increase support for female journalists and ensure that their voices are heard in the face of increasing censorship and repression. Concrete actions from governments and international organizations can make a real difference in preserving the freedom of the press and women's rights in Afghanistan. In over three years of Taliban rule, the group's leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, has issued nearly 90 decrees restricting women's rights and freedoms. These orders have had a profound impact on women's ability to work, express themselves, and fully participate in society.

Four killed, ten wounded in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, two journalists, including a Pajhwok Afghan News journalist, were wounded as a result of clashes at Torkham crossing in eastern Nangarhar province. Also last week, OCHA, Japan, and Denmark allocated over 62 million US dollars in humanitarian aid for Afghanistan. **Casualties:** Last week, four people were killed, and ten others were injured in various incidents across Afghanistan. Afghan officials reported that in Nangarhar's Momand Dara district, clashes between Afghan and neighbor country forces occurred twice. On Monday, the Ministry of Interior spokesperson stated, "In this clash, one Mujahid was martyred, and two others were injured." Additionally, the Nangarhar provincial media office reported that on Wednesday, eight people, including two journalists, were injured in gunfire from neighbor country forces. Reports also indicate that unidentified gunmen shot and killed a 15-year-old boy named Salman in Kapisa, while a family dispute in Bamyán led to the death of one person. Furthermore, a leftover hand grenade explosion in Jawzjan resulted in one fatality. During the previous week, 16 people had been killed and six others injured in different incidents nationwide. The week before, two people were killed, and one was injured in various incidents across Afghanistan. **Arrest of Kabul airport** attack perpetrator and IEA's response Last week, US President Donald Trump, in a speech to members of the US House of Representatives and Senate, claimed that the main perpetrator of the 2021 Kabul Airport attack had been arrested. He thanked the Pakistani government for assisting in the arrest but did not provide further details. However, IEA deputy spokesperson Mullah Hamdullah Fitrat stated in an audio message, "This was an incident related to Daesh. At that time, Daesh carried out the attack. The fact that an individual linked to this attack was arrested in neighbor country confirms that Daesh has hideouts and training centers in that country." He added that the arrest proves that Daesh no longer has a presence in Afghanistan. According to reports, on the 4th of Sunbula 1400 (August 26, 2021), a suicide bombing at the Kabul Airport gate killed approximately 170 people, including 13 US soldiers, and injured over 150 others. Daesh later claimed responsibility for the attack. **Extension of UNAMA's mission and IEA's reaction** Reports indicate that the UN Security Council will hold a meeting on Afghanistan on March 17, where discussions may include the possible extension of UNAMA's mission. However, IEA spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated that UNAMA's mission in Afghanistan has not been effective and accused the organization of presenting negative reports about the country. He said, "UNAMA has provided negative reports about Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the inaccurate perceptions about Afghanistan within the United Nations have been shaped based on false and misleading information from them." Mujahid further added, "UNAMA has not focused on Afghanistan's progress, achievements, security, and stability. Instead, it has always tried to highlight negative aspects, exaggerate minor issues, and depict Afghanistan as an insecure and problematic country." He asserted that UNAMA's reports have not benefited either Afghanistan or the United Nations. **Afghan refugees** Last week, Acting Minister of Refugee and Repatriation Maulvi Abdul Kabir separately met Iranian ambassador Alireza Bigdeli and the Pakistani ambassador Ubaid-ur-Rehman Nizamani in Kabul. He urged host countries to implement a systemic mechanism for return of Afghan refugees instead of forced deportations. He described Iran and Pakistan as Afghanistan's Muslim neighbors with many shared values, having hosted millions of Afghan refugees for years. He thanked them for their hospitality and urged them to treat Afghan refugees with patience and compassion. Maulvi Abdul Kabir said, "recently, mistreatment of Afghan refugees in neighbor countries has increased. We urge host countries to adhere to international refugee principles and treat Afghans humanely and according to Islamic values." Meanwhile, last week, 59 Afghans who had been detained in various parts of neighbor country for lacking legal documents were released from prisons and returned to Afghanistan. **Continued humanitarian aid** Last week, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced that \$48.5 million had been allocated for emergency humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. Additionally, Japan pledged \$7 million in aid, while Denmark allocated \$6.9 million for Afghanistan. Meanwhile, UN Secretary General António Guterres warned about the consequences of budget cuts, stating, "In Afghanistan, more than nine million people may lose access to healthcare and protection services as hundreds of mobile health teams and other essential programs could be suspended." Moreover, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that an estimated 22.9 million people, including 12 million children, will require humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan in 2025. Last week, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock also stated in a press conference that Germany would continue providing humanitarian and other forms of assistance to Afghans as much as possible.

