

Imran moves LHC  
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan on Tuesday approached the Lahore High Court for early hearings on the bail pleas filed by him in 8 cases related to May 9 mayhem. Imran filed miscellaneous applications through his counsel Barrister Salman Safdar. The former premier pleaded to have been nominated in the May 9 cases as part of political victimisation against him and his party.

NA session adjourned  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly session on Tuesday commenced at the Parliament House with Speaker Ayaz Sadiq presiding it. The House offered fateha for Maulana Hamid-ul-Haq Haqqani, Nawab Yousuf Talpur, and others who passed away. Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Hussain Magsi led the prayers.



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# Gunmen attack Jaffar Express near Bolan

## 13 terrorists killed, 80 train passengers rescued as operation continues

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Security forces have launched a clearance operation in Balochistan's Bolan area after an unknown number of terrorists took passengers of the Jaffar Express hostage, successfully eliminating at least 13 attackers and rescuing 80 civilians, said security sources.

The train, with over 400 passengers on board in nine bogies, was on its way from Quetta to Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa when it came under attack, according to security sources. Among those rescued are 53 men, 26 women and 11 children. Security sources added forces are continuing the operation to rescue the other hostages, and the circle around the terrorists is being tightened.

Soon after the attack started, security forces cordoned off and surrounded the train, and a heavy exchange of fire was reported. Security sources said that the terrorists behind the attack are in contact with their mastermind in Afghanistan and are using women and children as human shields.

The operation is being carried out with extreme caution due to the presence of civilians onboard. Security sources elaborated that the operation is further complicated by the difficult terrain of the area. The attackers bombed the railway track before storming aboard the train, said security forces, adding that they also opened fire on the locomotive, injuring the driver.

Security officials present on the train and the terrorists also reportedly exchanged fire. The locomotive was stopped just before a tunnel, and terrorists took control of the train in a remote, mountainous area of the province which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

"Over 450 passengers onboard are being held hostage by gunmen," Muhammad Kashif, a senior railway gov-

ernment official in Quetta, the capital of the province, told media. "Passengers include women and children," he added.

Security sources added that despite the challenging route, forces reached the scene in the Mushqaf area of the Bolan district of Balochistan to initiate the operation. The Balochistan government has imposed emergency measures, and all institutions have been mobilised to deal with the situation, spokesperson Shahid Rind said.

A relief train and contingents of security forces were also dispatched to the site. Meanwhile, an emergency has been imposed in Sibi and Civil Hospital Quetta.

According to the provincial health department, all medical and paramedical staff have been summoned to Civil Hospital and several wards were vacated to deal with the situation. Following the incident, an emergency information desk has been established at Quetta Railway Station. A railway official was appointed to share relevant developments regarding the Jaffar Express incident. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the attack and prayed for the early recovery of the injured people. He added: "Beasts who opened fire on innocent passengers deserve no leniency."

"Terrorists are the biggest threat to Pakistan," said Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari while condemning the attack on the passenger train. "Targeting innocent citizens by terrorists is a coward act," he added.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur also condemned the Jaffar Express incident and expressed concern for the safety of the train passengers taken hostage in Balochistan. He expressed wishes for their safe recovery. Awami National Party (ANP) President Aimal Wali Khan said that attacks on innocent citizens are unacceptable and demanded strict action against the terrorists.

## IMF approves govt's proposal to reduce electricity prices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has accepted the Pakistan government's proposal to lower electricity prices. Negotiations between Pakistan's economic team and the IMF delegation have entered the final phase as Pakistan sought to secure the second tranche of over \$1 billion under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme.

During crucial discussions, the Ministry of Energy officials held talks with the IMF on tariff rebasing. Sources indicate that the IMF has given a green signal for reducing electricity rates, allowing NEPRA and the Ministry of Energy to make the final decision. A proposal to cut base tariffs by up to Rs2 per unit from April or May was shared with the IMF.

Additionally, authorities presented the IMF with a privatisation plan for power distribution companies (DISCOs). The IMF expressed serious concerns over delays in privatising two DISCOs by January and highlighted inefficiencies in the power sector. The IMF also opposed amendments to the NEPRA Act proposed by the Ministry of Energy. Further negotiations on the circular debt in the power sector, tax policies, and sovereign wealth fund discussions are scheduled for today.

## JUI-F makes offer to PTI

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) has invited the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) to join it in its anti-government movement, which it plans to launch after Eidul Fitr.

It revealed that the invitation was extended at parleys between the leaders of two parties. They have disclosed that the JUI-F has accepted the PTI's invitation provided the latter also supports it on the Madaris Registration Bill. If the PTI supports the JUI-F on the bill, the latter is ready to throw its weight behind the former, sources said while quoting the JUI-F leaders.

However, they added, the PTI leaders have sought time from the JUI-F, saying they want to consult the former prime minister and the party founder Imran Khan, who is currently incarcerated at Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi.

Salman Akram Raja, who have informed, will hold consultations with Imran on the matter later today.

The PTI plans to give the finishing touches to its anti-government drive along with Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) before the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Leaders from both parties held a crucial meeting to discuss potential alliance, the spokesperson for the TTAP said on Monday. PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja, former NA speaker Asad Qaiser, Junaid Akbar Atif Khan and MNA Amir Dogar attended the meeting.

(Continued on Back Page)



QUETTA: Security personnel chopper going towards the site after unidentified gunmen opened fire on Jaffar Express.

## Sharifullah has no injury marks: FBI agent testifies

Jalil Afridi

ALEXANDRIA, Virginia: The accused mastermind of Abbey Gate bombing in Afghanistan, Muhammad Sharifullah was produced at Federal Court in Alexandria today for his preliminary hearing. At Abbey Gate bombing 183 Afghans along with 13 US soldiers were also killed.

In today's hearing Sharifullah was dressed in dark green prison clothes and he was being represented by Federal Public Defender, Jeremy Kamens and his colleague Miss Rosen. The court room was filled with several journalists and FBI agents.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) special agent Seth took the witness stand and introduced himself that since last 12 years he oversees cases related to terrorism. Mr Seth who was being questioned by Miss Rosen also informed that the case of Sharifullah is related to ISIS-K. Agent Seth said that so far five interviews were conducted with Sharifullah, out of which two were done in Pakistan, two on the aircraft and one in Virginia.

When Miss Rosen asked if Sharifullah was in the custody of the ISI, Mr Seth went quiet and later answered that he with Pakistani services. When asked how long was Sharifullah in the custody of Pakistani services, Mr Seth said that he did not know. When asked if Sharifullah was tortured in Pakistan, Mr Seth said he does not know.

FBI Special Agent, Mr Seth also said that he does not know the discussion of his seniors with Pakistani authorities. Mr Seth also said that he does not know where Sharifullah family is. Mr Seth also testified that since last few years Sharifullah was living in Pakistan, raising cattle and chickens. Mr Seth also said that according to his information Sharifullah only speaks Dari.

When asked by Miss Rosen whether he knew that Pakistani authorities had arrested Sharifuddin's whole family, Mr Seth of FBI replied that he was not aware. Mr Seth replied in yes when asked if he was aware that Sharifullah wife was pregnant.

Sharifullah defence council seems to believe



that her client officially got arrested on March 2, 2025 while he was stopped at road blockade in Pakistan and that he accepted the bombing charge during interrogation. Mr Seth also acknowledged that Sharifullah was not present at Abbey Gate and that he learnt about the attack later.

Mr Seth also acknowledged that there are no injury marks on the body of Sharifullah. Mr Seth said that Sharifullah accepted himself that he has experience in suicide bombing. Mr Seth also accepted that Taliban had taken control of Kabul when the Abbey Gate tragedy took place. Next date of the hearing will be announced later.

## Key economic indicators showing upward trends: Tarar Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar Tuesday said all the key economic indicators such as foreign exchange reserves, remittances, policy rate and revenue receipts are showing positive trends under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Talking to the media along with Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Tarar said PM Shehbaz Sharif has not only saved the country from default but also stabilized the economy and set it on the path of growth during the last one year.

He said the economic indicators are truly positive today under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Inflation has come down to 1.5 percent, the interest rate has been reduced to 12 percent, and the Pakistan Stock Exchange has been breaking records every other day. The minister lauded the role of overseas Pakistanis for massively contributing to the foreign exchange reserves by sending remittances in huge size.

He said the friendly countries are also acknowledging the national economy's growth, citing acknowledgment from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in this regard. Similarly, the Uzbekistan President during a joint press conference with PM Shehbaz Sharif appreciated Pakistan's economic turnaround, he added. The minister said that during past one year unprecedented steps were taken for the welfare of the masses and the nation building process would continue in future as well.

He said that strict measures were taken under price control mechanism to ensure supply of daily use items to consumers during the Holy month of Ramadan. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was given a detailed briefing on price control mechanism today, he added.

## Cabinet briefed on essential commodities' prices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the federal cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday was briefed about the monitoring of essential commodities prices during the holy month of Ramadan.

This was the first formal meeting of the cabinet following its recent expansion. The prime minister welcomed the new cabinet members and expressed his best wishes for them, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The cabinet was briefed by Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal regarding the monitoring of essential items' prices during the holy month of Ramadan.

The prime minister observed that the performance of the Price Control Committee for Islamabad had been very effective and efficient. The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, approved the Directorate of Religious Education as an affiliated department of the Ministry of Federal Education.

On the recommendation

of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, the meeting also approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Pakistan's National Cyber Emergency Response Team and the National Computer Emergency Response Technical Team/Coordination Center of China to strengthen cooperation in the field of cyber-security. The objective of the MoU is to promote collaboration in research, consultation, and training related to cyber-security.

Furthermore, under this MoU, coordination on preventing cyber-attacks, policy development, cyber-security drills, exchange of cyber-security intelligence, capacity building, and awareness promotion in the field of cyber-security would be ensured. The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, approved an agreement between the United Nations' International Telecom Union (ITU) and the Ministry of IT & Telecom, Government of Pakistan, for the establish-

ment of an ITU Accelerator Center.

Under this agreement, Pakistan's National Incubation Center in Islamabad would function as an IT Accelerator Center, by enhancing its capacity. The meeting, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, approved the appointment of Syed Jarrar Haider Kazmi as the Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan National Shipping Corporation.

While on the recommendation of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, it also approved a one-year extension in the secondment period of Commodore (OPS) Rizwan Ali Munawar as Commandant of the Pakistan Marine Academy, Karachi. The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and Overseas Pakistanis, approved the appointment of Engineer Syed Musarat Hussain as the Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Real Estate Investment & Management Company (Private) Limited.

# Bilawal calls for evolving consensus on new canals issue

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari while addressing representatives from the media in his chamber at the National Assembly said that today's session was a condolence meeting in memory of late Nawab Yousuf Talpur. He was an asset not only for the PPP, but the entire country. Bilawal thanked the political parties in attendance for paying tribute to the late PPP leader.

Chairman PPP said that President Zardari made a historic speech at the joint Parliament. This marked the first time in Pakistan's history that a civilian President addressed the Parliament for the eighth time. President Zardari's statesmanship and focus on the issues of the people, as well as urging for consensus-based reforms was a reflection of the expectations of the people. From economy to terrorism, and Palestine to Kashmir, as well as agriculture and technology, President Zardari's address touched upon all the vital issues faced by the country. President Zardari, as a symbol of the federation,

is the sole representative of all elected members of the Parliament, as well as the provincial assemblies.

In his address, President Zardari clearly pointed out the government's one-sided policies made without consensus, particularly the decision to make new canals from the Indus River. In a very positive manner, President Zardari shed light on the issue before the National Assembly and the current government. The government of the time is under strain due to the issue, and the decision should be reviewed and resolved.

Regarding the Iftar dinner with PM Shehbaz Sharif, Chairman Bilawal said that he is grateful to him for hosting the PPP's delegation. Chairman PPP said inflation was the most important issue, upon which the parties contested the elections, and now that the indicators are improving, the PPP joins the rest of the country in congratulating PM Sharif. He further said the PPP also raised it's concerns, including the law and order situation in Balochistan and KP. Regarding the latter, Chairman PPP said that such disinterest has never been witnessed by a provincial government before

when it comes to the issues of it's own people. From Parachinar to Bannu and Peshawar, including all tribal areas, the fire of terrorism continues to spread. Chairman Bilawal said that he requested the PM to beckon the provincial government towards resolving this. It is also the federation's responsibility to look after these issues, as they cannot abandon KP to the whims of the current provincial regime. Pertaining to Balochistan, not only is law and order a pressing issue, but climate change is too sinking it's claws into the province and the restoration work for the devastation caused by the floods needs to be expedited.

Responding to the questions, Chairman PPP said that it is the media's responsibility to disseminate the truth only. The Opposition's propaganda should not be repeated. PPP has been the first party to raise it's voice against issues encroaching on the rights of the provinces. Even in his last speech to the Assembly, late Nawaz Yousuf Talpur raised the water issue, and so did other members of the PPP. CM Sindh, his ministers and the provincial bureaucracy too raised

the issue on every forum. Politicians belonging to certain factions are using this national issue to further their own politics, and are targeting the sole party that always strives for parity.

Responding to another question, Chairman Bilawal said that he expects that the PM would honour the basic points agreed upon with the PPP as part of their political understanding. PM instructed his team to address our grievances, Chairman PPP said. He further said that the PPP is the third-largest force in the National Assembly. Our confidence level has not yet reached the stage where the PPP can become a coalition partner of the government, Chairman said. The PPP is currently working with the political party that engaged with it for the sake of the country.

Answering another question, Chairman PPP said that the Council of Common Interests is the right forum to address the issue of water distribution. The PPP has continuously demanded for a meeting of the CCI to be called. Moreover, as far as the Green Pakistan project and garnering investment for agriculture, the PPP

not only owns it but it is the very philosophy of the Party. We do not only want relief for our farmers, but wish for them to flourish. We believe that we have to work hard in two phases, one aspect of which is collective farming. To maximise results for the first phase, the areas of Punjab and Sindh that contribute to the agricultural economy need to be prioritised. The largest land ownership in Pakistan is not by the big landowners, but small landowners. Small landowners will be given the power of collective bargaining when working together. Moreover, if the provincial governments utilise the public-private partnership model, to introduce smart irrigation, and the federal government funds this transition, collective farming can become a revolutionary measure. The PPP currently is working on pilot projects across Sindh, including bio saline agricultural experiments in Thar. We do not oppose for the sake of opposing, but have alternate solutions to propose in wake of crises.

Bilawal said that addressing the law and order situation is a collective responsibility. Moreover, regarding

President Zardari's statement, Chairman PPP said that there is no reason for the government to not accept the suggestions. The government would not want for it's projects to become controversial or harm any of the federating units. Pertaining to the upcoming budget, Chairman Bilawal said that he hopes that the PPP and PML-N, as per their agreement will collectively draft it along with the PSDP for the four provinces.

Speaking in the National Assembly, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari expressed his condolences on the passing of Nawab Yousuf Talpur, acknowledging his significant contributions to politics. He noted that while Nawab Yousuf Talpur was a PPP MNA, their relationship extended beyond politics, spanning three generations of family ties. Despite his title, Nawab Yousuf Talpur remained a down-to-earth political activist who began his journey as a student leader, firmly rooted in ideological politics. Bilawal highlighted Nawab Yousuf Talpur's crucial role in democratic movements, from the MRD to the ARD, and his steadfast opposition to authoritarian rule.





## Wafaqi Mohtasib launches WhatsApp channel to enhance public awareness



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Wafaqi Mohtasib's Office is committed to redressing public complaints relating to maladministration in the federal government agencies and it will continue to make efforts to build greater awareness about the role and scope of work of the institution.

This was stated by the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman), Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi while inaugurating the official WhatsApp Channel at the

Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat here today.

The Wafaqi Mohtasib said that any person aggrieved by the administrative excesses of the government agencies can approach this Office for speedy and free of cost redressal of his complaint. He added that during the year 2024, it received 226,372 complaints out of which as many as 223,198 complaints were redressed within the statutory time limit of 60 days. The institution has also achieved

an impressive implementation rate of 93.21% of his decisions in 2024 as against 85.7% in 2023, said the Mohtasib.

Mr. Qureshi, further stated that expanding outreach and accessibility has always been a high priority for this Office. He observed that the institution has witnessed significant expansion since 1983 when it started operation with only four regional offices at provincial capitals which now has presence in 24

major cities including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

He said that opening of new regional offices and the greater use of IT tools has introduced further efficiency in the handling of complaints. "Now, multiple means are available for the general public to lodge their complaints including website, mobile phones, email, hearing via zoom link etc. which provide easy accessibility to the complainants for availing services being offered by this Office", he maintained.

Wafaqi Mohtasib, Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi invited the members of civil society and media fraternity to follow the official WhatsApp Channel to remain updated about the activities of the institution. He expressed confidence that the active presence on various social media platforms will greatly contribute towards raising awareness about the institution and enhance its outreach and connectivity with the general public.

## Sindh to issue salaries from March 21

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh government, Tuesday, announced to disburse salary and pension for March 2025 in advance to facilitate provincial government employees and pensioners on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The Sindh Finance Department has issued a notification in this regard directing all the relevant institutions to ensure payment of full salary and pension to all employees and pensioners of the provincial government from March 21, 2025, said a statement issued here.

All the Sindh government employees including permanent, contract, work-charged and contingent-paid employees as well as pensioners will benefit from the decision aimed at facilitating employees and pensioners in their preparations for Eid ul Fitr.

Normally, payment of salary and pension is made on the first day of every month, however the decision to issue salary and pension in advance has been taken in view of the possibility of Eid-ul-Fitr 1446 A.H. falling on March 31 or April 1, 2025 subject to sighting of the crescent of the month of Shawwal.

## CM Murad launches initiatives to support poultry, livestock growth

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Shah emphasised the need for the Fisheries and Livestock Department to implement initiatives that strengthen the poultry, fisheries and livestock industries to bolster the livestock sector, stabilising the economy and bringing prosperity to related businesses.

He said that during his meeting with provincial Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Muhammad Ali Malkani, who called on him here at the CM House to discuss strategies for modernising and improving the fisheries and livestock sectors through advanced technology.

During the meeting, Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani told the CM that steps are being taken to enhance these sectors. The CM instructed the minister to provide proper guidance to those

involved in fisheries and livestock.

Murad Shah underscored the necessity for the Fisheries and Livestock Department to introduce initiatives aimed at strengthening the poultry, fisheries, and livestock industries. He said that bolstering the livestock sector would not only stabilise the economy but also bring prosperity to businesses associated with it.

Mr Shah directed officials to implement modern fish farming practices in the province and ensure that fishermen have access to necessary facilities. He further stressed the importance of promoting fish farming in coastal areas and urged the adoption of modern techniques to increase fish exports.

The CM highlighted the need to upgrade fishing harbours with modern amenities to enhance

exports and called for environmentally sustainable fishing practices to protect marine ecosystems.

Murad Shah directed improvements in veterinary hospitals to ensure quality healthcare for livestock. He also emphasised the need to enhance animal breeding and vaccination systems across the province. Immediate measures were urged to prevent animal diseases, along with strict monitoring of livestock farms and actions against the sale of substandard animal feed.

The CM called for the adoption of advanced technology to boost the production of milk, eggs, and meat, recognising the Livestock Department's crucial role in ensuring food security. He concluded by emphasising the need for practical steps to enhance the overall performance of the department.

## Sindh Minister Sharjeel condemns Jaffer express terrorist attack

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon, strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the Jaffer Express in the Bolan region of Balochistan, stating that such acts of terrorism cannot weaken our national resolve.

In a statement, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that this cowardly act is a failed attempt by anti-state elements who want to create instability in Pakistan, but they will not succeed at any cost.

He further stated that anti-state elements are conspiring to spread fear and terror, but the nation will

thwart their malicious intentions at all costs.

Terrorists who target innocent civilians do not deserve any leniency. Sharjeel Inam Memon expressed his determination that the entire nation will stand together more firmly than ever against terrorist elements

## PHA launches spring tree plantation

LAHORE (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) on Tuesday launched the spring tree plantation and more than 4000 shady trees were planted at the center median of the Data Darbar Metro Bridge.

The plantation was carried out under the supervision of Shah Nawaz Wattoo, Director of Horticulture. In this regard, Muhammad Tahir Wattoo, Director-General of PHA, stated that tree plantation is being carried out on various highways and center medians throughout the city as part of the spring plantation campaign. He emphasized that trees planted today would play a significant role in a better environment for the future.