Muttaqi left for Oman on official visit



KABUL (Pajhwok): Foreign Affairs Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi on Sunday left for Oman for talks on ramping up bilateral cooperation in different fields. Foreign Affairs Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi was visiting Muscat in response to an invitation from his Omani counterpart Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, said a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a post on X, Zia Ahmad Takal wrote the acting foreign minister would discuss the promotion of political and economic relations and bilateral cooperation with Omani officials. This is Muttaqi's first visit to Oman, where the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan reopened its embassy in September last year.

New Deputy Minister appointed

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Noor Mohammad has been appointed as the new Deputy Minister for Professional and Policy Affairs at the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue, the Prevention of Vice, and Complaint Hearing. The appointment was made by the decree of Amir ul Momineen, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as announced by Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, on his social media platform. Sheikh Noor Mohammad previously served as the head of the Balkh Province office of the Ministry of Vice and Virtue. In his new role, he will focus on overseeing professional standards and policy implementation within the ministry, which is responsible for promoting Islamic values and addressing public complaints. The appointment reflects the Islamic Emirate's ongoing efforts to strengthen governance and administrative structures within the country.

Iran announces plan to resume construction of hospitals in Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): Iran has announced plans to resume the construction of two hospitals in Kabul and Bamyán provinces. This decision follows a meeting between Acting Public Health Minister Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali and Iranian Ambassador to Kabul, Ali Reza Bekdali. During the meeting, which focused on enhancing cooperation in health services, Minister Jalali emphasized the importance of strengthening relations between Kabul and Tehran, particularly in the health sector. He stated, "By increasing the capacity of staff, providing quality medicines and modern medical equipment, we will strengthen the health sector of Afghanistan." Ambassador Bekdali echoed this sentiment, expressing Iran's commitment to supporting Afghanistan's health initiatives. He expressed confidence in the collaboration and assured that the construction of the hospitals would commence soon, aiming to improve healthcare access for the Afghan population.



Residents of Big Pamir stranded in Faizabad due to lack of roads

FAIZABAD, Badakhshan (TOLOnews): A number of residents from Big Pamir who traveled to Faizabad, the capital of Badakhshan province, for medical treatment are struggling with the lack of a proper road and the challenges it brings. They say that due to the absence of a connecting road, they have been stranded in Faizabad for over five months. They urge the interim government to take immediate action to build a road connecting Pamir to the center of Badakhshan. Eidi Mohammad, a resident of Big Pamir in Wakhan district, told TOLOnews: "The road is blocked, and even horses cannot pass. There is a road up to the village of Gazkhan, but from there to Pamir, there is none. Since there is a lot of snow, we are unable to return." Like Eidi Mohammad, nearly ten other families who came to Faizabad are currently staying in the guesthouse of the General Directorate of Intelligence. Beardi, another resident of Big Pamir, shared his experience with TOLOnews in Faizabad: "We travel from Big Pamir to Wakhan on horseback, and since there is no road, it takes eight days to reach there. From Wakhan to Faizabad, we take a private vehicle. Now that we are in Faizabad, we have been stuck here for five months." Abdul Wahid, another resident of Big Pamir, expressed his demand: "Our request to the government is to build a road to Pamir so that our problems are reduced." The governor of Badakhshan, Mohammad Ayoub Khalid, has assured that efforts are underway to construct a road to Big Pamir. He stated: "During our meeting with Amir-ul-Mu'minin, we shared the problems of the Kyrgyz communities in Pamir. Amir-ul-Mu'minin emphasized the need to address their issues. We are committed to building a road from Big Pamir to Wakhan." Big and Small Pamir, located in Wakhan district of Badakhshan province, are among Afghanistan's most remote areas, where residents face numerous challenges, including economic hardships and a lack of medical facilities.

Afghan women entrepreneurs seek support to expand businesses

KABUL (TOLOnews): Abdul Rahman Habib, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, emphasized the crucial role of women in Afghanistan's economic growth. Speaking to TOLOnews, the ministry's spokesperson stated that currently 26,000 women are employed in the public sector, while another 250,000 women are engaged informally in various economic activities across the country. Habib said: "At present, around 26,000 women are working in different public sector offices. Additionally, licenses have been issued to 10,000 women entrepreneurs, and nearly 250,000 women are involved in small businesses, handicrafts, and production on an informal basis." Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, also affirmed: "The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has always supported women entrepreneurs and continues to do so in all aspects of industry and trade." Shirin, one of the women entrepreneurs, established a sewing workshop to support herself financially and create job opportunities for other girls. She told TOLOnews that she started her business with a small amount of money, and now her capital has grown to over 300,000 afghani. Shirin Arwin shared her experience: "I started this class with just 500 afghani. Today, we have more than 300,000 to 400,000 afghani in capital. Initially, we set up this class at home, and later expanded it outside to other locations." Another woman entrepreneur, Sediqa, highlighted the importance of women in economic development: "Women are half of society. Those who engage in business not only support their families but also contribute to the national economy." Several other women entrepreneurs running small businesses have called for more support from the Islamic Emirate. Najiba, a businesswoman, stated: "The more positive impact my work has on my family and friends, the greater the effect on the government and society. This, in turn, helps reduce poverty." Since the Islamic Emirate's return to power, many women and girls have launched small businesses in different sectors to sustain their livelihoods.





# CM KP directs oversight of M&R projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a significant move to ensure transparency, accountability, and quality in the use of development funds, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has directed the formulation of a regulatory framework for the effective oversight of maintenance and repair (M&R) projects.

The Chief Minister's Secretariat, through an official letter, has formally communicated this directive to the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, instructing the formulation of a robust mechanism to regulate the allocation and utilization of funds earmarked for the upkeep of roads, government buildings, irrigation canals, water supply schemes, and power transformers.

According to the letter, the absence of a structured regulatory framework has led to inefficiencies, unnecessary expenditure of public funds, delays, and substan-

dard work in M&R projects. To address these concerns, a comprehensive and integrated system for better management and accountability is required.

It has further been communicated that the proposed regulatory framework should comprise of District Supervisory Committees across all districts, headed by the respective Deputy Commissioners, and having membership of district heads of relevant departments, representatives from civil society, and officials from the Planning Department.

Their primary responsibilities will include identifying and prioritizing M&R projects based on regional needs, public interest, and cost-effectiveness.

Once projects are identified, they will be submitted to the relevant departments for final approval through departmental scrutiny committees. These committees will then formally communicate the approval to the District Supervisory Committees.

The District Supervisory Committees will also be responsible for the effective monitoring of M&R projects, ensuring quality standards are met.

To enhance transparency, an annual report detailing all M&R projects—including costs, pre and post photographic evidence, GPS coordinates, and other specifics will be submitted by the DSCs. Additionally, in case of emergencies, these committees will submit special reports to relevant authorities for immediate response and decision-making. Urgent maintenance work, including snow clearance from link roads, will be carried out based on their recommendations.

Periodic meetings will also be held to review ongoing projects, with recommendations for improvements as needed. All the concerned quarters have been directed in the letter to immediately implement these directives of the Chief Minister in letter and spirit at all levels of governance.

## Sindh extends operating hours of Peoples Bus Service

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh Transport Department has announced an extension in the operating hours of the Peoples Bus Service during the holy month of Ramadan.

According to Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, the bus service will now operate until 1:00 AM from the 15th of

Ramadan onwards.

He stated that this extension will apply to routes R1, R2, R3, R4, R9, R10, and EV1 to provide maximum travel convenience to the citizens.

Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized that the government understands the difficulties faced by the public during Ramadan, as a large number of Karachi residents rely on public transport.

Therefore, the extension in timings aims to

ease their travel issues, especially to ensure a safe journey home after Iftar and late-night shopping.

He further stated that the Sindh government is taking all possible measures for the welfare of the people and is committed to providing better transport options during Ramadan.

Sharjeel Inam Memon urged citizens to take full advantage of the extended hours of the Peoples Bus Service.

## Roof collapse at Afghan camp leaves six dead

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least six people, including women and children, lost their lives in a tragic incident when the roof of their house collapsed in an Afghan camp on the outskirts of Karachi in the early hours of Sunday.

According to details, Police sources reported that the tragic incident occurred in the wee hours of Sunday at the Janjal Goth Afghan Camp in the Gulshan-e-Maymar area, private news channels reported.