## LDA seals 118 properties

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on Tuesday sealed another 118 properties, besides partially demolishing 27 constructions for violating regulations.

The LDA teams conducted operations in areas such as Wapda Town, Johar Town, Sabzazar, Shadman, and Shah Jamal. On Khayaban-e-Firdousi Road in Johar Town, 27 properties were partially demolished for not securing permanent commercial status and for failing to pay commercial fees.

## UBL completes acquisition of Silkbank

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: United Bank Limited (UBL) is pleased to announce the successful amalgamation of Silkbank Limited (SBL) with and into UBL, that has come into effect from 11th March 2025, marking a pivotal step in its journey as Pakistan's premier financial institution. The Scheme of Amalgamation of SBL with

and into UBL has been sanctioned by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) through its Sanction Order dated 10th March 2025, under the provisions of Section 48 of the Banking Companies Ordinance 1962 (BCO).

For now, no changes will be made to the banking services of former SBL customers who will be able to

conduct their banking transactions as usual from their respective branches without any interruption. However, once the full integration is complete former SBL customers will gain direct access to UBL's extensive network of branches and ATMs alongside enhanced portfolio of products and services and advanced digital banking solutions.

## Tessori announces new IT universities in six districts

KARACHI (PPI): In a major educational initiative, Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori has unveiled plans to establish IT universities in six districts, aiming to bolster technological education across the province.

Provincial ministers will inaugurate these institutions, while the Governor House IT program boasts students earning up to 1 million rupees monthly, with courses offered free of charge and open to all.

During the 9th Iftar/Dinner event at Governor House, Tessori emphasized the transition from the 'doctrine of necessity' to the 'doctrine of service,' promising the facility remains accessible to the public. The Governor encouraged citizens to consider him a

family member, addressing their challenges with assurances of support.

Acknowledging key issues such as employment, education, and infrastructure, Tessori highlighted the ongoing provision of free IT courses and other resources despite lacking official authority.

He also announced new cash prizes, plots, and Umrah packages for citizens, underscoring the

inclusive nature of his initiatives.

The event attracted a diverse crowd, with students and citizens engaging with the Governor. Amid the gathering, Tessori distributed cash Eidi and conducted a lucky draw awarding various prizes.

The Governor's active participation and interaction with attendees demonstrated his dedication to community service.

## Minister pledges support for small and medium businesses in Sindh



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Sindh for Investment and Public-Private Partnership, has

said that the Sindh government is keen to ensure the financial support of every small and medium-sized business that has the potential to grow and develop and which can bring local

business flourishing and economic stability in the province.

He expressed these views today while presiding over the board meeting of Sindh Enterprise Development

Fund (SEDF). The SEDF board meeting was held today at Sindh Investment Department office in Karachi.

Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar said that in this regard the instructions of the Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah are clear that all possible financial support should be given to creative local entrepreneurs so that the local economy and business can develop and people can get self-reliant employment.

In the meeting, Chief Executive Officer of SEDF Mr. Khizar Pervaiz reviewed the performance of his organization and informed about the requests received for financial support in local businesses.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Investment Sindh Raja Khurram Shahzad, Chief Executive Officer of Sindh Enterprise Development Fund Khizar Pervaiz and SEDF Board members.

## KP Women Skill & Entrepreneurship employees announced strike

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as 109 employees, including 90 women and 19 men of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Program have announced to take to the streets in protest against the non-implementation of regularization orders of Chief Minister after almost 50 days, on Tuesday. These employees were working under the KP Women Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Program and the Ready-Made Garments project, but have been struggling for their rights for the past three years.

According to the employees, on December 12, 2024, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had directed the Secretary Industries and the Managing Director of the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) to present a case for the regularization of these employees.

However, despite the passage of 50 days, no progress has been made, leaving 109 employees without employment.

The employees' spokesperson Tahir Shah and the protesting employees said that 36 other SIDB employees had already been regularized in 2019, but they were being ignored. They warned that if

their demands were not met, they would be forced to take to the streets and stage a strong protest.

Speaking to the media, a representative of the affected women, Madam Tasleem, said that the women employees who had been fired were facing severe financial difficulties. She appealed to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to take immediate action to resolve the issue, so that they could support their families with dignity. If the issue was not resolved despite the government's orders, the affected employees would be forced to take extreme measures.

## Senator Rubina assures transparency in BISP payments

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, held a live e-katcheri session at BISP headquarters, addressing concerns of beneficiaries and reaffirming the programme's commitment to transparency and accessibility.

During the one-hour session, conducted via BISP's official Facebook account, 38 callers from across Pakistan raised their queries. Senator Khalid assured them

that BISP officials have been directed to resolve their issues on priority.

She reiterated that BISP registration is completely free, and no fee is required at any stage. "If anyone demands money for registration, they are deceiving you," she warned.

She also urged beneficiaries to be cautious of fraudulent messages, stating that only 8171 is the official number for BISP-related communication.

**AlliedBank**

**ATTENTION**

It is hereby informed to all our valued customers that the following branch of Allied Bank Limited is going to be shifted to new premises.

**ADD A BAZAR Tank (0389)**

**OLD Address** Saddar Plaza near Traffic Point Tank

**NEW Address** Iftikhar Plaza, Adda Bazar, Tank

## New committees to oversee Education projects in Sindh

KARACHI (PPI): In a decisive move to enhance transparency and efficiency in education infrastructure projects, Sindh's Minister for Education and Mines & Minerals Development, Syed Sardar Ali Shah, chaired a meeting with the officers from the Education Works division of the School Education Department. Special monitoring committees, led by the Secretary of School Education, are set to directly oversee development schemes across the province.

During the Tuesday meeting in


Karachi, Syed Sardar Ali Shah directed an in-depth review of ongoing development schemes. With over 2,136 schemes completed in the ongoing financial year, he urged the fast-tracking of remaining projects within the fiscal year. This would allow new initiatives to begin in the following year.

The minister highlighted the necessity of physical inspections of completed schools to ensure quality, emphasizing that paper-based reports alone are insufficient. The newly

formed committees are tasked with conducting these inspections and providing fact-based reports.


Chief engineers were instructed to perform daily field visits and provide real-time progress updates. Shah also promised personal site visits to assess work quality and speed.

He encouraged the quick establishment of science centers at the divisional level, focusing on STEM education, to foster scientific learning opportunities for students in Sindh.

**MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES**  
**PAKISTAN NAVY**  
**NOTICE OF TENDER**  
PRE-QUALIFICATION OF FIRMS / CONTRACTORS  
REF NO 6900/CC-464/E-6

- Applications alongwith all credentials are invited by the **HQ DW&CE (Navy), Sector E-8, Naval Complex, Islamabad** for prequalification of firms / contractors and issue of tenders against the following work in the light of Clause-13, 15 and 16 of PPRA Rules-2004:

Sr. No.	Name of Works
a.	Construction of Civil Work at Khor Kalmat (Phase-VII)
- Firms/ Contractors who are enlisted with MES in category 'A' & 'B' OR other Govt department, having experience of this type of works; may only apply.
- Applicants must provide Company's Profile containing the following information and documents; otherwise will not be considered for prequalification/issue of tenders:
  - Description of similar nature of works in hand and completed during last five years. The information must contain name of sponsoring agency, cost of works and performance report from the sponsoring agency.
  - List of enrolled manpower including engineers with valid PEC number.
  - Details of tools, plants & machinery held.
  - Bank statement of last two years.
  - NTN, FBR, PEC, MEC Registration Certificate.
- Firms/ contractors not registered with Pakistan Engineering Council or renewal their registration upto **30<sup>th</sup> June 2025** will not be considered for issuance of tender documents.
- Applications will be scrutinized and tenders will be issued to the prequalified firms/ contractors only. Prequalified firms will deposit bid security equal to 2% of quoted bid cost in favour of **DW&CE (Navy) Islamabad** with the tender documents (Clause-25 of PPRA Procurement Code 4<sup>th</sup> Edition). This amount is refundable to the unsuccessful bidders.
- The tenders are required to be received in **HQ DW&CE (Navy) Sector E8, Naval Complex, Islamabad** by **1130 hours on 26 March 2025** and will be opened on the same date at **1200 hours**.
- Received bids will be evaluated in light of bid evaluation criteria formulated by HQ DW&CE(N). The lowest evaluated responsive bid will be identified & accepted.
- The Accepting Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the applications in the light of Para-33 of PPRA rules-2004. Incomplete application shall not be entertained.

 **PID(I)6231/24**





PESHAWAR: Advisor to CM on Health, Ihtisham Ali receiving medicines donated by World Health Organization from Dr Lod Ping.

## Amjad directs monitoring of housing projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Housing, Dr. Amjad Ali, met newly appointed Secretary Housing, Mahmood Aslam, in Peshawar on Tuesday to discuss departmental projects.

The advisor directed

the secretary to closely monitor development work on housing projects across various divisions and ensure timely completion of all projects under the Housing Authority's supervision.

The secretary affirmed his commitment to completing ongoing projects on time, pledging to utilize available resources

efficiently to align housing schemes with modern standards and address public housing issues on a priority basis.

The advisor further emphasized maintaining quality, quantity, and transparency in project execution to ensure all housing schemes align with Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's vision.

## AKF distributes 300 food packages

PESHAWAR (APP): Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) distributed 300 food packages worth millions of rupees among the deserving families in district Peshawar under its Ramadan package.

In this connection a function was held at Markaz-e-Islami, the provincial headquarters of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) here on Tuesday. Provincial president, Al-Khidmat Foundation Khalid Waqas was chief guest on the occasion.

Like previous years, the food packages containing flour, ghee, sugar, rice, pulses and other food items were distributed among orphans, widows, transgender and persons with special abilities.

Others who attended the function were included provincial naib ameer JIP Maulana Hidayatullah, district president AKF Abdul Haseeb, Media Manager Noor-ul-Wahid Jadoon, Haji Saifullah and others.

## PHC seeks response against non-appointment of lady doctor at Mohmand

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has ordered Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to submit a response over the non-appointment of a lady doctor for post-mortem of women in the hospitals of Mohmand district and the non-construction of roads in the district including Ghalani road, on Tuesday.

PHC two-member bench, comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Sabit Ullah, heard the case. The petitioner, Reza Khan Safi Advocate, informed the court that there was no lady doctor in Mohmand district to perform post-mortem of women, and the police had to hire private lady doctors for this purpose. He added that this caused unnecessary delays and sometimes led to clashes between the police and local people.

The petitioner further stated that the government had initiated the construction of roads from Yakka Ghond to Ghulani and from Ghurikhel Chowk to Gursal Border in 2021, but the project had been stalled due to non-release of funds. He claimed that the roads were in a deplorable condition, causing immense difficulties for the local population.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shah Faisal Uthmankhel, appeared before the court and assured that he would raise the issue in the next cabinet meeting. He stated that the provincial government would take emergency measures to address the issues of appointment of lady doctors and construction of roads. The court directed the Advocate General to submit a report on the actions taken by the provincial government on the next hearing. The case was adjourned until further notice.

Allegations of financial irregularities in KP-HCIP baseless, administration firmly denies claims

## World Bank-supported education project completely transparent

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Human Capital Investment Project - Education (KP-HCIP) has strongly denied allegations of financial irregularities, terming them baseless and malicious. The project, funded by the World Bank, remains committed to transparency, accountability, and improving educational standards.

According to the project administration, the allegations were made by an Accounts Officer appointed on a contract basis, who is neither a

permanent government employee nor part of the project's core administrative structure.

The administration received multiple complaints from different sources regarding the officer's involvement in unauthorized financial activities.

Consequently, he was reassigned to a new responsibility. However, instead of complying with the administration's orders, he went on unauthorized leave from March 5, 2025, and subsequently launched a malicious campaign against the project.

The KP-HCIP strictly adheres to the World Bank's procurement and financial regulations, ensuring that all financial transactions are fully documented and audited. There is no room for unauthorized payments, advance disbursements, or contractual irregularities.

The administration has urged the public and media to rely on verified information instead of unverified news. Additionally, KP-HCIP will continue its efforts to promote education in the province and take strict legal action against those spreading misinformation about the project.

## Organic delights: KP's Iftar parties move towards healthier feasts

PESHAWAR (APP): The trend of use of organic food during iftar parties is on the rise due to its higher nutritional value in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The benefits of organic food and its positive effects on health longevity during Ramadan have drawn people's attention towards safe food that is also rich in nutrients and grown by traditional methods using natural ingredients beneficial for fasting people.

With the new innovation and developments in medical science that unveiled the hazardous of inorganic food to humans, people is seen desisting from food that is grown by using inorganic ways and manmade fertilizers and pesticides.

The scientists are still unaware about the real harmful effects of food grown from unnatural ways but the people are preferring food that is simple, pure and less contaminated by chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides as organic food was also beneficial to keep people healthy during Ramadan.

"Agricultural products that are grown and processed without use of chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers and genetically modified organisms are referred to inorganic food," said Darya Khan, Provincial Coordinator at Nutrition International Peshawar while talking to APP.

He said such kinds of food was healthy, full of antioxidants and without allergens besides have lasting effects on immunity and life span of an individual.

He said individuals who use inorganic food are more prone to various kinds of diseases and ailments during their lives and the best option was adaptation of homebased agriculture practices to get organic food.

He said that survival rate and life expectancy of people living in remote areas is far better as compared to people living in developed cities, adding the average life span of population residing in remote areas of Pakistan like Hunza, Swat and Chitral are significantly greater due to their reliance of local food items that are grown using traditional methods, natural manure and without any

pesticide.

He said the food grown in natural ways was full of nutrients and devoid of harmful effects that increased immunity of human beings and protects them from falling prey to most common diseases such as cholera, Diarrhea and other stomach disorders.

Besides Japan, Singapore, Indonesia and SAARC countries, he said that culture of organic food cultivation made inroads in Pakistan, adding the kitchen gardens culture at Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar was growing for organic food.

Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) report has revealed that organic farming in Pakistan has been growing at an average rate of 15 percent per year over the past decade and this is due to number of factors such as increasing awareness about health benefits of organic foods and hazardous being caused by synthetic chemicals in conventional farming.

"The Key principle of organic food production is soil health in which farmers maintain soil fertility through practices such as crop rotation and use of natural fertilizers i.e manure," said Sundas Manzoor, a diet consultant. She said that approach enriches the soil, ensure healthier plant growth besides making plants resistant to pests and diseases and increase immunity of consumers.

Organic farming relies on natural methods of production instead of using practices that are dependent on artificial methods of plant growth, she told. The production and use of organic food is also a habit that helps promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity, said former conservator for Forests KP Tauheed Khan.

He said farmers that use organic methods cultivate a variety of crops and utilize natural habitats into their agricultural and forest landscapes to support beneficial insects, birds and wildlife.

He said this diversity helps maintain a balanced ecosystem besides reducing need for unnecessary chemical interventions. These practices contribute to healthier animals and

produce meat, dairy and eggs that are free from harmful residues.

Organic food farming also contributes to environmental conservation by reducing pollution, ensure judicious use of water, promoting soil health and protecting wildlife habitats, he said and added effects of climate change could be effectively controlled by increased production of organic food.

The sales of organic packaged food and beverages in Pakistan has increased by 29 percent in 2020 as compared to just 2 percent growth in the overall packaged food market, he said.

In recent years, he said consumers are seen preferring organic food for several reasons because they are healthier, safer and free from synthetic chemicals and pesticides, said Shafiq Khan who has grown an organic kitchen garden in its backyard at Gulbahar Peshawar.

"I did not use synthetic chemicals or pesticides to control pests, weeds and diseases. The basics of my production method is to use natural methods like beneficial insect predators, crop rotation and mechanical weed control to manage pests and maintain crop health, he said.

He added that production of organic food is labor intensive but benefits are more exciting as compared to time consumption and laborious work.

The organic food production also confronted with challenges like more labor and lower yields compared to conventional methods leading to increased prices and beyond reach of low-income consumers.

However, the demand for organic food continues to grow day by day globally as more consumers are becoming conscious of health priorities, he added.

He said that increase in demand of organic food substantiate the fact that people are now attracting towards healthy organic food due to health benefits of such food on human life.

Dr Fazal Wahab, director agriculture and research KP said that Pakistan's fertile soil especially in Northern Punjab and KP was most suited for pro-

duction of different varieties of organic fruits and vegetables, adding that, the country's walnuts, chalgaza, orange, locots, chauns mangoes, banana and peas were being preferred in domestic and international markets due to their high nutritional value and better taste.

The wheat and maize flour of southern districts of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh were organic in nature as there is hardly any use of pesticide in it.

Dr Wahab cited a research study suggesting that amount of certain nutrients could vary between conventional and organic bananas, adding that the latter was higher in zinc, fiber and vitamins than the former.

"Approximately 1,000 organic plants, including herbs, saffron, aloe vera, medicinal and cosmetic are being produced in the country," he said, adding still we have to import different herbs plants to cater the needs of pharmaceutical industry.

Saffron, aloe vera and olives cultivation have been started in the country including KP where the market size of organic products had almost been doubled during the past few years.

He said that a quality certification agency had mostly determined whether the product was organic or non-organic, adding that the country lacked such services and mostly the farmers relied on Global GAP (good agriculture practice) agency for certification before exporting their products to the European Union.

"Our farmers had to pay about Rs1.5 million per five acres for certification of their organic products," he said, adding that interested farmers were being given a yearlong training for cultivation and farming of organic agriculture products.

He said the agriculture department has launched a mega project 'certification of agriculture products and organic food farming,' in the province under which farmers investing in organic farming are being imparted free training and certification services to explore new markets for their products inside and outside of the country.

## Ghulam Ali demands to reopen of Torkham Border

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting was held under the chairmanship of former Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali, under the auspices of the Sarhad Business Alliance. The meeting strongly condemned the prolonged closure of the Torkham Border, terming it a massive loss for the business community, the national economy, and the general public.

Participants expressed grave concern over the government's indifference and flawed policies, which have resulted in the destruction of thousands of

traders' businesses, causing losses worth billions of rupees on both sides.

The meeting was attended by former provincial ministers Malik Mehar Ilaahi, Adnan Jalil, Syed Sirajuddin, former president of the Sarhad Chamber Dr. Yousaf Sarwar, Ghulam Bilal Javid, Sharukh Khan, Minhajuddin Bacha, and other business leaders. They emphasized that in the blessed month of Ramadan, the Torkham Border must be reopened immediately to alleviate the suffering of traders and the general public, as the patience of the business community has run out due to the enormous

financial damage they have suffered.

The participants demanded that the government act responsibly and ensure that trade routes remain open at all times. They strongly condemned the fact that border trade has been left at the mercy of bureaucratic hurdles and unnecessary policies, which is a grave injustice to the economy and will not be tolerated under any circumstances. The meeting called upon the federal government to issue immediate orders to reopen the Torkham Border, preventing further hardship for the business community and the general public.

## Meeting on KP Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2019 held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Provincial Cabinet Standing Committee was held on Tuesday in Peshawar regarding the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2019. The meeting was chaired by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Law Minister, Advocate Aftab Alam. Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Faisal Atman Khail, and other relevant officials were also present. During the meeting, the department's officers briefed the participants in detail about the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2019. Committee members provided their suggestions and feedback on the Bill, while Law Minister Advocate Aftab Alam emphasized that this is a sensitive issue closely related to religious and Islamic teachings, and therefore, the Bill should be sent to the Council of Islamic Ideology for further review and progress.



PESHAWAR: President Peshawar Press Club Muhammad Riaz addressing a seminar on press freedom and journalists safety.

## NUML students depart for Turkiye under student exchange program

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The first batch of students from the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) is set to leave for Duzce University, Turkiye this week under the Student Exchange Program, a milestone initiative aimed at providing students with international academic exposure.

These students were selected through a competitive process, emerging successful from among hundreds of applicants. They will now have the opportunity to pursue their studies in Turkiye, gaining invaluable cross-cultural learning experiences.

This exchange program is a direct outcome of the Rector NUML's recent visit to Turkiye, during which he visited top universities and signed Memorandums of

Understanding (MoUs) to establish collaborative opportunities for student and faculty exchanges. This initiative underscores NUML's commitment to expanding global academic partnerships and enhancing the learning experiences of its students.