According to police, the roof collapse also left four people injured, while the affected family, originally from Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, struggled to come to terms with the tragedy.

Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident to determine its cause.

Rescue sources shifted the injured to a nearby hospital for immediate medical attention.

## Karachiites deprived of 3,773 bikes in Feb: CPLC Monitoring Desk

KARACHI: The Citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) reported on Sunday that 36 people lost their lives in various incidents across Karachi last month, while 1,402 mobile phones were snatched during the same period.

According to CPLC officials, 3,773 motorcycles and 195 cars were either snatched or stolen in February. These figures include 36 car snatchings and 159 car thefts, along with 549 snatched motorcycles and 3,224 stolen two-wheelers.

The report also highlighted four extortion cases and one abduction for ransom, while no bank robberies or dacoities were recorded during the month.

In 2024, Karachi experienced several tragic incidents, resulting in the loss of 1,503 lives, including women, children, and law enforcement officers.

Despite the police implementing the controversial "half-fry" policy—where suspects are arrested and shot—robberies remained rampant, leading to the deaths of 106 people, including an army officer, a retired commando, police personnel, engineers, security guards, and women. Additionally, around 300 people were injured due to robbers' gunfire.

City police claim that crime rates fell by 21% in 2024 compared to the previous year, arguing that their crime-solving efficiency now matches global standards. However, street crime remains a persistent issue, with daily incidents of theft, robbery, and violence continuing to impact residents.

The stark contrast between official police claims and ground realities highlights the ongoing struggle against street criminals, who robbed citizens of billions of rupees in cash and valuables last year, often resorting to violence even when victims showed minimal resistance.



WASHINGTON, DC: U.S. Secret Service Uniformed Division officers patrol near the White House on Sunday in Washington, DC. An armed man was shot by U.S. Secret Service personnel Sunday morning following a confrontation outside the White House.

## Iran, Russia and China to hold joint military drills

TEHRAN (AFP): The navies of Iran, Russia and China will hold military drills off the coast of Iran this week in a bid to boost cooperation, Iranian media reported on Sunday.

The three countries, which share a common desire to counter what they characterize as American hegemony, have held similar exercises in the region in recent years. The drills "will begin

on Tuesday in the port of Chabahar," located in southeast Iran on the Gulf of Oman, the Tasnim news agency said, without specifying their duration.

"Warships and combat and support vessels of the Chinese and Russian naval forces, as well as the warships of Iran's naval forces of the army and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," the ideological arm of Iran's mili-

tary, are expected to participate, according to Tasnim.

The exercises will take place "in the northern Indian Ocean" and aim to "strengthen security in the region, and expand multilateral cooperation between participating countries," Tasnim said.

Azerbaijan, South Africa, Oman, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Iraq, the United

Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka will attend as observers.

China will deploy "a destroyer and a supply ship," Beijing's defense ministry said on the WeChat social media network.

The Iranian army conducted drills in the same area in February to "strengthen defense capabilities against any threat."

## Musk says US should quit NATO, to stop paying for defense of Europe

WASHINGTON (Bloomberg): Billionaire Elon Musk threw his weight behind a US exit from NATO, saying on his social media platform that it "doesn't make sense for America to pay for the defense of Europe."

The senior adviser to US President Donald Trump was responding to a post on X early Sunday that asserted the US should "Exit NATO now!"

"We really should," the Tesla Inc. co-founder and chief executive officer said. On March 3, Musk wrote on X he agreed with a suggestion by a conservative commentator that the US should leave both NATO and the United Nations.

Musk's comments comes at a time when the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which will mark its 76th anniversary in April, hangs in the balance.

NBC reported on March 6 that Trump had discussed with aides calibrating US engagement with NATO in a way that favors members of the alliance that spend a certain percentage of their GDP on defense.

Speaking to reporters the same day, Trump said he told NATO allies that if they're not going to pay their bills, he won't defend them.

"It's common sense, right," Trump told

reporters in the Oval Office.

"If they don't pay, I'm not going to defend them. No, I'm not going to defend them."

Within NATO, Europe — which largely disarmed after the Cold War — is reliant on the US for communications, intelligence and logistics as well as strategic military leadership and firepower.

European Union leaders met in Brussels for an emergency summit last week with a view to massively increase defense spending.

The officials discussed a European Commission proposal that includes as much as 150 billion (\$162.5 billion) in loans to

member states for defense, as well as plans to allow countries to use their national budgets to potentially spend 650 billion on defense over four years without triggering budgetary penalties.