Rector NUML expressed his gratitude to the Government of Turkiye and Duzce University for their support in facilitating this

academic exchange. He emphasized that such collaborations strengthen educational ties between Pakistan and Turkiye, providing students with access to world-class learning environments and fostering long-term academic cooperation.

In a candid interaction with the departing students, Director General NUML extended his best wishes and prayers, encouraging

them to make the most of this opportunity. He urged them to act as ambassadors of Pakistan, showcasing the country's rich culture, values, and academic excellence on the international stage. NUML continues to play a pivotal role in facilitating its students' access to international study programs, equipping them with the skills and perspectives needed to thrive in a globally connected world.







## In brief

### BTM holds protest Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: Badeh Taluka Movement (BTM), which has been struggling for 6 years against not getting the status of Taluk to Badeh city, held a protest demonstration from Hyder Chowk to the town committee office, on Tuesday. On this occasion, BTM leaders Zeib Ali Sario, Aziz Brohi, Asghar Nunari, Dudu Deshi and others protested and said that making Badeh city a taluka is our basic right which we will get in any case, raised which shows that the elected members of the assembly are making fools of the people of Badah city and turn the tide on the promises made. Meanwhile, the accused Abdul Fattah Mugheri shot and killed Samina Mugheri, the mother of four children, in the premises of police station Hyderi Larkana. On this occasion the mother of killed woman, cried and said that my deceased daughter was married a few years ago with Ali Raza, son of Nawab Solangi, resident of Madhu Chandio village in Qamber Shahdadkot district, who was also the son of Nawab Solangi, but 8 months ago her husband divorced her due to some problem.

### Three killed including a child F.P. Report

HAFAIZABAD: Almost three people, including a ten-year-old child, were killed in three separate incidents in Hafizabad. The ten-year-old Zahibullah resident of Qila Ramkor, was taken away by four accused Ahmad, Ehtesham, etc. on the pretext of feeding him something, where they beat Zahibullah to death with sticks, after which the police registered a case against the four accused on the complaint of the deceased father. The second incident took place near Karriala village, where Abdul Qadeer alias Kaka was riding a bicycle to his village when unidentified vehicle hit him on the way, seriously injuring him. He was immediately taken to a Trauma Centre, where he succumbed to his injuries. The third incident took place near Jalalpur Bhattian where a student of 10th, Hamid Raza, was returning home on a motorcycle after submitting his annual paper when he was hit by a speeding tractor-trolley. As a result of which he died before any medical aid could be available to him.

### Tailor shot dead F.P. Report

ATTOCK: In a horrific incident, a tailor was shot dead and another person was injured in Attock's Campbellpur Musa area after a dispute over stitching an Eid dress. According to police, the accused, identified as Mudassar, opened fire on the tailor, Sajid, and another person, Ehsan, after Sajid refused to stitch Eid dress for him. Police officials said that Sajid was killed on the spot, while Ehsan was injured and rushed to the hospital in critical condition. The accused fled the scene, and police have launched a search operation to apprehend him. Eid-ul-Fitr is expected to be observed across Pakistan on Monday, March 31, 2025, following the completion of 29 days of Ramadan. According to the Ruet-e-Hilal Research Council, the Shawwal crescent is likely to be visible on the evening of Sunday, March 30, provided weather conditions remain clear. Khalid Ijaz Mufti, Secretary General of the council, stated that the new moon will be born on Saturday, March 29, at 3:58 PM Pakistan time.

# Construction of Rescue 1122 center's in doldrum

## F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The unavailability and shortage of funds has discontinued construction work on Rescue 1122 center in Landi Kotal for the last nine months, C&W and Rescue 1122 officials informed, on Tuesday.



Sub-Engineer, C&W (building) said that the whole project cost seventy million rupees however so far less than ten million rupees had been released to a contractor. He maintained that repeatedly they sent their demand for provision

of fund but to in avail.

If the development fund is supplied, the project will be completed as early as its completion period, he remarked. An official of Rescue 1122 in district headquarter, Jamrud said that with the hectic efforts of their highgup, a separate sub-station of Rescue 1122

of Landi Kotal expressed regret over the non-serious attitude of the concerned departments and said that local station of Rescue 1122, a must to tackle emergencies locally.

Maroof Afridi, a social worker while commenting on the matter said that previously the area deprived of the relief services although with approval of structuring Rescue 1122 center locally, convinced the tribesmen of Landi Kotal that they would avail relief services being provided in other Rescue 1122 centers.

But ironically, for the last nine months, construction work on the center had been suspended due to lack of funds that put a question mark on the efficiency of the provincial government.

He demanded of the Members Parliament from the constituency and concerned highup to forthwith address the issue, provide funds to resume building work on the Rescue 1122. It is to be mentioned here that Rescue 1122 service commenced on 8 January, 2020 in Jamrud, district Khyber.

# Four killed over irrigation water dispute

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: As many as four persons were killed and four injured, including three brothers, were seriously injured in the accident over a year-old oral dispute regarding irrigation of land. Three brothers died on the spot while one of the injured died in the hospital.

The condition of the other injured is critical. A child passerby is also among the injured. The bodies have been shifted to Toru Type D Hospital while the injured have been shifted to MMC Hospital. A case was registered at Toru police station on the report of the assailant, and the police started a raid.

According to details, yesterday, armed men opened indiscriminate fire on those spraying pesticides in the fields in the Karpande Qasim Mera

Toru area of Mardan, as a result of which Mirza Khan, Zahir Shah, Muhammad Jamal, Muhammad Awaits, Ibadullah, and Khaista Rehman were seriously injured of which the first three people died on the spot while Humayun died in the hospital after being shot in the second party, a four-year-old passerby was also injured in the firing.

According to the report of Ibadullah a victim of the first party the Toru police station registered a case against Ashfaq, Ruhullah the son of the Gul Farosh, Awaits, Gohar, and Sikandar, the sons of Humayun while on the report of the second party's wife Humayun the Toru police station registered a case against Asif, Khaista, Sabz Ali and Jamal Shah, while a case was also registered against four-year-old

migrant child Sameer son of Ziaur Rehman. It is clear that the dispute was a verbal altercation over irrigation of fields a year ago.

**Section 144 imposed:** Deputy Commissioner Mardan has imposed a complete ban on kite flying in the district and imposed Section 144 for two months. Under this order, there will be a complete ban on making, selling, buying and flying kites.

According to the district administration, this measure has been taken to protect citizens and maintain law and order, as the use of chemical-laden strings and metal wires during kite flying can pose a threat to precious lives. DC said that strict legal action will be taken against those violating Section 144 and the concerned police stations have been instructed to take immediate action against the violators.

# PPP announces unconditional support for Malgari Wakeel

## F.P. Report

PABB: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has announced its unconditional support for Malgari Wakeelan president Tariq Mahmood Khattak and his cabinet in the upcoming annual elections of the Pabbi Bar Association, on Tuesday.

According to details, a meeting of the PPP Pabbi was held at the Hujra of late Mian Mahboob Shah in Pabbi city, presided over by

Mian Imtiaz Ali Shah, the president of PPP Pabbi city. The meeting was attended by Muhammad Ilyas, and other office-bearers, including Mian Bakhtiar Hussain, Muhammad Idris Shahbaz, Fahad Ali Shah, Muhammad Amin, Javed Khan, Shah Faisal, Shahzeb Khan, Ismail Khan, Muhammad Yasin, Mian Zulfiqar Ali, Ans Shahzad, Muhammad Ayaz Khan, Ahmad Hussain, Fayyaz Khan, and Muhammad

Fahad.

The meeting unanimously decided to support Tariq Mahmood Khattak, the president of Malgari Welfare Lawyers, and his panel in the annual elections of the PBA. A five-member election committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Muhammad Elias, the president of PPP Pabbi, to ensure the success of Tariq Mahmood Khattak and his panel.

# Admn helpless before profiteers

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Residents of Mardan are facing severe difficulties due to a sharp rise in the prices of essential food items, including chicken, meat, and groceries, during the holy month of Ramadan.

The artificial inflation has hit the poor the hardest, while the district administration remains largely inactive in

addressing the issue. A survey of various markets across the city revealed that traders have significantly increased prices, taking advantage of the high demand.

However, authorities appear indifferent, allowing the price surge to continue unchecked. In key commercial areas such as Bank Road, Bigut Gunj, Par Hoti, Shaheedano Bazaar, Shamshi

Road, Malakand Chowk, and Adda Bazaar, Gaju Khan, customers are reluctant to buy chicken and meat due to soaring prices.

Despite the district administration setting the price of cow milk at Rs140 per liter and buffalo milk at Rs200 per liter, both are being sold at inflated rates ranging from Rs240 to Rs260 per kilogram.



KAGHAN: Director General, Kaghan Development Authority, Shabbir Khan discussing development of Valley with MPA Munir Hussain Nomani.

## 7 butchers arrested for overcharging F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan along with additional deputy commissioner Gohar Ali, conducted a covert inspection of various shops in the Timergara and Mian Banda bazaars.

During the visit, authorities arrested seven butchers in Mian Banda and Timergara for engaging in price gouging and operating in unhygienic conditions. Following this, the Deputy Commissioner instructed the Additional Assistant Commissioner of Timergara to seal all non-compliant shops.

The inspection covered a wide range of businesses, including bakeries, chicken shops, grocery stores, and fruit and vegetable vendors. The Deputy Commissioner inquired about the prices of various food items and gathered feedback from shopkeepers. The public has welcomed this unannounced crackdown, commending the district administration for its proactive approach.

In response to the findings, the Deputy Commissioner issued instructions for the deployment of Dir Levies personnel in major bazaars across Lower Dir. These officers will work undercover as customers and submit daily reports to their respective Assistant or Additional Assistant Commissioners. The reports will cover issues such as overpricing, substandard food, the display of price lists, and potential adulteration.

Following the market inspection, the Deputy Commissioner also visited the Price Monitoring Desk at Shaheed Chowk in Timergara. He reviewed the records of public complaints and directed the staff to ensure that all grievances were forwarded to the appropriate authorities for swift action against violators.

## AC inspects facilitation bazaar F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Assistant Commissioner Ali Sameer visited the Ramadan facilitation bazaar and reviewed arrangements for public.

AC inspected stalls, checked prices and quality, and directed officials to ensure the availability of subsidized essential commodities. He stated that strict monitoring is in place to prevent profiteering.

# Revolutionizes learning, not replaces teachers

## Muhammad Saleem

**ARTIFICIAL Intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant dream and it makes its way into our classrooms. Schools around the world are using AI to make learning more engaging, ease teachers' workload, and create new opportunities for students.**

Yes, like any other technology, AI comes with its share of concerns. But when used wisely, it has the potential to transform education for the betterment of the students and teachers. It helps the students learn at their own pace and gives teachers more time to do what they want to teach.

Every student learns differently, but traditional classrooms often struggle to accommodate those differences. AI is changing that by offering personalized learning experiences. Smart educational tools can track students' progress, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and adjust lessons accordingly. This means a student struggling with a math concept can get extra practice, while an adaptive person can move ahead without waiting for the rest of the class.

For students with special educational needs, AI can be a life-changer. Speech recognition software helps those with speech difficulties, text-to-speech tools assist students with dyslexia, and AI-powered screen readers make learning accessible for visually impaired students. These advancements ensure that education becomes truly inclusive.

Teachers are the heart of education, but they are often overwhelmed with grading, lesson planning, and administrative tasks. AI can ease this burden by managing routine work, such as checking assignments, tracking attendance, and even offering instant feedback on student performance. This frees teachers to focus on what really matters. It makes it easy for teachers to connect with their students and inspire them to learn effectively.

Some schools are even using AI chatbots to answer students' questions after school hours. This ensures learning does not stop when the bell rings. But while AI can be a helpful assistant, it will not replace the unique role of teachers, who bring warmth, encouragement, empathy,

adaptability, and a deep understanding of students' individual needs. Teachers foster creativity, instill critical thinking, and provide emotional support that goes beyond academic instruction. This shapes students into well-rounded individuals.

AI has the power to bring quality education to students who might otherwise be left behind. In rural or underserved areas where qualified teachers are scarce, AI-powered platforms can provide interactive lessons and real-time tutoring which ensure students do not miss learning opportunities. Language barriers can also be broken down with AI-driven translation tools. This makes it easier for students from different linguistic backgrounds to understand their lessons.

Despite its benefits, AI in education is not without its challenges. One major concern is data privacy—AI systems collect vast amounts of student information, and schools must ensure that this data is protected from misuse. Another concern is the risk of relying too much on AI. While technology can enhance learning, it should never replace human interaction in the classroom. Teachers do not just deliver lessons—they inspire, guide, and support students in ways that AI never can. Striking the right balance between technology and traditional teaching is essential.

Incorporation of AI in schools, both teachers and students need to be digitally literate. Educators may receive proper training on how to use AI tools effectively so that these technologies complement their teaching rather than overshadow it. Governments and policymakers also need to establish clear guidelines to ensure AI is used ethically and responsibly in schools.

AI is reshaping education, making it more personalized, inclusive, and efficient. While challenges exist, a thoughtful approach to AI integration can help unlock its full potential. The key is to embrace innovation while ensuring that education remains a deep human experience. If we get this balance right, AI can become one of the powerful tools in shaping the future of learning.

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# KUST Physio Rehabilitation Center inaugurated

## Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) has officially inaugurated the "Physio Rehabilitation Center" under its Department of Physical Therapy.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by VC Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin, Registrar Rauf Khan, Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences Dr. Dilawar Khan, Dean of the Faculty of Biological Sciences Dr. Muhammad Jamil, Dean of the Faculty of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences Dr. Ejaz Ahmed, Chairman of the Department of Physical Therapy Dr. Mughal Qayyum, along with heads of various departments, faculty members, and other digni-

taries.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin emphasized the need for integrating practical healthcare solutions within educational institutions. He highlighted that such initiatives not only provide theoretical knowledge but also equip students with hands-on training. He further stated that the center would serve as a valuable learning platform for students while also offering quality physiotherapy services to the local community. The Vice Chancellor commended the efforts of Dr. Mughal Qayyum in establishing the center.

The attending deans appreciated the initiative, terming it a significant step forward for both the universi-

ty and the community. Dr. Dilawar Khan emphasized the center's role in enhancing students' practical skills, while Dr. Muhammad Jamil regarded it as a milestone in research and advanced physiotherapy. Dr. Ejaz Ahmed expressed satisfaction over the provision of quality physiotherapy services to the local community, considering it a revolutionary step in public healthcare.

Equipped with state-of-the-art machinery, the KUST Physio Rehabilitation Center will provide students with practical training, research opportunities, and community services. The initiative is expected to improve public health standards in the region and promote awareness in the field of physiotherapy.

# Exploitation of poor in the name Ramadan Philanthropy

## Kinza Sualiha

**RAMAZAN is considered a month of generosity, where individuals and organizations actively engage in charity and donations. However, beneath this noble cause lies a less-discussed reality: the mismanagement, exploitation, and unethical practices by some NGOs and charitable organizations. While the majority operate with good intentions, there are significant cases where philanthropy becomes a tool for personal gain rather than public service.**

During Ramadan, NGOs collect substantial amounts of donations, but the lack of transparency raises concerns. Many organizations fail to provide clear records of how the funds are allocated. Large sums are collected in the name of charity but

are not distributed to the intended beneficiaries. A significant portion of donations is spent on salaries, marketing, and operational expenses rather than direct aid. Instead of focusing on those in dire need, some NGOs favor certain groups based on personal affiliations or publicity interests.

Philanthropy during Ramadan has, in many cases, turned into a lucrative business. Some organizations prioritize fundraising over actual impact. Emotional appeals and aggressive marketing tactics compel people to donate without ensuring accountability. Iftar drives and ration distributions sometimes serve as branding exercises rather than genuine aid efforts. The focus remains on temporary relief instead of sustainable development projects that can uplift communities.

While the Edhi Foundation continues to be a beacon of

hope, countless unregistered NGOs pop up during Ramadan, collecting funds and disappearing afterward. People donate generously, assuming their money is reaching the poor, but there is no proper accountability. In Karachi and Lahore, there have been multiple reports of ration bags being distributed for political gains rather than genuine help. Some well-known organizations collect money but distribute substandard goods, keeping a significant portion of the funds for their operations. Many private hospitals and schools receive Zakat donations but charge patients and students the full fee, defeating the purpose of these charitable contributions. This has been observed in some institutions in major cities like Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

A few years ago, a well-known charity organization in

Pakistan was exposed for misusing millions of rupees collected during Ramadan. This NGO had launched an extensive donation campaign, claiming to provide ration bags and iftar meals to thousands of underprivileged families. With heart-touching advertisements and celebrity endorsements, they managed to collect an overwhelming amount of funds. However, investigative journalists later revealed that only a fraction of these donations reached the needy. The majority of the funds were either unaccounted for or spent on administrative luxuries, including high-end office spaces and personal perks for top officials. Reports showed that while they promised ration bags worth Rs. 5,000 each, the actual distribution contained items worth barely Rs. 2,000. Worse, many recipients alleged they never received anything despite their names

being listed as beneficiaries.

The scandal came to light when an audit was demanded by donors, exposing how some NGO executives had used donation money for international travel and lavish expenses. While some officials were arrested, the damage had already been done—trust was lost, and countless deserving families remained hungry despite the massive funds raised in their name.

Many charities use religious sentiments to encourage donations, but without proper oversight, these funds can be misused. People believe they are contributing to noble causes, but the money might be redirected elsewhere. There have been instances where donations were funneled into activities unrelated to humanitarian aid.

To ensure philanthropy serves its true purpose, it is crucial to implement financial transparen-

cy. NGOs must publicly disclose their income and expenditure. Authorities should oversee how charitable organizations operate and ensure funds are used appropriately. Individuals should research before donating and support only credible organizations with a history of impact.

Ramazan philanthropy should be about genuine compassion and support for those in need. However, the darker side of charity must be addressed to prevent exploitation and ensure that donations reach their rightful recipients. True philanthropy demands accountability, honesty, and a commitment to social welfare beyond mere fundraising campaigns. As someone who deeply believes in responsible charity, I urge donors to question where their money is going and support organizations that have a proven track record of helping people with integrity.





# Syrian leader says killings of Alawites threaten unity

DAMASCUS (Reuters): Syria's interim President Ahmed Sharaa said mass killings of members of ousted President Bashar al-Assad's minority sect were a threat to his mission to unite the country, and promised to punish those responsible, including his own allies if necessary.

In his first interview to a global news agency, held after hundreds died in four days of clashes between Alawite Muslims and Syria's new Sunni Islamist authorities, Sharaa blamed pro-Assad groups backed by foreigners for triggering the bloodshed but acknowledged that revenge killings had followed.

"Syria is a state of law. The law will take its course on all," he told Reuters from the Damascus presidential palace, where Assad resided until Sharaa's forces toppled him on December 8, forcing the ousted ruler to flee to Moscow. "We fought to defend the oppressed, and we won't accept that any blood be shed unjustly, or goes without punishment or accountability, even among those closest to us," Sharaa said.

In a wide-ranging interview, Sharaa also said that his government had had no contacts with the United States since President Donald Trump had taken office. He repeated pleas for Washington to lift sanctions imposed in the Assad era. He also held out the prospect of restoring relations with Moscow, Assad's backer throughout the war, which is trying to retain two major military bases in Syria.

He rejected criticism from Israel, which has captured territory in southern Syria since Assad was toppled. And he said he aimed to resolve differences with Kurds, including by meeting

the head of a Kurdish-led group long backed by Washington. While he blamed the outbreak of violence in recent days on a former military unit loyal to Assad's brother and an unspecified foreign power, he acknowledged that in response "many parties entered the Syrian coast and many violations occurred". "It became an opportunity for revenge" for years of pent-up grievances, he said, although he said the situation had since been largely contained. Sharaa said 200 members of the security forces had been killed in the unrest, while declining to say the overall death toll pending an investigation, which will be conducted by an independent committee announced before his interview.

A UK-based war monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said that as many as 973 Alawite civilians had been killed in revenge attacks, after fighting in which more than 250 Alawite fighters and more than 230 members of the security forces had died. After years in the field at the helm of a guerrilla movement that broke off from Al Qaeda, the 42-year-old son of an Arab nationalist was soft-spoken. His voice sometimes barely registered above a whisper during the interview, held during the holy month of Ramadan when business is often conducted late.

His entourage of young, bearded men appeared to still be adjusting to protocol in the opulent seat of power. "To be honest, my chest tightens in this palace. I'm astonished by how much evil against society emanated from every corner," Sharaa said. The unrest of recent days, the bloodiest since Assad was ousted, was

his biggest setback as he seeks international legitimacy, to fully lift US and other Western sanctions and assert his rule over a country fractured by 14 years of war. His forces rode into the capital pledging to rule for all of Syria's communities - Sunnis, Alawites, Druze, Christians, Shi'ites, Kurds and Armenians - while trying to assuage domestic and foreign concern over his extremist Islamist background. He quickly welcomed a stream of foreign dignitaries and, along with his close circle, has toured the region to court support. But three months in, joy at Assad's ouster has largely been replaced by concern over the formidable challenges at home.

The economy remains in tatters, large parts of the country including its oil-rich northeast, are out of state control and Israel has struck an increasingly threatening tone backed by airstrikes, incursions and seizure of territory. Sharaa recognised the violence of the past days threatened to derail his attempt to bring Syria together. It "will impact this path," Sharaa said, but he vowed to "rectify the situation as much as we can".

To do that, Sharaa has set up an independent committee - the first body created by him that includes Alawites - to probe the killings within 30 days and bring perpetrators to account. A second committee was set up "to preserve civil peace and reconciliation, because blood begets more blood," he added. Sharaa declined to answer whether foreign jihadist fighters and other allied Islamist factions or his own security forces were involved in the mass killings, saying these were matters for the investigation.

## Hard road ahead to restore ties with US, says Kremlin

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia sees restoring ties with the United States as a long, hard task but believes there is political will on both sides to move forward, the Kremlin said. Rapid moves by US President Donald Trump to pursue a rapprochement with Russian President Vladimir Putin have unnerved Ukraine and its European allies.

"We are at the initial stage of the path to restoring our bilateral relations. The road ahead is quite long and difficult, but at least the two presidents have expressed political will in this direction," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. He said it was important to determine whether Ukraine, which is due to hold high-level diplomatic talks with the US in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, really wanted peace or not. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says he is willing to come to the negotiating table as soon as possible, and is seeking guarantees from the US and Europe to underpin the future security of his country.

## Trump admn urged to cancel owl-killing plan

WASHINGTON (AP): A bipartisan group of lawmakers urged the Trump administration to scrap plans to kill more than 450,000 invasive barred owls in West Coast forests as part of efforts to stop the birds from crowding out a smaller type of owl that's facing potential extinction.

The 19 lawmakers - led by Republican Rep. Troy Nehls, a Texas conservative, and Democrat Rep. Sydney Kamlager-Dove, a California liberal - claimed the killings would be "grossly expensive" and cost \$3,000 per bird. They questioned if the shootings would help native populations of northern spotted owls, which have long been controversial because of logging restrictions in the birds' forest habitat beginning in the 1990s, and the closely related California spotted owl.

Barred owls are native to eastern North America and started appearing in the Pacific Northwest in the 1970s. They've quickly displaced many spotted owls, which are smaller birds that need larger territories to breed. An estimated 100,000 barred owls now live within a range that contains only about 7,100 spotted owls, according to federal officials.

Under a US Fish and Wildlife Service plan approved last year, trained shooters would target barred owls over 30 years across a maximum of about 23,000 square miles (60,000 square kilometers) in California, Oregon and Washington. The plan did not include a cost estimate. But the lawmakers said in a letter to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum that it could top \$1.3 billion based on extrapolating costs from a grant awarded to the Hoopa Valley Native American Tribe in California to kill up to 1,500 barred owls. "This is an inappropriate and inefficient use of US taxpayer dollars," the lawmakers wrote. "This latest plan is an example of our federal government attempting to supersede nature and control environmental outcomes at great cost."

A US Fish and Wildlife Service spokesperson did not immediately respond to questions about the cost estimate and the owl removal program. The agency's plan called for more than 2,400 barred owls to be removed this year and for that number to ramp up to more than 15,500 birds annually beginning in 2027. Scientists for years have been shooting barred owls on an experimental basis and officials say the results show the strategy could halt spotted owl declines. As of last year, about 4,500 barred owls were killed on the West Coast by researchers since 2009.

Killing one bird species to save others has divided wildlife advocates and is reminiscent of past government efforts to save West Coast salmon by killing sea lions and cormorants.



WEST BANK: Internally displaced Palestinian children waiting to receive a portion of food from a charity in Khan Younis.

# Ukraine to present US with Russia partial truce after row

JEDDAH (AFP): Ukraine will present the United States on Tuesday with a plan for a partial ceasefire with Russia, hoping to restore support from its key benefactor, which under President Donald Trump has demanded concessions to end the three-year war.

The talks in Saudi Arabia will be the most senior since a disastrous White House meeting on February 28, when Trump berated Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky for purported ingratitude. Since Trump's dressing down of Zelensky, Washington has suspended military aid to Ukraine as well as intelligence sharing and access to satellite imagery in a bid to force it to the negotiating table. Zelensky, who wrote a repentant letter to Trump, flew to the port city of Jeddah to meet Saudi rulers, but was leaving the talks to three top aides. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who will be joined by Trump's national security advisor Mike Waltz, said the aid suspension was "something I hope we can resolve" in the talks on Tuesday.

"Hopefully, we'll have a good meeting and good news to report," Rubio said. Rubio said that the United States had not cut off intelligence for defensive operations. Zelensky left the White House without signing an agreement demanded by Trump that would give the United States access to much of Ukraine's mineral wealth as compensation for past weapons supplies.

Zelensky has said he is still willing to sign, although Rubio said it would not be the focus of Tuesday's talks.

Russia has since ramped up its attacks, striking hard against Ukrainian infrastructure and taking back villages in its Kursk region that Ukraine had captured in a bid for bargaining leverage. In the White House meeting, Zelensky refused to bite his tongue in the face of criticism from Vice President JD Vance, with the Ukrainian leader questioning why his country should trust promises from Russia which launched a full-scale invasion in 2022 despite previous diplomacy.

But faced with Washington's pressure, Ukraine will lay out its support for a limited ceasefire. "We do have a proposal for a ceasefire in the sky and ceasefire at sea," a Ukrainian official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Because these are the ceasefire options that are easy to install and to monitor, and it's possible to start with them."

Rubio signalled that the Trump administration would likely be pleased by such a proposal. "I'm not saying that alone is enough, but it's the kind of concession you would need to see in order to end the conflict," he told reporters. "You're not going to get a ceasefire and an end to this war unless both sides make concessions." "The Russians can't conquer all of Ukraine and obviously it will be very difficult for Ukraine in any reasonable time period to force the Russians all the way back to where they were back in 2014," Rubio said, referring to the time of a partial offensive and Russian seizure of the Crimea peninsula.

In a meeting with Saudi Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman ahead of the US-Ukraine talks, Zelensky discussed Ukraine's conditions for any permanent peace deal, including the release of prisoners and the return of children Kyiv accuses Moscow of abducting, the Ukrainian leader's office said in a statement. The two leaders "discussed the possible mediation of Saudi Arabia in the release of military and civilian prisoners and the return of deported children", the statement said.

"The leaders exchanged views on the formats of security guarantees and what they should be for Ukraine so that war does not return again." Rubio said he did not expect to sit in a room in Jeddah with the Ukrainians "drawing lines on a map" towards a final deal. But Rubio said he would bring the ideas back to Russia. Rubio and Waltz met last month, also in Saudi Arabia, with counterparts from Russia, ending a freeze in high-level contacts imposed by former president Joe Biden after Russia defied Western warnings and launched its invasion.

Trump last week also threatened further sanctions against Russia to force it to the table as it carried out strikes on Ukraine. But Trump's abrupt shift in US policy has stunned many allies. Rubio said the United States was objecting to "antagonistic" language on Russia at a gathering of Group of Seven foreign ministers later this week in Canada. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock called the scene from the White House "unpleasant" and described a "new age of infamy" that will require Europeans to shoulder more responsibility.

# US wants no G7 Russia antagonism as allies fear blockage

MONTREAL/JEDDAH (Reuters): The US opposes language that could harm its efforts to bring Russia and Ukraine to the negotiating table, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said, as Washington wrangled with G7 allies ahead of a meeting this week, further alarming them.

The foreign ministers of the Group of Seven major democracies - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States - will meet in the river resort of La Malbaie, Quebec on March 12-14 for the first time since President Donald Trump returned to power in January. While the G7 meetings have been consensual since Russia's membership was suspended in March 2014 in response to its annexation of Crimea, underscoring their steadfast backing for Ukraine, Trump has upended

Western unity by drawing the US closer to Moscow while heaping criticism on Kyiv.

According to four G7 diplomats, Canada had initially hoped the seven would agree on an overall statement ranging from the war in Ukraine to the Middle East and China and a second declaration that would outline the G7's efforts to curb Russia's so-called shadow fleet. Shadow fleet refers to vessels used by Russia to move oil, arms and grains around in violation of international sanctions imposed on it over the Ukraine war. The vessels are not regulated or insured by conventional Western providers.

Almost two pages out of eight in the last G7 statement in November were focused entirely on Ukraine, mostly taking aim at Russia. However,

the diplomats said agreement on the full communiqué this time was proving very difficult, with some fearing that a compromise may not be found. Two diplomats said the United States was seeking to remove references to sanctions and Russia's war in Ukraine, while demanding tougher language on China.

Speaking to reporters en route to Saudi Arabia for talks with Ukrainian officials, Rubio said there are always sticking points, adding that Washington cannot sign off on anything that could impede bringing Russia and Ukraine to the negotiating table. "We feel like antagonistic language sometimes makes it harder to bring parties to the table, especially since we're the only ones right now that seem to be in a position to make talks like that possible," he said.

He said he was "certain" they would eventually arrive at a document that was meaningful and unifying without "undermining our ability to bring both sides to the table." Three diplomats said the United States also opposed a separate statement on Russia's shadow fleet.

Washington has already broken with allies at the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation at the end of February, refusing to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. "The best case scenario is two statements. Plan B is one statement. But the Americans are blocking the maritime statement, so it's not easy. Even what the Canadians thought was going to be easy is not in fact easy," said one G7 diplomat. The diplomats cautioned that talks were still ongoing to try to find a compromise.

# France's domestic crisis to reshaping Europe's defense

PARIS (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron is back at the center of global diplomacy, seeking to ease relations with President Donald Trump, championing a Ukraine peace plan alongside his British counterpart, and seeing his longstanding desire to boost European defense turning into reality.

Six months ago, Macron seemed weaker than ever after his call for early legislative elections produced a hung parliament, sparking an unprecedented crisis. Known for his nonstop political activism, Macron shifted his focus to foreign policy, leaving domestic struggles largely to the prime minister. Now, he appears as the one leader who speaks to Trump several times per week and takes the lead in European support for Ukraine, while positioning himself as the commander-in-chief of the European Union's only nuclear power.

Macron, 47, is one of the few leaders who knew Trump during his first term in office, maintaining despite disagreements a cordial relationship, which both describe as "friendship." He was the first European leader to visit Trump since his reelection, seeking to persuade him not to abandon Ukraine in pursuit of a peace deal with Russia.

Macron is also a heavyweight of European poli-

tics, and shifting US policies gave momentum to his longstanding views. Since he was first elected in 2017, Macron has pushed for a stronger, more sovereign Europe. That same year, in a sweeping speech at Sorbonne University, he called for a common European defense policy, with increased military cooperation and joint defense initiatives.

He later lamented the "brain death" of the NATO military alliance, insisting the EU should step up and start acting as a strategic world power. EU leaders committed to strengthening defenses and freeing up hundreds of billions of euros for security in the wake of Trump's warnings that they might face the Russian threat alone.

In a resounding declaration last week, Macron announced he would discuss extending France's nuclear deterrent to European partners to help protect the continent. France's nuclear power is inherited from the strategy set by wartime hero Gen. Charles de Gaulle, president from 1958 to 1969, who sought to maintain France's independence from the US and assert the country's role as a global power. That went through the development of an independent French nuclear arsenal. France's Minister for European affairs

Benjamin Haddad praised Macron's efforts, saying they were aimed at ensuring that "in the face of this world upheaval, Europeans are not spectators but players."

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, in office for eight months, has sought closer defense cooperation with Europe as part of a "reset" with the EU after years of bitterness over Brexit. Macron and Starmer are now spearheading a desperate diplomatic drive to bolster Ukraine's defenses, drawing up a peace plan with Kyiv at its core. That plan includes the possibility of sending European troops to Ukraine to enforce a potential peace agreement.

Meanwhile, Germany's conservative election winner Friedrich Merz said his top priority would be to "strengthen Europe as soon as possible" and gradually move toward "real independence" from the US. Only three days after his victory last month, Merz, who has called for a discussion on "nuclear sharing" with France, traveled to Paris for a working dinner with Macron. No statement was released after the meeting, but French officials with knowledge of the matter said both men's visions for Europe align. They spoke anonymously because the talks were not to be made public.

# Iran would consider talks with US about concerns, UN mission says

DUBAI (Reuters): Iran would consider negotiations with the US if the aim of the talks was to address concerns regarding any potential militarization of its nuclear program, Iran's UN mission said in a post on X.

The comment came a day after the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Iran will not negotiate under US "bullying". In the post on X the mission said: "If the objective of negotiations is to address concerns vis-à-vis any potential militarization of Iran's nuclear program, such discussions may be subject to consideration."

"However, should the aim be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear program ... such negotiations will never take place," the post added. Khamenei was quoted by state media as saying: "They are bringing up new demands that certainly will not be accepted by Iran, like our defence capabilities, missile range and international influence."

US President Donald Trump said in an interview with Fox Business Network, broadcast, that he wants to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran and had sent a letter to its leadership suggesting talks with the Islamic Republic, which

the West fears is rapidly nearing the capability to make atomic weapons. Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons. While expressing openness to a deal with Tehran, Trump has 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.

During his 2017-2021 term, Trump withdrew the United States from a landmark deal between Iran and major powers that had placed strict limits on Tehran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief.



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## The mood in Greenland not for America

**W**HATEVER be the outcome of the election in Greenland on Tuesday about independence, it is certain that Greenlanders are not in favour of becoming part of the United States of America (USA) as envisaged by American President Donald Trump. Even Trump partisans in Greenland are not for Greenland getting absorbed in America.

Trump supporter Jorgen Boassen said, "I am not interested in Greenland becoming an American state. But I want a larger American military presence here. Denmark has not done what they promised regarding military build-up, and we can't solely rely on Europe now."

The general perception is that Russia and China will be encroaching in the Arctic region, and it will pose a threat to Greenland. The bet is that the American military presence would be the right antidote. If Greenland were to choose independence – the position of Danish politicians is that the decision about independence is entirely that of Greenland leaders – then Greenland is likely to make an independent deal with Trump and America.

And Greenland on its own is a much weaker entity than when it is an autonomous region of Denmark, it will not have much to bargain with the hard businessman that Trump is. As far back as 2019, Trump looked at Greenland as a real estate bargain.

But Danish observers believe that independence for Greenland is not something that is going to happen in a jiffy, in double-quick time as it were. Maria Ackren, professor of political science at the Greenland University, says, "I don't think full independence will happen anytime soon – it has always been a factor in Greenlandic elections. However, I don't see it happening quickly, even though some political parties are pushing for it. Maybe in 20 to 30 years."

If Scotland's independence is taken as an example, the timeline set by the Greenland professor seems plausible. In a referendum in Scotland, there are a large number of Scots who prefer to continue to stay with Great Britain. In the case of Greenland, this does not seem to be the case. As Ackren observes, "Almost every party in Greenland supports independence. However, the timing, conditions, and pace of the process vary."

Greenland's premier Mute B Egede in his New Year speech in New York had said, "It is about time that we take a step forward and shape our own future, including deciding who we collaborate closely with and who our trade collections will be. Our relationships with other countries cannot happen solely through Denmark."

Social influencer Qupanuk Olsen, 39, had joined the opposition party Naleraq in the parliamentary election because she feels, "This is a truly historic moment. I feel we are finally voting on independence. This has primarily happened because the US is showing greater interest in Greenland."

The Danes, according to a survey, seem to believe that the \$570 million subsidy that the Copenhagen government provides to Greenland despite it being an autonomous region fully in control of its internal affairs, and with foreign affairs and defence resting with Denmark should be discontinued. It is possible that Greenlanders may want to retain a special relationship with Denmark because of the centuries-old relationship, and the sentiment is mutual with enough Danes feeling a sense of obligations towards the Greenlanders though there is a surprisingly huge gap in perception between the two people. Trump and Americans may feel that if they throw enough money, they can buy the loyalty of the Greenlanders. As a matter of fact, Greenlanders might be repelled by the domineering behaviour of the Americans. The Inuits – the name that Greenlanders identify themselves as – are used to being on their own and they do not like intruders, friendly or otherwise.

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## Time for Netanyahu to launch a full Oct. 7 inquiry

Yossi Mekeberg

**I**N a low-key ceremony at the headquarters of the Israeli military last week, Chief of the General Staff Herzi Halevi, who commanded the army during the calamitous Oct. 7 Hamas massacre and its aftermath, was replaced by Eyal Zamir.

Although Halevi announced his departure some time ago, it was fitting that the ceremony should take place shortly after an investigation by the Israeli military released a report admitting what we all know — that it "failed in its mission to protect Israeli civilians." But what shockingly emerges from the details of this failure is that the entire catastrophe could have been prevented.

In the same week, an investigation by Shin Bet, the internal security service, also revealed that, for several years, the organization had failed to identify Hamas' plan to attack Israel. And not because of a lack of the necessary information, but because it believed that Hamas was under control. Yet, it still warned the government against complacency regarding the intentions of this Islamist organization, regardless of any specific attack plan. As such, these conclusions amount to nothing that we could not have deduced by ourselves. However, these powerful and honest investigations by two of Israel's most crucial security organizations, in addition to Mossad, are beginning to assemble the jigsaw puzzle that ought to provide a full picture of the truth. They will also enable any identified shortcomings to be fixed for the sake of preventing any such future catastrophes, as well as allowing Israeli society to begin its healing process.

The task of the military is to defend its citizens and borders from enemy attacks and the naked truth is that it failed in the most colossal

manner, with immeasurable consequences for the Israeli people, the Palestinians and the region as whole. As we might have expected, many senior commanders have already taken responsibility and retired from service. Yet, not one politician — first and foremost Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — has been prepared to admit any responsibility for the failure to defend their own citizens. Instead, in their audacity, they have portrayed themselves as victims of a system that deliberately led them to fail, which is a complete absurdity.

Calamitous strategic surprises with far-reaching consequences are not unknown in history. Pearl Harbor and Operation Barbarossa, both during the Second World War; the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968; Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990; and, in Israel's case, the coordinated attack by Egypt and Syria in 1973, are just a small sample of such surprises. What they all have in common — beyond the element of surprise — is that, despite ample warning signs, it was misperceptions and preconceived ideas held by decision-makers at the political and military levels about the intentions of the attacker and their capabilities that led to calamity.

The Israeli military and Shin Bet have done the only thing that you could expect of organizations that have failed those whom they had a duty to protect in such a spectacular, tragic way: they have thoroughly investigated how they suffered such an eclipse of judgment regarding their enemy.

Until Oct. 7, Israelis believed that, regardless of Hamas' ill intentions and even its capabilities, the border between Gaza and Israel was impenetrable. Only two years before the Hamas attack, Israel completed a

barrier that featured a sensor-equipped underground wall, a 6-meter-high above-ground fence and a barrier at sea with monitoring equipment to detect incursions from the water at a staggering cost of \$1.1 billion. This security fence was even equipped with remotely controlled weapons systems and an array of radar systems with cameras that covered the entire territory of the Gaza Strip.

Who could have believed that, not only would it take less than an hour to make this obstacle obsolete, but also that the Israeli forces would take so many hours to reach the communities on the border and those at the Nova festival while people were being massacred. The soldiers in the bases and the civilians who carried weapons fought heroically to stop the waves of attack, but the failure of the senior command to take seriously warnings from spotters in the days and weeks leading up to the attack — and put all the bases on high alert and mobilize more troops — beggars belief.

The most basic maxim in this kind of scenario, "better safe than sorry," eluded them. This was because of a combination of dogma, complacency, arrogance and groupthink, let alone a lack of discipline when procedures that should have been activated due to suspicions were ignored.