"In the last weeks, we've seen what I would call quite a turbulent development," EU Defense Commissioner Andrius Kubilius said on Bloomberg TV on Friday. "It's still not perhaps very clear what finally will be the American strategy."

Under a 2023 law, a president can't unilaterally withdraw from the alliance without a two-thirds supermajority in the Senate or an act of Congress.

## Trump adviser hopes Canada fentanyl dispute will be solved

WASHINGTON (Reuters): White House economic adviser Kevin Hassett said on Sunday he was hopeful a dispute with Canada over accusations of the deadly fentanyl opioid entering the U.S. across its northern border could be resolved by the end of March.

His comments on ABC News's "This Week" raise the possibility that tariffs due to be reimposed by U.S. President Donald Trump at the end of the month could be stayed further.

Hassett said the on-again, off-again tariffs that Trump was imposing on Canada were a reflection of the president's concerns over drug smuggling.

"We launched a drug war, not a trade war," he said. "We've got the drug war, which we're hopefully going to solve by the end of the month."

In reality, Canada is responsible for a minuscule proportion of drug smuggling into the United States and it wasn't immediately clear what progress Hassett was referring to.

Hassett, who directs the White House's

economic

National Council, further muddled the waters over the administration's intentions when he referred later in the interview to America's "trade war."

Democratic U.S. Senator Adam Schiff from California, who appeared after Hassett on ABC, called the adviser's comments "incomprehensible."

## India win Champions Trophy for a record third time

DUBAI (BBC): India survived a New Zealand fight-back to win the Champions Trophy with a four-wicket victory in Dubai.

India, dominant throughout the tournament, made a rampant start in pursuit of 252 only to lose three wickets for 17 runs, including captain Rohit Sharma for 76 and Virat Kohli for one.

Shreyas Iyer followed

for 48 and Axar Patel holed out on 29 to leave 49 runs to get from 51 balls.

Hardik Pandya took India closer and, after he fell for 18, KL Rahul finished 34 not out as Ravindra Jadeja hit the winning runs with an over to spare.

That India always still felt ahead of the game was thanks to their spinners

once again impressing by limiting New Zealand to 251-7.

Victory confirms India's place as the world's premier white-ball side.

Since being beaten in the final of the 2023 World Cup they have won the T20 World Cup and the Champions Trophy - a record third time they have won this event but first

since 2013.

They were loudly supported by a partisan crowd in Dubai, fireworks erupting into the night sky as the players rushed onto the field at the final moment, but disappointment remained that this final was not played in Lahore, which would have been the case had India not refused to travel to Pakistan.



NEWSHERA: JUI Chief Maulana Fazl ur Rehman offering fateha during his condolence visit to Jamia Haqqania, Akora Khattak.

## China life expectancy reaches 79 years in 2024

BEIJING (APP): China's life expectancy reached 79 years in 2024, a 0.4-year increase from 2023, achieving the goals of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) ahead of schedule, with eight provinces exceeding 80 years, said Lei Haichao, head of the National Health Commission (NHC), at a press conference on Sunday.

Lei also announced new initiatives to promote mental health, weight management and healthy lifestyles nationwide.

These remarks were made by Lei in response to media inquiries about the current health level of Chinese people, specifically regarding key areas of focus for promoting healthy lifestyles and the initiatives planned for this year.

Globally, China ranks

fourth among 53 middle- and high-income countries, according to statistics, Lei said. When compared with the G20 countries, the average life expectancy still ranks 10th, indicating that even compared with high-income countries, China surpasses the life expectancy of 21 high-income nations.

This shows the Chinese people have a good lifestyle, and it also proves that the implementation of strategies such as Healthy China 2030 has had a direct effect on improving public health.

The average life expectancy of Chinese residents increased by 1.7 years in 2024 compared with 2019, marking a significant improvement over five years, Lei said. Notably, the gap in health levels among

the 31 provinces across the country has been gradually narrowing, indicating improved health equity. In addition, the three municipalities — Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai — as well as eight provinces, including Shandong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, have all surpassed an average life expectancy of 80 years.

"The potential for further improvement in Chinese residents' average life expectancy remains evident and highly expectable," said Lei.

In terms of mental health services, by the end of this year, every prefecture and city will be able to establish a psychological or sleep clinic to provide more accessible mental health services to the public, according to Lei.