The military investigation focused on its own conceptual and operational failures and was careful to avoid linking itself directly with the responsibility on the political level. Yet, the divisions in Israeli society caused by the government allowing foreign money to finance Hamas set the conceptual framework for assuming that Hamas was pacified. Unlike the military probe, Shin Bet's inquiry did

not pull any punches regarding the government's role and Netanyahu's personal misjudgment that contributed to Oct. 7. It is not that the organization and its head Ronen Bar relinquished their own responsibility, but for the first time they formally stated that allowing money to be funneled to Hamas, with the encouragement of Netanyahu, as a way of maintaining "quiet" in Gaza, was a major factor in building Hamas' military capability and a crucial factor that enabled Hamas to prepare for the attack.

Moreover, Shin Bet officials had, prior to that day, warned their political superiors that "we are entering an unstable period" and that only by proactive action against Hamas, including targeting its leadership, would Israel avoid being pulled into another round of fighting. One can question the legality and the effectiveness of targeted assassinations, but it is fair to assume that Netanyahu and his Cabinet colleagues were ignoring these warnings.

In the Knesset chamber last week, Netanyahu suggested that the findings of such an inquiry would be "predetermined" against him. This reflects both his paranoia and calculated evasiveness. Playing the victim could hardly wash in this case and the person at the top of the pyramid is always responsible when things go so disastrously wrong, but here he also set the policies and instructed the security forces how to operate.

The only decent thing the prime minister can do for the memory of those who lost their lives and their families, as well as those taken hostage, is ensure that the full truth about whose mistakes led to this calamity is thoroughly sought out and investigated by an apolitical state commission of inquiry — immediately.

## Why Israel failed to prevent Oct 7 attack

Zarar Haroon

**I**sraeli investigations into the October 7th, 2023, attack on southern Israel have revealed how its and domestic intelligence agency Shin Bet, and army failed to identify Hamas' intentions and pre-empt the raid that killed 1,200 and precipitated all-out retaliatory war on Gaza. At the end of last month, the army admitted its failure "in its mission to protect Israeli civilians" while last week Shin Bet published the results of its probe.

Shin Bet admitted failure to predict and prevent the Hamas attack. The Israeli liberal daily Haaretz said the agency had "correctly assessed" the serious threat posed by Hamas but did not use its knowledge to warn the government of the danger Israel faced in the days or hours before the attack. However, Haaretz reported that in May 2023, Shin Bet head Ronen Bar told Netanyahu that Hamas was a "challenge at (Israel's) doorstep" and it should prepare for "an opening blow." Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu dismissed this warning and said Israel had deterred Hamas with "a strong balance of fear." Netanyahu prioritised his policy of allowing funds from abroad to flow to Hamas for payment of salaries to Gaza's civil servants.

This policy was meant to strengthen Hamas in its competition with Fatah in the West Bank and divide Palestinians. Both Shin Bet and the army were alerted to 2018 and 2022 Hamas plans for attacks but did not follow through in 2023 by looking for signs such an operation was nearing launch. Information did not reach senior Shin Bet and army officers who did not coordi-

nate and share assessments. Shin Bet agents in Gaza itself did not inform Israel of preparations for the attack. Despite the scandal, Shin Bet boss Bar has declared he has no intention of resigning and, according to Haaretz, would resist Netanyahu's calls for his dismissal.

The army's probe revealed that the high command believed Hamas did not want war and, in case of attack, Israel would have time to respond. The Israeli army has not been seriously challenged for decades and has relied largely on airpower to counter attacks from Gaza. The army has, instead, focused on the West Bank and Hizbollah in Lebanon. In the days just before the Hamas raid, male commanders ignored warnings that Hamas was preparing an operation by female "spotter" soldiers posted along the Israeli border with Gaza. Several of the women were killed and others taken captive when Hamas fighters swept into Israel.

In January this year, Israel's army chief Herzl Halevi and southern command head Yaron Finkelman resigned. Halevi admitted "the responsibility is mine" as commander of the army and assumed part of the blame for mistakes made by subordinates.

Addressing the ceremony marking the hand-over to a new army chief, Netanyahu said that Israel must "achieve the aims of the war in full: 'the elimination of Hamas and return of all remaining hostages.'" Incoming chief-of-staff General Eyal Zamir vowed, "Victory over Hamas" and praised the Israeli people for rising and proving "their power in the moment of truth."

The army investigation said that a total of 5,000 Hamas fighters entered Israel on October 7th, with a vanguard of more than 1,000 seasoned fighters crossing the border under heavy fire. They silenced Israel's communication and command-and-control systems, creating chaos. Around 2,000 arrived in the second wave along with hundreds of civilians, the probe reported. Such large numbers would explain why Hamas fighters quickly overpowered Israeli forces in the area. Hamas has denied these figures and said that only a few hundred of its fighters were involved.

On fatalities and wounded, Haaretz said the army may have fired on Israeli civilians to prevent them from being seized by Hamas in accordance with the "Hannibal procedure" which allows troops to shoot fellow soldiers. On this occasion, Haaretz said kidnapped civilians were at risk at three locations. Some were said to have been killed.

Faced with the results of these probes Netanyahu has refused a court-appointed independent investigation into Israel's failures to anticipate and ward off Hamas' assault. Israel's supreme court has called for a state commission of inquiry, echoing Knesset members who have long demanded such an investigation. While Netanyahu has called for a state inquiry, he has argued it must investigate the "deep state" bureaucracy, cabinet leaks and the media. His aim is to draw the focus away from himself and evade responsibility for what happened.

His office said it had received a non-urgent army memo describing suspicious Hamas actions three hours

before the attack but did not pass on the information to Netanyahu's staff. This behaviour demonstrated the overconfident attitude adopted by Israel when assessing threats and lax behaviour in the army command, the defence ministry, and prime minister's office. Netanyahu — who held the top job from 2009 to 2021 and from early 2023 — has refused to admit blame for failing to prevent October 7th. During his time in office, Netanyahu took a relaxed attitude toward Hamas as he believed Israel's relationship with the movement had stabilised.

Netanyahu has been accused of postponing the reckoning for October 7th by saying this cannot take place until the Gaza war ends. Critics say his self-interested determination to cling to power has prolonged the deadly and destructive war and the ordeal of the Israeli captives.

Netanyahu has appointed Secretary of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer to head ceasefire negotiations and sidelined Bar and external intelligence agency Mossad chief David Barnea who had taken part in talks in Doha and Cairo. Dermer is a Netanyahu loyalist. He does not trust Bar or Barnea. Leaks to the press revealed that once the team made deals with Hamas via the Egyptian and Qatari mediators, Netanyahu repeatedly put forward new demands, undermining the process of reaching a ceasefire. Netanyahu has now refused to advance from the first phase of the January ceasefire-hostageprisoner release agreement as the second phase is meant to conclude with an end to the Gaza war and Israeli withdrawal from the devastated strip.

## Arab world should not ignore rising Islamophobia in US

Ray Hanania

**T**RENDS show a rise in terms of b o t h Islamophobia and anti-semitism, but in America more concern is expressed for the latter, often exaggerated by politically weaponized pro-Israel agendas and growing animosity toward Arabs. Although this may seem to only be a problem for Arabs and Muslims in America, it is actually an early warning sign that could portend long-term problems for these communities worldwide.

The White House and Congress have recently stepped up efforts to punish pro-Palestinian student protesters by denying them their constitutional right to free speech when they express legitimate criticism of Israeli violence against Muslims and Christians in the Gaza Strip.

President Donald Trump, with the backing of the pro-Israel Congress, in January signed an executive order to "combat anti-semitism," calling for tougher action on colleges.

Last week, for example, the federal government cut \$400 million in grants that were due to Columbia University, one of the nation's preeminent educational institutions, because students there protested against Israel's indiscriminate killing of women and children in the Gaza Strip.

Other universities are also being targeted, such as the prestigious DePaul University in Chicago, which was founded by Vincentians, a Catholic organization that helps the poor. Investigations have been launched into four other universities for allegations of tolerating antisemitism, including Northwestern University in suburban Chicago and the University of California at Berkeley, which has often been identified as a leader in free speech. Also targeted are Portland State

University in Oregon and the University of Minnesota. The campaign against pro-Palestinian protests was also augmented when the Anti-Defamation League — a political organization that conflates criticism of Israel's government with hatred of Jews — last month released the results of a survey that purports to show a rise in antisemitism. This is not a fight against antisemitism. Instead, it is the augmentation of an unconstitutional political campaign to silence supporters of Palestinian rights. Ignored in all of this is the fact that hatred targeting Arabs in America is not only at an all-time high, but it continues unabated and unaddressed by the White House or Congress. It is a new trend to criticize anything Palestinian while defending everything Israeli. It does not matter that Israel is a foreign country that shields its war crimes behind the false veil of weaponized antisemitism. The American news media is complicit, reporting on every instance of alleged antisemitism in lengthy and detailed reports, while marginalizing stories on the increase in Islamophobia and ignoring instances of racism against Arabs. All this is a result of how "hate" has become politicized.

In fact, concerns about rising Islamophobia have been more prominent elsewhere in the world than in America, where so many anti-Muslim incidents have occurred. One of the leaders in warning about the "alarming rise" in Islamophobia has been the UN, attracting criticism from Israel, the White House and Congress. The ADL has consistently used accusations of antisemitism to respond to rising expressions of concern by UN officials over the increasing Israeli violence against Palestinians.

In contrast to the US, the British government last month created a working group to provide it with a working definition of Islamophobia, while cautioning that confronting anti-Muslim hate "must be compatible with the unchanging right of British citizens to exercise freedom of speech and expression." This is the exact opposite approach being taken by Congress and the White House, which is calling for stronger measures to block protests against Israel's government policies.

These changes in how the West views the hatred of individuals because of their race or religion are fueling the political activism that is undermining the international rule of law and empowering those who wish to silence those who speak out against favored political policies or favored for-

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Democrats in Congress last month reintroduced a

eign governments.

It may not appear to be a problem for the Arab world today, but it is. These policies, which augment and broaden antisemitism to include political issues in defense of Israel and that are unrelated to hate, are marginalizing the growing hatred of Muslims.

The political movement to weaponize anti-Muslim sentiment in America will skew the public's perception of the issue. Unable to hear both sides fairly, the public is likely to embrace the distorted view that essentially makes Islamophobia more acceptable.

The Arab and Muslim worlds really need to make a greater effort to speak out on the issues of Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. So far, expressions of concern have not been matched by programs or funding to educate the public and push back against the rising hatred.

For the region, it may not seem important that Islamophobia is being weaponized and empowered in America in both obvious and subtle ways, but it will result in long-term consequences for the Middle Eastern countries that may be hoping for improved relations with America and the West.

The Arab world should be more vocal in defending the rights of pro-Palestinian protesters at American universities and colleges or face a future of growing animosity among Americans toward the Middle East.



# The stock market plunge shows Trump’s disruption can’t be contained

**DONALD Trump never told voters there might be a recession on the road to his new “golden age.”**

The president’s refusal – twice – to rule out an economic contraction this year set off a stock market plunge on Monday that hammered Americans’ retirement accounts.

But the 9% losses on the S&P in less than a month reflect a wider force unleashed by the president in his new term – global instability and uncertainty about what he’ll do next and what the world will look when he’s done.

Trump is trying to shatter everything that everyone thought they knew about US foreign aid, trade and economic policy. He’s set off trade wars with US neighbors, indiscriminately fired thousands of government workers, and switched to punishing the victim in Ukraine – fracturing an 80-year bond of trust with allies.

And, as he told the nation a week ago, “We’re just getting started.”

So it wouldn’t be surprising if there’s a price to be paid.

Trump’s voters love his instinct for disruption and volatility. But with consumer confidence softening, hiring slowing and fears of a recession growing, the last thing the economy needs is a president whipping up uncertainty.

But in a Fox News interview on Sunday, Trump lacked his usual bombast when asked whether the strong economy he inherited from former President Joe Biden would tip into recession this year. “I hate to predict things like that,” he said, and compounded the damage later on Air Force One by saying, “Who knows?”

It was less what Trump said but how a president known for unshakeable certainty said it.

Trump’s apparent acknowledgement on Fox News that his policies, including tariffs, could cause a period of “transition” for the economy was also disturbing – since it appeared to indicate that short-term pain is in the

offing and that he is prepared for a country weary of high prices for groceries and housing to endure it.

Predictions that the resilient US economy is about to crash have been wrong for years.

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One example is Trump’s harsh turn against Canada and Mexico and his threat for 25% tariffs that he imposed last week – then froze for a month – as well as reciprocal tariffs that will catch other US friends in his dragnet in early April.

“What we’re seeing in the policy approach is a lack of vision,” Julia Coronado, president and founder of MacroPolicy Perspectives LLC, told Richard Quest on CNN International. “We all knew that there was a vision on narrowing trade deficits, reshoring some activity. ... We’re really going after our closest friends, both on a foreign policy level as well as a trade level, and that

Stephen Collinson

feels like more of a profound change, without the clear vision of what we’re trying to achieve.”

White House officials on Monday dismissed the panic on markets and the idea that an economic contraction is looming. They also argued that any core weakness in growth is not due to Trump’s whiplash leadership but a hangover from the Biden administration.

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tion. “I think that what’s going to happen is the first quarter is going to squeak into the positive category, and then the second quarter is going to take off as everybody sees the reality of the tax cuts,” Kevin Hassett, director of the White House National Economic Council, said on CNBC.

Trump has not had time to fully enact his economic policies yet – or to demonstrate his claims that they will make Americans far wealthier and send the economy soaring. But relying on the stimulative potential of tax cuts to generate growth doesn’t say much about the underlying strength of the economy. And Hassett set an ambitious timetable for pushing a complex tax-cutting bill through Congress, given the tiny GOP majority in the House of Representatives.

There was more happy talk about tariffs unleashing rocketing prosperity by Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on NBC’s “Meet the Press” on Sunday. “There’s going to be no recession in

America,” Lutnick said.

Such rosy assessments seem rather familiar and risk falling into a dangerous political trap that snared the Biden administration – that of telling voters the economy is in better shape than they perceive it to be. Repeated claims by top Biden aides that the worst inflation since the 1980s early in his term was merely “transitory” eroded public trust in his presidency

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and played a significant role in paving the way for Trump’s return to the Oval Office.

It was also notable Monday that the president did not appear publicly for a new round of economic commentary as the stock market, one of his favorite scorecards of his own performance, tanked.

**What will Trump do next?**

Growing concerns about the economy and the impact of Trump’s shock-and-awe policies pose several questions about his next moves.

The president has argued that his tariff policies will quickly bring in billions of dollars to the United States and rejected the economic logic that consumers will pay for them in higher prices. His aim is a laudable one – restoring the US industrial base that has ripped the heart of rust-belt manufacturing areas. But achieving this goal would mean reversing decades of globalization – a task that would take far longer than Trump’s remaining years in the White House. This puts Trump’s comments about a “transition” period for the

economy in a new light. Will Americans experience discomfort until the policy yields results?

Or will Trump react with his characteristic volatility to days of selloffs on Wall Street by moderating his policies? There’s no sign of that yet. On Fox, the president, who endlessly claims credit for market rallies on social media warned, “You can’t really watch the stock market.” He added: “If you look at China, they have a 100-year perspective. We have a quarter. We go by quarters.” Last week, however, Trump didn’t even have a 100-hour perspective – freezing tariffs on Mexico and Canada a day after they’d been imposed, following a poor reaction from the markets and blowback among Republican lawmakers. A new Trump climbdown this week might calm markets. But at some point, volatility itself becomes self-perpetuating and could boost recession fears.

One key question hangs over Trump’s second term: Is the president prepared to pay a political price and to spend significant capital to impose policies that represent a risky break with years of US orthodoxy? He still enjoys loyal support from his base. But rising pressure on Republican members of Congress caused by Elon Musk’s shredding of the federal government showed that the GOP is not immune from the consequences of Trump’s actions. And midterm elections loom next year.

Trump’s presidency is only six weeks old – and if the economy steadies and markets respond, Monday’s panic will be seen as a momentary blip.

But there’s a foreboding sense that a serious moment is approaching.

Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, who correctly called the inflationary spike that marred Biden’s presidency, struck an ominous note Monday as he signed off after an interview with CNN’s Kasie Hunt.

“Good luck to you and your viewers in this challenging time,” he said.

# Europe going nuclear would be a catastrophic mistake

**THE second administration of US President Donald Trump has brought about tectonic shifts in the European security calculus. Growing anxieties about American retrenchment and the collapse of post-World War II security arrangements have sent European leaders scrambling to put forward alternatives.**

Ahead of the German elections last month, Friedrich Merz, the head of the Christian Democratic Union, who was already expected to become the next German chancellor, opined: “We need to have discussions with both the British and the French – the two European nuclear powers – about whether nuclear sharing, or at least nuclear security from the UK and France, could also apply to us”.

Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron said that in response to Merz, he has decided to “open the strategic debate on the protection of our allies on the European continent through our [nuclear] deterrence”.

The proposal for some form of European nuclear sharing arrangement with France and the United Kingdom to protect against threats from Moscow is not new. Versions of it have been floated around for decades.

But today, resurfacing this proposal is not just a

Olamide Samuel

pled by inefficiencies, with only 50 percent of army equipment meeting NATO readiness standards.

Meanwhile, France and the UK lack the conventional force multipliers – global surveillance networks, intelligence capabilities, or even complete nuclear triads – that underpin US extended deterrence. Even if every euro cent of the European Union’s recently announced 800 billion-euro (\$867 billion) defence boost were spent on nuclear weapons programmes, cold-starting the sort of production complexes required for a credible deterrent would still take decades.

Attempting to replicate NATO’s nuclear-coalition model at a European level ignores six decades of integrated command structures and fails to address hybrid threats now defining modern conflict.

What is more, replacing one dependency with another solves nothing. Proponents claim nuclear sharing offers protection, but the reality is that it can lead to strategic subjugation.

Neither France nor the UK is likely to give up control over its nuclear arsenals and transfer it to the EU. That means that a nuclear-sharing agreement would reduce Germany and other European countries participating in the arrangement to Franco-British warhead warehouses

**Amid the growing unpredictability of United States-Russia relations under the second Trump administration, Europe must pivot from nuclear escapism to a bold agenda of diplomatic engagement on nuclear disarmament.**

**The fantasy of European nuclear sharing. The proposal for European nuclear sharing founders on arithmetic and strategic reality. Russia’s nuclear arsenal boasts 5,580 warheads, including hypersonic Avangard glide vehicles and Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). This dwarfs the combined Anglo-French stockpile of 515 warheads. This asymmetry isn’t merely quantitative; it is also doctrinal. Moscow’s “escalate to de-escalate” strategy represents a calculated approach to conflict escalation designed to coerce adversaries into concessions. It is a strategy the British and French nuclear arsenals, optimised for minimal deterrence, cannot counter. Data on defence spending reveals a deeper flaw: Europeans do not have the funds or the technological capabilities to carry it out while executing their ambitious rearmament plans. Germany’s 90.6-billion euro (\$98bn) military budget remains crippled by inefficiencies, with only 50 percent of army equipment meeting NATO readiness standards. Meanwhile, France and the UK lack the conventional force multipliers – global surveillance networks, intelligence capabilities, or even complete nuclear triads – that underpin US extended deterrence. Even if every euro cent of the European Union’s recently announced 800 billion-euro (\$867 billion) defence boost were spent on nuclear weapons programmes, cold-starting the sort of production complexes required for a credible deterrent would still take decades. Attempting to replicate NATO’s nuclear-coalition model at a European level ignores six decades of integrated command structures and fails to address hybrid threats now defining modern conflict. What is more, replacing one dependency with another solves nothing. Proponents claim nuclear sharing offers protection, but the reality is that it can lead to strategic subjugation. Neither France nor the UK is likely to give up control over its nuclear arsenals and transfer it to the EU. That means that a nuclear-sharing agreement would reduce Germany and other European countries participating in the arrangement to Franco-British warhead warehouses with no real agency. This Potemkin deterrence—all ceremony, no substance—would only further irritate Washington.**

geopolitical miscalculation; it is a strategic dead end. It reflects a misreading of both the nuclear balance of power and the existential risks of fragmenting Europe’s security architecture further. Rather than bolstering deterrence, this gambit risks accelerating the very instability it seeks to avert.

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Trump has already shown that he has no qualms about abandoning allies if he sees no benefit for the US strategic interest. His recent moves to stop intelligence sharing and military aid for Ukraine and his conditioning mutual defence on military spending have exposed NATO’s fraying norms – the alliance is witnessing a collapse of shared purpose.

As experts note, Trump’s “MAGA Carta” foreign policy explicitly rejects strategic altruism. A European nuclear caucus would signal panic, validating Trump’s transactional world view while undermining NATO’s cohesion.

A European nuclear club would deepen fragmentation, emboldening revisionist actors like Russia and China while diverting resources from critical gaps in AI advancement, sustainable economic output, and energy resilience that define 21st-century power.

The economic argument compounds the folly.

Pouring billions of euros from Europe’s finite resources into redundant warheads while neglecting practical gaps in conventional capability isn’t statecraft—it’s generational malpractice.

Disarmament and fiscal realpolitik

The EU’s opportunity lies not in nuclear posturing, but in revitalising arms control and mediation.

The collapse of the US-Russia strategic dia-

logue since the invasion of Ukraine has left critical arms control frameworks in disarray.

The New START treaty, which limits deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 each for Russia and the US, remains the last pillar of bilateral arms control. Its expiration in 2026 without a successor would mark the first time since 1972 that the world’s nuclear superpowers operate without mutually verified limits—a scenario that could trigger a new nuclear arms race.

Herein lies Europe’s opportunity. Rather than pursuing a European nuclear umbrella, it could lead efforts to revive nuclear disarmament dialogue.

Austria, an EU member, has already played a key role in nuclear talks between the West and Iran as well as the 2020 US-Russia-China trilateral arms control discussions. This positions it as an ideal venue for restarting negotiations on nuclear risk reduction issues, especially at a time when Washington is open to renewed dialogue with Moscow.

Taking a lead on nuclear disarmament would be the sort of leadership that would reflect a more mature interpretation of security policy, as opposed to seeking an impossible nuclear deterrence.

Some critics maintain that negotiating with Russia rewards aggression.

**Amid the growing unpredictability of United States-Russia relations under the second Trump administration, Europe must pivot from nuclear escapism to a bold agenda of diplomatic engagement on nuclear disarmament.**

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sion. Yet history shows even bitter adversaries can cooperate on arms control when interests align.

The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which eliminated 2,692 missiles, was finalised after years of heightened tensions between the USSR and the US in the early 1980s.

The treaty succeeded not because US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev trusted each other, but because dismantling missiles saved both sides a significant amount of funds that would have gone into continuing the arms race and maintaining the destroyed ordinance.

Today, with Russia’s economy faltering amid the war in Ukraine and Trump’s fixation with cost-cutting, there is an opportunity to pursue another deal if disarmament is framed not as idealism, but as fiscal pragmatism. Europe can help broker a deal that serves all parties’ wallets—and humanity’s survival.

The unintended consequences of Trump’s first-term nuclear gambits – escalated arms racing, eroded alliances, and emboldened adversaries – offer cautionary lessons. His second term, however, can offer an opportunity to shift the Doomsday Clock back from its position of 89 seconds to midnight.

Europe now faces a choice: to cling to Cold War relics while the planet burns, or to pioneer a security paradigm prioritising planetary survival over great-power vanity. The decision it makes will define not just Europe’s future—but all of humanity’s.





# MoU signed between SCCI and Enablers

## F.P Report

PESHAWAR: A strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and “Enablers”, a largest e-Commerce network to jointly work for promotion of online businesses and trade.

SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan and Head of “Enablers” Peshawar Campus Nosheen signed the agreement during a ceremony held at the chamber house.

On the occasion, the chamber senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, vice

president Shehryar Khan, officials from Enablers, Secretary General SCCI Muqtasid Ahsan and other officials were present.

Officials from Enablers briefed the meeting about main objectives of the agreement and the organization. The MoU aims to provide an e-commerce platform for men and women businesspeople to promote their products at local and international markets in an efficient manner.

Both sides have agreed to jointly conduct training and awareness sessions regarding e-commerce and business and skill development of entrepreneurs in

various trades.

As per agreement, the Enablers will offer upto 50 percent concessions to members of the SCCI on various training programs.

Fazal Moqem while speaking on the occasion termed the agreement as an important step towards promotion of E-commerce and businesses.

The SCCI chief noted the importance of e-businesses has increased in the rapidly advancing world, urging the government and private sector to play a proactive role in promotion of online businesses and trade.

Moqem asserted that

adopting the latest methods for promotion of products has become crucial while keeping in view the fast moving world and other challenges.

The chamber president asked men and women businesspeople to equip themselves with advanced technology and tools to promote their products in a befitting way at local and international markets.

He hoped members will get information through training about e-commerce under the agreement that will help to promote online business and make them economically vibrant and self-sufficient.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan and Head of “Enablers” Peshawar Campus Nosheen signing Memorandum of Understanding.

# State Bank BSC celebrates International Women’s Day 2025

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan Banking Services Corporation (SBP BSC North Nazimabad) celebrated International Women's Day to honor high-achieving women across various sectors. The event brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from Karachi Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KWCCI), Accelerate Prosperity, NIC Hyderabad, Rupani Foundation, Born2Run, Bioniks, Hands Foundation, Sindh Enterprise Development Fund (SEDF), Dastaan Travels, Entrepreneurs Bench, and female officials from banks like HBL, Meezan, Habib Metro, NBP, Albaraka, UBL, Ameen, and Sindh Bank.

The event began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by an opening address by Mr. Muhammad Faheem Maqsood, ACM Financial Inclusion Division at SBP BSC NNO. He highlighted SBP's Banking on Equality

(BoE) Policy and its impact on women's financial inclusion.

Several influential speakers shared their success stories and initiatives. Dr. Ayesha Zulfiqar, a UN Award winner for Innovation in South Asia, introduced Bioniks, Pakistan's first bionics startup offering affordable, brainwave-controlled prosthetics. Ms. Sana Shah from NIC Hyderabad emphasized the importance of mentorship and aligning business ideas with financing opportunities. Athletes Sana Wamiq and Allayama Bhutto shared their journeys, breaking barriers in sports and fashion design. Ms. Bhutto, who overcame a severe leg injury, credited Born2Run for her success in running.

Ms. Zehra Shalwani, founder of Dastaan Travels, highlighted Pakistan's tourism potential and the need for public-private partnerships. She raised concerns about banks' reluctance to offer concessional financing for women, which was

addressed by Ms. Hina Nasir, Senior Officer, SBP BSC NNO. Ms. Nasir explained that SBP has deployed Women Champions across 14,786 branches to facilitate female customers and improve service quality.

Ms. Mashal Mabood, Lead Focal Person at HBL, stressed that financial literacy empowers women to unlock economic opportunities. Ms. Sonia Nawab from Entrepreneurs Bench highlighted the importance of mental wellness in enhancing productivity, while Ms. Mahnoor Hussain, HBL's first female Security Head, shared her journey of success in a male-dominated field.

The ceremony concluded with souvenirs for speakers and certificates for Student Ambassadors, who will promote SBP initiatives in academic institutions. Mr. Salman Ali Khan from SBP introduced Accelerate Prosperity, fostering networking between attendees and Women Chamber of Commerce members to support women entrepreneurs.

training for mothers, and Ms. Rahila Rahim from Hands Foundation shared details of interest-free, collateral-free loans for women entrepreneurs.

Rizwan Khaleel Shamsi, Chief Manager of SBP BSC North Nazimabad, concluded the event by expressing his appreciation for the participants and reaffirming SBP's commitment to women's financial inclusion. He emphasized the pivotal role of women in Pakistan's history, drawing inspiration from Fatima Jinnah's legacy. "SBP is committed to promoting women's rights through its Banking on Equality Policy," he said.

The ceremony concluded with souvenirs for speakers and certificates for Student Ambassadors, who will promote SBP initiatives in academic institutions. Mr. Salman Ali Khan from SBP introduced Accelerate Prosperity, fostering networking between attendees and Women Chamber of Commerce members to support women entrepreneurs.

## Exports to US increase 11.23%

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to the United States witnessed an increase of 11.23 percent during the first seven months of fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the exports of the corresponding months of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to the US were recorded at US \$3.565 billion during July-January (2024-25) against exports of US \$3.205 billion during July-January (2023-24), SBP data revealed.

On a year-to-year basis, the exports to the US also surged to \$547.752 million in January 2025 against the export of \$456.508 million in January 2024.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to the US witnessed an increase of 8.57 percent during January 2025 as compared to the exports of \$504.481 million in December 2024, the SBP data revealed.

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 7.56 percent in the first seven months, from US \$17.826 billion to US \$19.175 billion, the SBP data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from the US into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$1.268 billion against US \$1.034 billion last year, showing an increase of 22.63 percent in July-January (2024-25).

On a year-on-year basis, the imports for the US also increased to US \$188.310 million in January 2025, against the export of US \$139.783 million in January 2024.

The competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) initiated an inquiry in May 2021 following informal complaints regarding possible cartelization by local flat steel manufacturers.

Complaints suggested that prices of flat steel products were moving in parallel, and there were allegations of an artificial shortage in the market.

Price analysis indicated a pattern of price parallelism among the major players, with price changes occurring simultaneously and in identical quantum.

Between July 2020 and December 2023, the prices of cold-rolled coil (CRC) increased by Rs. 146,000 per metric ton for ISL and Rs. 145,900 per metric ton for ASML, reflecting an average increase of 111 percent.

To further investigate these allegations, the CCP conducted a Search & Inspection at the premises of ISL and ASML on June 12, 2024.

The impounded evidence suggests that the two companies allegedly coordinated with each other before implementing any price changes and discounts.

As per the inquiry report, ISL and ASML also exchanged commercially sensitive information on raw material purchase prices, allowing them to align their final product pricing.

Flat steel products, including Cold Rolled Coil (CRC) and Galvanized Coil (GC), are widely used in various industries such as electronics, automotive, agriculture, and manufacturing.

Any anti-competitive behavior in this sector has far-reaching implications, affecting industrial costs and consumer prices.

The CCP's investigation, however, found no evidence of collusive activity by the smaller local competitor, Hadeed Pakistan Limited (HPL).

Following these findings, the CCP has issued Show Cause Notices to ISL and ASML.

The Commission will pass a final order in the case after reviewing the written and oral arguments presented by the parties.

## Chinese yuan weakens to 7.1741

BEIJING (APP): The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 8 pips to 7.1741 against the US dollar Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

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

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

# Stock Exchange loses 178 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 178.69 points, a negative change of 0.16 percent, closing at 114,177.66 points as compared to 114,356.34 points on the last trading day.

A total of 318,518,329 shares were traded during the day as compared to 324,654,460 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs22.883 billion against Rs20.704 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 438 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 132 of them recorded gains and 233 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 73 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Sui South Gas with 26,385,255 shares at Rs37.03 per share, Bank of Punjab with 22,122,890 shares at Rs13.16 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 18,118,609 shares at Rs1.33 per share.

Macter International Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs32.34 per share closing at

Rs355.73 whereas runner-up was Premium Textile Mills Limited with Rs29.90 rise in its share price to close at Rs439.90.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs412.91 per share price, closing at Rs23,286.00, whereas the runner-up was PIA Holding Company Limited with Rs82.23 decline in its per share price to Rs809.20.

Rupee gains 11 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 11 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.95 against the previous day's closing of Rs280.06.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.25 and Rs281.75, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs2.09 to close at Rs305.22 against the last day's closing of Rs303.13, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.90, whereas an increase of 72 paise was

witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs361.72 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs361.00.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 and 01 paise to close at Rs 76.22 and Rs74.64, respectively.

**Gold prices remain unchanged at Rs306,000 per tola for 2nd consecutive day**

The price of 24 karat per tola gold remained unchanged at Rs306,000 for second consecutive day on Tuesday. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat and 10 gram 22 karat also witnessed no change and were traded at Rs 262,345 and Rs 240,491 respectively. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver were also sold on same rates at Rs,3,388 and Rs,2,904 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market remained constant at \$2,910 whereas that of silver remained unchanged at \$32.50, the Association reported.

# European and Asian stock markets diverged

LONDON (AFP/APP): European and Asian stock markets diverged Tuesday after a sharp sell-off on Wall Street fuelled by fears about the US economy as President Donald Trump presses ahead with steep tariffs.

Traders had initially welcomed Trump's election win in late 2024, optimistic that his promised tax cuts and deregulation would boost the world's biggest economy and help equities push to further record highs.

But there is now a growing pessimism that a recession could be on the cards amid warnings that tariffs imposed on key trading partners will reignite inflation, forcing the Federal Reserve to again start raising interest rates.

"Markets are jittery and volatility seems like the only certainty while the White House pushes hard to usher in a new era, seemingly happy for stock markets to be collateral damage," said Matt Britzman, senior equity analyst at Hargreaves

Lansdown.

The president's weekend comments that the economy was facing "a period of transition" and his refusal to rule out a recession did little to soothe investor worries.

London's stock market dipped in morning deals Tuesday, while Paris and Frankfurt edged higher, helped by gains for infrastructure and defence stocks on European spending plans.

A new wave of US tariffs due this week will see levies of 25 percent on steel and aluminium imports.

Fears about the future battered Wall Street on Monday, where the Nasdaq tanked four percent owing to another plunge in high-flying tech titans including Apple, Amazon and Tesla.

Asia followed suit in early trading Tuesday, with big losses across the board, though they recovered a bit as the day wore on.

Tokyo was hit after Japanese Trade Minister Yoji Muto said he had failed to win an immediate

exemption from US tariffs.

Hong Kong was flat and Shanghai ended higher despite falling sharply at the open.

US futures also inched higher, having first extended Monday's losses.

"Trump's trade policies, including ongoing tariff discussions, are creating uncertainty and fears of economic slowdown," said Shaun Murison, senior market analyst at the online trading platform IG.

"These tariffs could potentially elevate prices and complicate efforts to reduce interest rates," he said.

The weak sentiment also filtered through to bitcoin, which tumbled below \$80,000 on Monday to its lowest level since November -- having hit a record of close to \$110,000 in January.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Maryam Mahnoor Civil Judge- VII, Bannu. Suit No.4/1 Institution 2024 Next date of hearing 18-03-2025 Case Title: Shahtamas Khan Vs Mst Qubli Bibi etc. Notice to, (14) Ibrahim Khan Son Laiq zaman R/o Abdullah akbar kaki bannu (22) Mohammad Rasheed Khan son of Mohammad Ayub Khan R/o Lalazar Kaloni Farooq Street House No.1. Peshawar University Peshawar (23) Maqsood Khan Son of Muhammad Ayub Khan (24) Mal Afsarah wife Farooq Khan R/o Talian kaki Bannu (25) Saleha Bibi wife of Muhammad Farid Khan R/o Muhammad Amir Kaki bannu (27) Wali Khan (28) Mir Qad Ayaz (29) Abdul Ali Khan alias Muhammad Ali Sons of Rais Khan R/o Raja Singh Tehsil Laki District Bannu. In the above case titled the service of above defendant (s) is not possible through ordinary means, therefore, you defendant (s) is / are informed through this publication that on 18-03-2025 at 8.00 AM. You has / have to appear before this court either personally or through attorney or through counsel to pursue the suit noted above, otherwise, Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you. Seal of this court.

# Harnessing the economic potential of Pakistan’s minerals landscape

## Zeeshan Zaidi

Pakistan is blessed with an abundance of mineral resources that hold immense potential for economic growth and industrial development. The country's vast reserves of minerals, including coal, copper, gold, iron ore, chromite, and precious stones, provide a solid foundation for the mining sector to thrive and contribute in the country's economic development.

Despite its huge potential, the mineral sector currently contributes around 3.2% to the country's GDP, with exports accounting for only 0.1% of the world's total. However, with increasing exploration, foreign investment, and infrastructural improvements, Pakistan's mining industry is poised for significant expansion.

Pakistan's mineral-rich

landscape covers an outcrop area of approximately 600,000 square kilometers. With 92 known minerals, 52 of which are commercially exploited, Pakistan produces an estimated 68.52 million metric tons of minerals annually. The sector supports over 5,000 operational mines and 50,000 small and medium enterprises (SMEs), providing direct employment to 300,000 workers.

Some of the country's most notable mineral reserves include the world's second-largest salt mines, the fifth-largest copper and gold deposits, and significant coal reserves. Furthermore, the country holds vast quantities of bauxite, gypsum, and precious stones such as ruby, topaz, and emerald, which offer considerable export potential.

Globally, mineral resources play a crucial role in eco-

nomics development. Many developed countries, including China, Italy, Turkey, Spain, and Brazil, have effectively leveraged their mineral wealth to fuel industrial growth, increase employment, and enhance per capita income.

Pakistan's mineral sector holds similar promise. With strategic planning and investment, the country can improve trade, generate employment, and facilitate infrastructure development, ultimately accelerating economic progress.

Enhanced mineral exploration and value addition can significantly increase revenue. Many countries import raw minerals, refine them, and export value-added products. Pakistan has the potential to follow suit by establishing mineral processing and refining industries, leading to higher-value

exports and reduced dependency on raw material exports.

Pakistan's mining sector is increasingly attracting foreign investment, with global firms eyeing the country's untapped mineral reserves. The Reko Diq copper and gold project, located in Balochistan's Chagai district, is the world's largest untapped copper reserve and stands as a milestone for Pakistan's mining ambitions.

The project, revived by Canada's Barrick Gold, is expected to start producing copper and gold by 2028, with an initial investment of \$5.5 billion. According to Mark Bristow, CEO of Barrick Gold, which owns a 50% stake in the project, the reserve is expected to generate approximately \$74 billion in free cash flow over the next 37 years, based on consensus long-term prices.

The mine is anticipated to generate \$2.8 billion in annual exports, creating thousands of jobs and transforming the local economy. A planned expansion will further increase copper production to 400,000 tonnes and gold output to 500,000 ounces per year, with an additional investment of \$3.5 billion.

Under an intergovernmental transaction agreement, the federal cabinet has approved the sale of a 15% stake in the Reko Diq project to Saudi Arabia. This underscores the region's potential as a hub for foreign investments in the country's mining sector. Saudi Arabian mining company, Manara Minerals will acquire a 15% stake in the mining project, potentially involving an investment of \$1 billion.

Pakistan's commitment to infrastructure development

is crucial to unlocking the full potential of the mining industry. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is playing a pivotal role in transforming the transportation and export logistics of mineral resources. Gwadar Port and Port Qasim are set to enhance mineral exports, while improved road and rail networks will facilitate better connectivity between mining regions and industrial hubs.

Logistics for the Reko Diq mine would be managed through a railway track that is being established in partnership with Pakistan Railway. The railway tracks would essentially entail moving mining supplies to the mine from Karachi and eventually exporting copper concentrate and gold from the mine to Karachi for export.

Beyond Reko Diq, Balochistan harbors over 400 minerals, including oil, gas, uranium, and coal, with the potential to fuel Pakistan's energy and industrial needs for a century. Efforts are also underway to establish refineries, which will allow Pakistan to move up the value chain and reduce reliance on raw material exports.

Recognizing the potential of the mining sector, the government is finalizing the National Minerals Harmonization Framework 2025, a comprehensive policy aimed at attracting investment and formalizing regulations at both the provincial and national levels. The framework will provide incentives to local and foreign investors, streamline mining regulations, and facilitate public-private partnerships.





In brief

Jorgenson wins 3rd stage of Paris-Nice race

NEVERS (AFP): Matteo Jorgenson helped power Visma-Lease a Bike to victory in the third stage of the Paris-Nice race on Tuesday, a team time-trial around the town of Nevers. The result saw the American all-rounder, the defending champion, back at the top of the overall standings ahead of teammate Jonas Vingegaard. On the 28.4km circuit, the Dutch team finished 15 seconds ahead of Jayco-AlUla, with Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe a further 10sec adrift. "I'm proud of the boys," said Jorgenson. "I think we did the plan as well as we could and I'm happy with the commitment of everyone." "I don't take it for granted to have six riders so strong and committed next to me. We wanted to use our two 'motorbikes', Per (Strand Hagenes) and Edo (Affini). "They did their turns before the steep climb and the goal was to have four of us on top. Then it was about navigating the last corners as fast as possible to the finish." Jorgenson said he was excited to race with the leader's yellow jersey. "I didn't wear it in race last year, I took it on the last day," he said. "I want just to feel what it is to race with the Maillot Jaune. It's iconic."

Arsenal will keep fighting: Arteta

LONDON (AFP): Mikel Arteta said Arsenal are focused on "fighting to win every game" even though their Premier League dream appears to be over as they eye the next round of the Champions League. The second-placed Gunners trail Premier League leaders Liverpool by 15 points after Sunday's 1-1 draw at Manchester United extended their winless league run to three matches. It is a crushing disappointment for Arsenal, who have finished as runners-up to Manchester City for the past two seasons. Arsenal, who have one foot in the Champions League quarter-finals after their 7-1 first-leg away win over PSV Eindhoven last week, host the Dutch side at the Emirates in Wednesday's reverse fixture. "We are going to carry on fighting to win every game," Spanish coach Arteta said at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday. "There are the demands we put on ourselves in every competition. We are very much conscious that the demands for this football club are to reach the highest level and to win football matches. "There's always improvement. We have talked about what we can do better, it's about execution. My job is to give the players as many tools so we can deliver again." Despite missing injured forwards Bukayo Saka and Kai Havertz, Arsenal had six different scorers in their crushing victory over PSV. The Gunners, who have never won the Champions League, will face the winners of the tie between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid in the next round should they advance, as expected, on Wednesday. "It's a competition that we have a lot of enthusiasm for. We have been very consistent and tomorrow can put us in an exciting position," Arteta said. France international defender William Saliba is keen to help guide his side to their first trophy since Arsenal's 2020 FA Cup triumph against Chelsea. "I think we are very close, we need to keep going," Saliba said, referring to Arsenal's trophy ambitions.

Mohammad Yousuf confirms availability for Pakistan team's New Zealand tour



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's batting coach Mohammad Yousuf on Tuesday confirmed his availability for the New Zealand tour after reporting improvement in his daughter's health.

The development came hours after it was reported that the former captain withdrew from the Pakistan cricket team's tour to New Zealand due to the deteriorating health of his daughter.

Report said that the national side would be without the batting coach after Mohammad Yousuf notified the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) of his decision.

However, the former Pakistan captain has now reversed his decision on the back of an improvement in the health of his daughter.

Explaining his decision, Mohammad Yousuf said that doctors have informed the family about improvement in his daughter's health.

"Touring with the Pakistan cricket team is a national duty and I am going to discharge it," he said in a statement.

It is to be noted here that Pakistan's white-ball tour of New Zealand will kick off with the first T20I in Christchurch on March 16. The Pakistan cricket

team will then travel to Dunedin to play the second game on March 18.

The third match will be played in Auckland on March 21, while the subsequent games are scheduled in Mount Maunganui and Wellington on March 23 and 26, respectively.

Following the conclusion of the T20I series, the two sides will face off in Napier in the first ODI, scheduled for March 29.

The second ODI will be played on April 2 in Hamilton, while Mount Maunganui will host the third and final ODI on April 5.

Paul Pogba free to return to pitch as doping ban ends

PARIS (AFP): Paul Pogba can return to competition from Tuesday as the former France star's 18-month doping ban expired -- but he needs to find a club.

The player who graced the midfield of Manchester United and Juventus is hoping to put three chaotic years behind him and is searching for a new employer with a view to playing in the 2026 World Cup, with David Beckham's MLS side Inter Miami among his possible options.

The 91-times capped midfielder suffered through repeated injuries and patchy form that led to his departure from United in 2022. He returned for a second stint at Juventus, where problems continued to dog him.

A failed drugs test after a game in Italy in August 2023 resulted in a four-year doping ban which was reduced on appeal.

Pogba blamed a food supplement prescribed by a doctor he consulted in the United States for the positive test. Juventus terminated his contract last November, but Pogba "is training at 1,000 percent, he's in good spirits, he has received many offers", a member of his entourage insisted.

His ultimate dream remains next year's World Cup, but a player who turns 32 this week would first have to convince France coach Didier Deschamps.

Pogba is in regular contact with Deschamps, "one of his advisors for sporting decisions", according to one of the player's close friends. But who could be interested in signing a player whose last match dates back to September 3, 2023 when he lined up Juventus?

In January, Pogba said on social media he had received "proposals, not very interesting stuff", such as "going to play in Russia, but that's not the goal".

A contract, he admitted, "doesn't depend on me, but on a lot of other things".

Inter Miami could be a solution. Pogba lives in Florida and was in the stands for Inter's first MLS match this season, against New York City on February 23. He is working on his physical condition with the fitness coach of Lionel Messi, the team's Argentinian superstar.

Pogba has been sharing photos of his intensive training sessions with his 62.7 million Instagram followers, along with fashion shots, his other passion.

French club Marseille are also reported to be interested with football director Medhi Benatia having played alongside Pogba at Juventus.

But Marseille may not want to take the risk of enlisting a player whose form will be uncertain after such a long absence.

Pogba's personal life has also been through a turbulent period -- he was the victim of a kidnapping and extortion case in 2022 for which his brother Mathias and five of his childhood friends received prison terms.

"I can finally turn the page on this extremely painful period," Pogba said after the trial ended in December last year.

"This conclusion is an opportunity for everyone to focus on the future."

Bracewell leads depleted New Zealand in Pakistan T20 series

WELLINGTON (AFP): Michael Bracewell will captain New Zealand for the first time on home soil when they meet Pakistan in a five-game T20 series, leading a squad named Tuesday missing several key players because of the IPL.

Bracewell starred as the Black Caps reached the final of the Champions Trophy and is one of seven players from that one-day team selected for the T20s.

But a host of top names are not available due to Indian Premier League commitments, including regular skipper Mitchell Santner, along with Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson and Glenn Phillips.

Kane Williamson also

made himself unavailable for the series, which gets under way on Sunday in Christchurch.

"It's a great honor and a real privilege to captain your country," said Bracewell, who led the side on their white-ball tour of Pakistan last year but has yet to take the reins at home.

"Mitch Santner's done a great job since taking over as white-ball captain and I'll really just be trying to build on his good work and create an enjoyable environment for the guys to perform in.

"Pakistan are always a dangerous short-form side with lots of power and pace and we know they'll be hurting after an early exit in the Champions

Trophy," he added.

Spinner Ish Sodhi was recalled while paceman Ben Sears is back after recovering from a torn hamstring.

Finn Allen, Jimmy Neesham and Tim Seifert were also included as both teams start building up to next year's T20 World Cup in India.

**New Zealand squad:** Michael Bracewell (capt), Finn Allen, Mark Chapman, Jacob Duffy, Zak Foulkes (games 4 and 5 only), Mitch Hay, Matt Henry (games 4 and 5 only), Kyle Jamieson (games 1, 2 and 3 only), Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke (games 1, 2 and 3 only), Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi.

Trial of medical team in Maradona death starts in Argentina



BUENOS AIRES (Reuters): Argentina began a long-awaited trial on Tuesday of the medical team for football star Diego Maradona, who died in 2020, in a case that has riled emotions in the South American country where the World Cup winner is still revered.

Family members and the accused arrived at the court on the outskirts of capital city Buenos Aires. Maradona's nurses, brain surgeon and psychiatrist are among those accused of homicide by negligence.

Outside the San Isidro appeals court, fans held up placards with the message "Justice for D10S," using a nickname based on Maradona's shirt number and the Spanish word for God.

Maradona is considered one of the greatest football players ever. Seven mem-

bers of the medical team are due in court in a trial expected to last several months. An eighth member faces a trial by jury in July. Maradona died at home in November 2020 from heart failure at age 60 while recovering from surgery to remove a blood clot days earlier. His medical team reject the charges of "simple homicide with eventual intent" in the treatment of the former Boca Juniors and Napoli player.

If convicted, they could face prison sentences of between eight and 25 years.

Maradona's death rocked the South American nation where he was revered for leading Argentina to World Cup glory in 1986, prompting an outpouring of grief and finger-pointing over who was to blame after Maradona's years-long battle with drug addiction and

ill health. More than 100 witness testimonies are due to be presented to the three-judge court, ranging from family members and doctors to friends and journalists. Prosecutors on the first day of the trial will read out the indictment.

Investigators classified the case in 2021 as culpable homicide, a crime similar to involuntary manslaughter, because they determined the accused were aware of the seriousness of Maradona's health condition and failed to take the necessary measures to save him.

"There are more than enough elements to prove that Diego was not treated properly," said Mario Baudry, lawyer for one of Maradona's sons who together with other family members brought the case forward to reporters. "Justice has accused them of homicide with eventual intent. Let's hope that justice is done, that's what we all want," the lawyer added.

Those standing trial include psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque, psychologist Carlos Ángel Díaz, doctor Nancy Edith Forlini, nurse Ricardo Almirón, the chief nurse Mariano Ariel Perroni and clinical physician Pedro Pablo Di Spagna.

Australia to play England in historic day-night Test

MELBOURNE (AFP): Australia will play England under lights at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Test cricket in 2027, it was announced Tuesday.

The match, from March 11-15, will commemorate the first ever Test, played between the two arch-rivals in Melbourne in 1877.

It will be the first time the MCG has hosted a men's day-night Test after a successful women's Ashes pink ball clash at the venue

earlier last month.

"The 150th Anniversary Test at the MCG will be one of the great cricket events," said Cricket Australia newly-installed chief Todd Greenberg.

"Playing under lights will be a fantastic way to celebrate both our game's rich heritage and Test cricket's modern evolution.

"This season's Ashes series will whet the appetite for this clash in exactly two years, and we look forward to celebrating this historic

occasion further as it draws nearer," he added.

Australia host England for five Tests starting in November this year. The 150th Anniversary Test will follow Australia's home five-Test series against India in 2027, making for a blockbuster summer.

The Melbourne Cricket Ground was the venue for the 100th Centenary Test in 1977 where the Greg Chappell-led Australia beat Tony Greig's England by 45 runs.

Manchester United to build new 100,000-seat stadium

LONDON (AFP): Manchester United on Tuesday announced plans to build a new 100,000-capacity stadium close to their historic Old Trafford home, with co-owner Jim Ratcliffe promising it would be the "world's greatest" football ground.

The momentous decision by the Premier League club comes after an extensive consultation process on whether to develop their creaking current ground or move.

The stadium, which will be built on land surrounding Old Trafford, will cost around £2 billion (\$2.6 billion) and the timescale for the project is five years.

United, 20-time English league champions, are one of the world's most iconic football clubs but have fallen behind rivals such as Manchester City and Liverpool over the past decade.

They are having a dismal season under current manager Ruben Amorim, lan-



guishing 14th in the Premier League table and knocked out of both domestic cup competitions.

British billionaire Ratcliffe himself this week told the BBC some of the club's players are "not good enough" and some are "overpaid".

Scaled models and conceptual images for United's new stadium were revealed

on Tuesday at the London headquarters of architects Foster + Partners, appointed in September to design the stadium district.

"Today marks the start of an incredibly exciting journey to the delivery of what will be the world's greatest football stadium, at the centre of a regenerated Old Trafford," Ratcliffe said in a club statement.

"Our current stadium has served us brilliantly for the past 115 years, but it has fallen behind the best arenas in world sport."

United said the stadium and a wider regeneration project had the potential to deliver an additional £7.3 billion per year to the UK economy, including the possible creation of 92,000 new jobs.

A joint task force was created last year to explore options for regenerating the Old Trafford area of Greater Manchester, with the stadium development at its heart.

It was led by Sebastian Coe, president of World Athletics and chief organiser of the 2012 London Olympics, and also included the mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham.

Omar Berrada, United's chief executive, said the club's long-term objective was to "have the world's best football team playing in the world's best stadium", promising further consultation with fans.

Old Trafford, United's home since 1910, is England's biggest club ground with a capacity of around 74,000 but criticism of the stadium has grown in recent years, with issues including a leaking roof.

The proposed new stadium will rank as Europe's second biggest, behind only

Barcelona's Camp Nou, which will accommodate about 105,000 fans once an upgrade is completed.

Ferguson backing The move to a new ground has been backed by former United boss Alex Ferguson, who won 13 Premier League titles during his reign of nearly 27 years that ended in 2013.

"Old Trafford holds so many special memories for me personally, but we must be brave and seize this opportunity to build a new home, fit for the future, where new history can be made," he said.

United, whose struggles on the pitch are matched by problems off it, are around £1 billion in debt and have yet to say how they will pay for the new stadium.

But Berrada said Tuesday he was confident the club would find a way to finance the stadium as it was a "very attractive investment opportunity".

Foster + Partners designed the new Wembley

stadium and the Lusail stadium in Qatar, which hosted the 2022 World Cup final.

Norman Foster, founder of Foster + Partners, said United's new stadium would feature an umbrella design sheltering a public plaza that is "twice the size of Trafalgar Square" in London.

The design will feature three masts described as "Trident", which the architects say will be 200 metres high and visible from 40 kilometres (25 miles) away.

The Manchester United Supporters' Trust said it was vital that fans were consulted throughout the process. The group said in a statement: "Will it drive up ticket prices and force out local fans? Will it harm the atmosphere, which is consistently fans' top priority in the ground?"

"Will it add to the debt burden which has held back the club for the last two decades? Will it lead to reduced investment in the playing side at a time when it is so badly needed?"





## In brief

### PFA discards 1,000 litres adulterated milk

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Rawalpindi officials during Sehri time on Tuesday destroyed some 1,000 litres of adulterated milk. According to a PFA spokesman, the food authority teams set checkpoints at the GT road and inspected vehicles supplying milk to different local outlets. About 135,000 litres of milk were checked, and on screening of samples some 1,000 litres were found adulterated with water, which were wasted on the spot, the spokesman said. A total fine of Rs 105,000 was imposed on the drivers of four vehicles carrying adulterated milk, he added. The spokesman said that the PFA's special teams were working during Sehri and Ifrit time, and urged the citizens to contact the helpline 1223 in case of any complaint.

### Drug paddler jailed for 9 years

RAWALPINDI (APP): A court on Tuesday sentenced a drug paddler to imprisonment along with the fine. Criminal Asim Ali, arrested from Wah Cantt in 2024, was sentenced to 9 years in prison and a fine of Rs 80,000. According to the details, Wah Cantt Police arrested the criminal in November 2024 and recovered 1.66 Kg of hashish from him. After registering a case against and the investigation Doen by the police, the accused was presented in the court. In view of solid evidence and effective prosecution, the court sentenced the criminal to imprisonment along with the fine. CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani while appreciating SSP Investigation and legal teams, urged to further accelerate the operation against the drug supplier. He reiterated that through full scaled operations against the drug suppliers, the scourge of drugs would be eradicated from the society.

### APP staffer's nephew shot dead

RAWALPINDI (APP): The young nephew of APP staffer Raja Nadeem Iqbal has been shot dead, whose dead body was found from a field within the limits of Kallar Syedan Police Station on Tuesday. The police shifted the body of deceased Abdul Rahim Bhatti to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital where it was handed over to the heirs after postmortem, the Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. The deceased's father Abdul Latif, a resident of Qasimabad Rawat, in his complaint informed the police that his son had gone missing from Humak two days ago. He suspected that his son had been killed by his friends. The police started an investigation into the murder after collecting evidence from the crime scene.

### 6 drug peddlers nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police during the ongoing operations against drug peddlers arrested six accused with more than 9.5 kilograms charas on Tuesday. According to the police spokesman, the City Police nabbed two suspects Attaulah and Usman on the recovery of 3.6 kg charas from them. Similarly, the Pirwadhai Police recovered 2.4 kg charas from accused Ayaz while the Ratta Amral Police held accused Bilal with 2.2 kg of the contraband item. Likewise, the Wah Saddar Police also held two accused Asim and Ikramul Haq, and recovered 1.4 kg charas from their possession.

# Kundi hosts joint meeting of PML-N, PPP to formulate strategy for peace

ISLAMABAD (APP): A joint meeting of leaders from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was hosted by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at his residence in Islamabad on Tuesday on formulating a joint strategy to ensure sustainable peace and overall development in the province.

The meeting focused on the overall situation in the province, addressing key concerns such as law and order, economic challenges, and political instability.

Senior PML-N leaders, including Rana Sanaullah, Amir Muqam, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, Khawaja Saad Rafique, and Murtaza Javed Abbasi, participated in the meeting.

From PPP, provincial president Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, provincial general secretary Shuja Khanzada, and Parliamentary leader Ahmad Karim Kundi were in attendance.

The meeting was convened on the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Leaders of both parties expressed deep concern over the deteriorating security situation in KP, emphasizing the urgent need for measures to restore peace and stability. The leaders also agreed to engage like-minded political parties in consultations to strengthen collaborative efforts for the province's progress.

The meeting further

underscored the importance of continued dialogue and consultation between the two major political parties to address the province's issues effectively.

The leaders paid tribute to law enforcement agencies for their sacrifices in combating terrorism and maintaining security. They also honored the martyrs who lost their lives in the fight against terrorism.

Additionally, the meeting criticized the KP government's lack of response to the escalating security concerns, describing it as a matter of grave concern.

Both parties vowed to keep a close watch on the situation and work together for the province's betterment through collective political efforts.

## Zardari committed to Pakistan's stability: Marri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Central Information Secretary of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Shazia Atta Marri Tuesday said that President Asif Zardari remains dedicated to the country's unity and prosperity, consistently upholding the slogan "Pakistan Khappay."

Talking to media persons outside the Parliament House, Shazia Marri said that President Asif Zardari has always prioritized Pakistan's national interests. She highlighted his

recent address to Parliament, where he shed light on key national and international concerns, including the situations in Palestine and Kashmir.

President Asif Zardari, she said, urged the global community to recognize the hardships faced by the Palestinian people.

She said that President Asif Zardari has never harbored political animosity or engaged in political revenge. "As part of the coalition government, he ensures that no actions are taken that

could jeopardize Pakistan's stability or the federation's unity," she added.

Addressing the resurgence of terrorism, she acknowledged the growing security challenges and commended Pakistan's security forces for their relentless efforts in maintaining peace and stability.

She reiterated that under President Asif Zardari's leadership, the government remains committed to addressing critical national issues and ensuring the country's continued progress.



ISLAMABAD: Worker busy repairing CCTV camera at G-9 Markaz in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## Health minister for eliminating substandard medicines

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal on Tuesday said that eliminating counterfeit and substandard medicines is essential for a healthier Pakistan.

The Health Minister said this during visit to Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) where he held a meeting with senior officials of DRAP including newly appointed Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Obaidullah. The CEO DRAP briefed the minister about the institution's functions, performance, and challenges.

While addressing the

DRAP officers, Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal said, "Our decisions directly impact human lives and the outcomes of our decisions and actions should benefit the common man."

Mustafa Kamal directed that the elimination of counterfeit and substandard medicines is imperative. He said, "We must protect human lives from potential threats at all costs."

He said that a coordinated strategy will be developed in collaboration with provincial governments to eliminate counterfeit medicines. Mustafa Kamal said,

"Pharmaceutical industry and local manufacturing should be facilitated and DRAP's policies should be conducive for investment so that foreign manufacturing companies prioritize investing in Pakistan."

He emphasized to increase medicine exports by adopting international standards. The minister added that the journey to elevate DRAP to World Health Organization (WHO) Level-4 should be accelerated.

A National Medicine Policy will be formulated in consultation with all stakeholders, he added.

## NUML students depart for Turkiye under student exchange program

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first batch of students from the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) is set to leave for Duzce University, Turkiye this week under the Student Exchange Program, a milestone initiative aimed at providing students with international academic exposure.

These students were selected through a competitive process, emerging successful from among hundreds of applicants, said a press release on Tuesday. They will now have the opportunity to pursue their studies in Turkiye, gaining invaluable cross-cultural learning experiences.

"This exchange program is a direct outcome of the

Rector NUML's recent visit to Turkiye, during which he visited top universities and signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to establish collaborative opportunities for student and faculty exchanges." This initiative underscores NUML's commitment to expanding global academic partnerships and enhancing the learning experiences of its students.

Rector NUML expressed his gratitude to the Government of Turkiye and Duzce University for their support in facilitating this academic exchange. He emphasized that such collaborations strengthen educational ties between Pakistan and Turkiye, providing stu-

dents with access to world-class learning environments and fostering long-term academic cooperation.

In a candid interaction with the departing students, Director General NUML extended his best wishes and prayers, encouraging them to make the most of this opportunity. He urged them to act as ambassadors of Pakistan, showcasing the country's rich culture, values, and academic excellence on the international stage.

NUML continues to play a pivotal role in facilitating its students' access to international study programs, equipping them with the skills and perspectives needed to thrive in a globally connected world.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal chairing a high-level progress review meeting on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). —APP Photo

## IHC summons IGP ICT in illegal detention case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday summoned Inspector General of Police ICT in person on March 13, in a case regarding alleged illegal detention of a citizen.

IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani heard the case against illegal detention of a citizen Ali Muhammad.

At the outset of hearing, Justice Kayani inquired whether the involved police officials in illegal detention have been arrested, to which DSP Legal Islamabad police informed the court that a joint investigation team (JIT) has been formed against the involved officials in illegal detention of citizen.

He said that the police have summoned the complainant to identify the officials but he didn't come.

Petitioner's lawyer Sher Afzal Murawat argued that the CCTV footage of citizen's abduction is available so there is no need of identification parade.

The lawyer said that the concern police officials are still on their posts. He also said that he has a call recording of the SSP related to the matter.

The court summoned IG Islamabad on March 13, and adjourned the case.

## Two dengue patients reported

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two confirmed dengue patients have been reported in Rawalpindi since January 2025. Lowered temperature due to recent rains caused the rapid growth in dengue fever.

According to the District Health Authority, anti dengue activities have been accelerated to reduce dengue risk. Anti-Dengue meeting was held here on Wednesday, chaired by Commissioner Engr Amir Khattak in which representatives from the health authority informed that 1432 houses were found with a positive larvae presence out of a total of 14,68,978 home checked.

The meeting was attended by Islamabad Administration and Cantonment Boards officers and Divisional Administration officers.

It was briefed that 508 indoor teams were fully engaged in the field, while 1788 outdoor teams have been constituted. It was informed the meeting that actions against 217 were taken including registering 38 FIRs and issuance of 295 challans.

A total of 21 buildings were also sealed due to violation of dengue SOPs, while a fine of Rs1,28,000.0 has been imposed. Speaking during the meeting, the Commissioner urged to work beyond the limits of the number of mosquitoes to deal with dengue.

He also directed to take Islamabad administration and Pindis Cantt Boards on board in anti-dengue activities.

The commissioner further directed to pay special attention to third-party validation to standardize field activities and make the efforts effective.

## SAPM slams PTI's false narratives, urges for national dialogue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Huzaifa Rahman Tuesday condemned the PTI's false narratives, urging them to focus on fostering national dialogue instead to promote unity and address the country's challenges through constructive conversation.

In an exclusive interview with PTV News, he accused the party of consistently spreading false narratives to undermine institutions and harm the country's image. Huzaifa emphasized that our armed forces have made immense sacrifices for the country's

defense, and it is essential to respect and honor them instead of resorting to baseless criticism that damages their reputation.

Responding to a query, SAPM Huzaifa Rahman expressed willingness to engage with PTI, stating that if they approach the national dialogue with sincerity, their concerns will be heard and considered through democratic processes.

SAPM asserted that the nation will never forget the heinous attack on the armed forces on May 9, emphasizing that such incidents are etched in the collective

memory of the country.

He further emphasized that PTI needs to rise above its personal interests and agendas for the greater good. By doing so, PTI can engage in constructive dialogue and contribute to the legislative process, rather than choosing chaos and alienating itself, he added.

SAPM praised fruitful policies and results of Shehbaz Sharif's government, acknowledging their positive impact. He also expressed admiration for PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, highlighting his significant contributions.

## Four students caught cheating in SSC Exams, UMC registered

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Education Board continues surprised visits to ensure a transparent examination system across the division. During the inspections four candidates were caught cheating in the examination here on Tuesday. Unfair Means Cases (UMCs) along with FIRs have been registered against them.

According to the details, Chairman Education Board, Rawalpindi Muhammad Adnan Khan visited various examination centers set up in Rawalpindi for Matriculation First Annual 2025 examination. Controller of Examinations, Tanveer Asghar Awan also visited different examination centers and reviewed the arrangements made by the Education Board.

He said that four candidates were caught red-handed while copying. Among them, Muhammad Wasiq roll number 951381 in Bukharaal, Wasim Akhtar roll number 959198 in Kahuta and Muhammad Wajahat roll number 951596 in Kahuta were found cheating during the examination.

"A UMC case was registered against these three candidates and sent to the Disciplinary Branch Board Office", he said and added that a candidate Malik Ahad Nawaz roll number 952774 was caught red-handed while sitting in the examination hall in place of candidate Qasim Abbasi instead, an FIR was registered against both of them.

The chairman Board said

that effective and comprehensive monitoring of all examination centers was being carried out along with the personnel from the Special Branch on a daily basis. "No compromise is being made on examination SOPs. We are united against the booti mafia and are making an example of its intentions", he said.

He further reiterated that in accordance with the vision of CM Maryam Nawaz, positive steps have been taken in the Matriculation First Annual Examination 2025 by checking merit and transparency. The chairman Education Board urged the invigilators to remain vigilant for their duties to eradicate the menace of Booti mafia.

## Child beggars disrupt daily life in Islamabad's markets

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad's markets and public spaces face an influx of child beggars operating in coordinated groups, sparking demands for urgent intervention, especially in the holy month of Ramadan.

Residents report escalating encounters with minors directed by handlers to solicit money, food, or goods, disrupting daily life and raising alarms over exploitation, as mostly people distribute charity and zakat this month. With Eid shopping also in full swing, crowded commercial zones like Blue Area, Jinnah Super Market, and popular dining strips have become focal points for child begging.

Shoppers and families cite repeated encounters with children who deploy persistent tactics, often working in teams. Talking to APP, Muhammad Asif, a local resident, recounted how weekend meals with his family are frequently interrupted by minors who first demand cash, then insist on food if refused.

"What begins as a single child approaching soon turns into multiple requests. It leaves us uneasy," he said. Hafeez Ullah, another resident, described being surrounded by groups of beggars while shopping. "One person approaches,

then signals others to join. It feels orchestrated," he explained. Many residents suspect adults are directing these children, leveraging public sympathy during the holy month of Ramadan and the festive Eid period.

In response, Islamabad's district administration has intensified efforts to curb organized begging. A recent operation led to the transfer of 25 children found begging to the Edhi Center, a local welfare organization. Officials confirmed that minors are provided shelter and care while authorities attempt to trace families or handlers.

In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon highlighted the need to target those profiting from child exploitation. "This is not just about begging—it's about criminal networks exploiting minors," he stated. Memon called for legal action against organizers under child protection laws and anti-trafficking statutes.

While many welcome the crackdown, critics argue that short-term arrests or re-locations fail to address root causes. Child rights advocates stress that poverty, lack of education, and weak enforcement allow syndicates to thrive.

## Over 6,400 motorists fined

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Traffic police (ITP) fined 6,486 motorists, motorcyclists and public transport drivers for violating traffic laws during the last week.

A police spokesperson told APP on Tuesday that the ITP is committed to ensuring smooth traffic flow in the federal capital while taking legal action against traffic violators.

He said that as part of a special campaign, 818 vehicles with non-standard number plates, 382 motorcyclists without helmets, 2,726 for illegal parking, 575 for driving in the wrong direction, 1,088 for violating red lights, 314 for not wearing seat belts, 167 for using mobile phones while driving, and 416 for using tinted glasses were penalized. Additionally, 416 motorists were fined for other traffic violations.

He said that 686 vehicles and motorcycles were impounded in various police stations for severe violations. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (Retd) Syed Zeeshan Haider urged citizens to comply with traffic laws and cooperate with Islamabad Traffic Police to maintain an efficient traffic system in the city.

Additionally, he said that the ITP is making every possible effort to prevent accidents and ensure the rule of law on an equal basis.



### Alleged killer arrested

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): Security forces have arrested a man accused of murdering an 11-year-old girl in the Bangi district of northern Takhar province, police said. "The suspect, a resident of Mughal Qishlaq village, allegedly stabbed the girl to death due to a family dispute," the police headquarters said in a statement. The detainee is currently under investigation, according to, the statement, which did not mention the suspect's relationship to the victim.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 11, 1446 — Wednesday, March 12, 2025

### China urges lifting of sanctions

KABUL (BNA): The Chinese ambassador to UN has called for the Security Council to lift sanctions imposed on IEA. Ambassador Fu Cong urged the council to amend the sanctions list to foster greater interaction with IE led government. Ambassador Fu emphasized the importance of continued engagement with the Islamic Emirate, noting that an increasing number of countries have initiated dialogue and cooperation with Afghanistan over the past year.

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

## Muscat desires expanded economic ties with Kabul



KABUL (Pajhwok): Oman's Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi has reaffirmed his country's commitment to enhancing political, economic and trade relations with Afghanistan.

He renewed the commitment at a meeting with his Afghan counterpart Amir

Khan Muttaqi in Muscat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said.

A statement from the ministry said the two sides discussed ways of strengthening cooperation between Kabul and Muscat.

Both sides reiterated their determination to opening a new chapter in Kabul-

Muscat relations, focusing on economic cooperation and diplomatic engagement. Welcoming his Afghan counterpart, Al Busaidi renewed Oman's long-standing support for Afghanistan's stability and development.

He expressed optimism about continued exchanges

between the two foreign ministries, stressing the importance of sustained dialogue on exploring new partnership avenues.

For his part, Muttaqi highlighted Afghanistan's achievements, including the end of decades of conflict, the establishment of balanced global and regional relations and restoration of nationwide security.

He underscored these developments as key opportunities for foreign investment, particularly for Omani entrepreneurs and businesspeople.

Expressing gratitude to the Omani government for facilitating operations of the Afghan Embassy in Muscat, Muttaqi outlined key priorities, including issuing work visas for Afghans, facilitating exports to Oman and resuming direct flights between the two countries.

## Do not forget Afghanistan, situation will worsen

KABUL (TOLONews): Arafat Jamal, the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Afghanistan, has called on the world not to forget Afghanistan.

Speaking to TOLONews, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative stressed that given Afghanistan's strategic position in the region, abandoning the country would lead to challenges such as mass migration and regional instability.

Arafat Jamal stated: "Stay with the people of Afghanistan. Whatever you think of the policies or other political situations, the people need you to stay there. If you abandon Afghanistan now, it may turn for the worse, people may start to leave and we will have instability in a very important region in Asia, so don't leave us alone."

His remarks come as the United States, previously the largest donor, has suspended its aid to several countries, including Afghanistan. However, Jamal emphasized that now is not the time to abandon Afghanistan.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative in Afghanistan added: "Don't forget Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a strategically important country. Historically it has been at the center of trade routes and of civilizations. There has been so much effort on Afghanistan—some of it positive, much of it negative. Now is not the time to disappoint Afghanistan."

"Afghanistan has been engaged in war for 40 or 45 years. Its citizens have migrated in the past and continue to do so. Therefore, the United Nations, as a global organization, and its agencies must strengthen their coordination with the world on this issue," Hewad Zazai, a political analyst, told TOLONews.

A few weeks ago, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Afghanistan also urged the world to support Afghanistan, assist millions of people, and prevent a larger crisis in the country.

## 8 km of TAPI pipeline installed in Afghanistan: Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): Homayoon Afghan, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, said that the construction of the TAPI project in Afghanistan has progressed by eight kilometers.

The ministry's spokesperson said that with the improvement of weather conditions, the construction process of this project will accelerate.

TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) is intended to transport Turkmenistan's gas to Pakistan and India, generating an annual revenue of \$400 million for Afghanistan through transit fees.

"So far, about 17.4 kilometers of the pipeline route survey for the TAPI project have been completed. Additionally, 10.2 kilometers of pipe have been

transported to the site, 9.2 kilometers of land have been leveled for its extension, and eight kilometers of pipeline have been welded and installed," stated Homayoon Afghan.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum also emphasized that there are currently no challenges hindering the implementation of the TAPI project in Afghanistan, and the countries involved in this project are committed to completing it within the designated timeframe.

Some economic experts say that the implementation of the TAPI project is extremely important for Afghanistan.

"This project not only brings financial benefits to Afghanistan but will also lower gas prices, allowing

people to benefit from it," said Abdul Shakoor Hadawal, an economic affairs expert.

"Moreover, the TAPI project includes the development of fiber optics and a railway line, which, once completed, will introduce modern technology to the country and create more job opportunities," Stated Mohammad Asif Stanikzai, another economic affairs expert.

It is worth mentioning that the TAPI project is not a standalone initiative; several other projects are integrated with it, including a 500-kilovolt power transmission line from Turkmenistan that will supply electricity to Pakistan via Afghanistan, as well as fiber optic cable installation and railway construction along the gas pipeline route.

## Baghlan tinsmiths call for ban on imported items

P U L - I - K H U M R I (Pajhwok): Several tinsmiths in Pul-i-Khumri, the capital of northern Baghlan province, say their business has improved compared to the past. However, they are calling for a ban on imported products that they locally manufacture.

Currently, dozens of tinsmiths are engaged in producing various metallic household items in a specialized market in the provincial capital. They manufacture buckets, heaters, pipes, teapots, gutters, water tanks, and other metal products, meeting the needs of local customers.

However, they insist that the import of similar products should be restricted to help the local tinworking industry grow.

Abdul Jalil, a 20-year-old tinsmith, stated that his business was doing well. However, he believes that if plastic alternatives and imported Turkish heaters were restricted, the local industry across Afghanistan would experience significant growth.

He added: "Tinworking is a decent business, but the economic situation of the people is not great. If people's financial conditions improve, our business will also flourish."

"We produce high-quality metal products at low prices, but some customers prefer expensive imported goods, such as Turkish heater despite their low quality. If these imports are banned, the tinworking industry will further thrive," he explained.

Abdul Sattar, another tinsmith, also expressed satisfaction with his business. He highlighted that raw materials had become cheaper, making their products more affordable.

"Last year, a barrel of raw material cost 1,100 afghanis, but this year, it has dropped to 700 afghanis. This has lowered production costs, allowing us to sell heaters and other items at better prices. If Turkish heaters are banned, our business will improve even further," he said.

Similarly, Abdul Hamid, another tinsmith, noted that his business has seen a spike in customers, but challenges remained that need to be addressed in order to further boost the industry.

At the same time, Sher

Mohammad Ayoubi, head of the Shopkeepers and Craftsmen Union in Baghlan, told Pajhwok that he has repeatedly requested authorities to ban the import of similar products in order to support local tinsmiths. However, their demands could not be met as yet.

Meanwhile, Commerce and Industry Director Qari Mohammad Naeem Hamkar acknowledged that the tinsmiths' requests were valid and assured that efforts were being made to facilitate their access to raw materials.

"We have provided them with a dedicated workspace and ensured easy access to raw materials, which has made them happy. We will continue to create more facilities for them."

"However, banning imported goods is a decision for the ministry, and we hope they will address this issue. Locally, we are working to resolve other problems faced by industry workers," Hamkar assured.

Similar demands for banning imports of locally produced goods have been made by industrialists in other provinces as well.

## Cultural Heritage Protection Day celebrated in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The 20th of Hoot (solar year) marks the National Day for the Protection of Cultural Heritage. The Ministry of Information and Culture has committed to the preservation of cultural heritage, especially those sites registered with UNESCO.

Officials from the Ministry of Information and Culture have stated that currently, nine historical monuments of Afghanistan are listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Efforts are ongoing to register Bagh-e-Babur, Takht-e-Rustam, and the Masjid-e Noh Gunbad in Balkh with UNESCO as

well.

"The ministry is striving to register some historical monuments in Herat city, the Masjid-e Noh Gunbad in Balkh province, as well as Takht-e-Rustam and some other locations with UNESCO," stated Khubib Ghafra, spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture.

Experts say Afghanistan's cultural heritage not only preserves the national identity of its people but also serves as a bridge connecting the past, present, and future, linking generations together. From Herat, the city of culture and civilization, to Ghor, Bamiyan, Balkh, Kabul, and Samangan, every corner of

this land holds a story of ancient civilizations.

However, some of these heritage sites are now on the verge of destruction.

Wali Shah Bahra, a cultural affairs expert, spoke about the preservation of these sites in the country, stating: "It is the government's responsibility to secure sufficient funding for the protection, maintenance, and especially the restoration of these historical monuments, as they stand as testimony to our nation's rich history and are a clear example of our ancestors' capabilities."

According to some cultural experts, since Afghanistan became a member of UNESCO, the

organization has not paid significant attention to the protection of the country's heritage.

"Unfortunately, from the past until Afghanistan gained UNESCO membership, this organization has not given much attention to registering the country's cultural heritage—whether in the field of tangible or intangible cultural heritage," stated Ikrami Fanduqistani, another cultural affairs expert.

The historical monuments of Afghanistan registered with UNESCO include Bamiyan Buddha, the city of Zahak, the Minaret of Jam in Ghor, the Buddhas of Bamiyan, and several other important sites.

## Kabul teacher offers 150 girls above 6th grade homeschooling

KABUL (Pajhwok): Nazanin Kohistani, a teacher in Kabul with 33 years of experience, has offered 150 girls the chance to learn school subjects above sixth grade for free at her home.

Since the Islamic Emirate's takeover on August 14, 2021, girls' education above sixth grade has been suspended. On December 19, 2022, public and private universities were ordered to stop the education of girls and women until further notice.

After girls' education in schools and universities was suspended, IEA officials announced they were working on a plan to resolve the issue and allow girls to resume their education. However, more than three years later, the problem remains unresolved.

**Efforts to educate girls**

After dedicating 33 years of her life to teaching girls, Nazanin Kohistani has transformed her home, once a place of safety, into a space for education.

She aims to ensure that girls of the country become literate and can play a significant role in society in the future. Three years ago, she wanted to create this educational place, but ini-

tially faced opposition from her husband. Nevertheless, her determination kept her going.

In the beginning, Nazanin was helped by her two daughters in teaching, but later hired two volunteer teachers to assist her at the educational facility.

She explained the educational center offers not only religious subjects but also modern subjects, including computer studies.

Initially, all classes were held in one small room, but as the number of students increased, she decided to set up separate rooms so that each group could continue their lessons in a quieter atmosphere without distractions.

Nazanin has set special conditions at her educational center. She says anyone studying in different classes could successfully pass an exam and move up to a higher class and continue their education.

Referring to computer class, she said she has arranged two computer classes in one room so that the students could learn computer concepts in a practical way.

"I wish I could create a separate computer room

with a large number of computers for my students and have a large library so that various books are available for students to read".

This veteran teacher hopes schools will soon reopen for girls above the sixth grade.

Alongside Nazanin, there is Hamisha Osman Yar, another volunteer at this home school who teaches English and computers to students for free.

"The number of my students is increasing day by day and girls who study are diligent and hardworking", Hamisha added.

**Girls at educational facility hopeful for a brighter future**

Shiba Hashimi, a 10th grader, who has been enrolled in this homeschooling for three months, thanks her teachers for their hard work. "We are studying in a situation where girls above sixth grade are not allowed to go to school, but I try to learn my lessons well and one day teach others", she explained.

Other homeschooled girls, like Shiba, are happy that they have the opportunity to learn school subjects.

**A mother's hope for her**

**children's brighter future**

Nadia, a resident of Khairkhana area and the mother of two girls who are currently studying here, said it is a very good move that one of the teachers has created this educational center at her home.

With her eyes filled with hope for her daughters' future, she explained: "I am happy that every day my daughters come to this school. The girls are giving their all to secure a better future for themselves".

She asked the government to reopen schools for girls above the sixth grade in the academic year 1404.

**Educational expert: Establishing homeschooling program is a positive step**

Taqi Farhad, an educational affairs expert, praised the establishment of the educational center and said that although it is a small step, but it will be very effective.

"Continuing to educate girls wherever possible is a good and worthwhile thing to do, especially when women themselves are the pioneers. This type of education could reduce barriers and help girls learn according to their talents".

## Mines Minister meets ex-officials from Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Mullah Hedayatullah Badri, held discussions with Almazbek Tumanov, former Deputy Minister of Mines of Kyrgyzstan, and Azar Shukurov, former Deputy Minister of Mines of Azerbaijan.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, the former officials highlighted Afghanistan's potential as an investment destination, particularly in the oil and gas sectors. They expressed their interest in collaboration and pledged to support the ministry in establishing a standardized laboratory to enhance mining sector operations.



Minister Badri reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to attracting foreign investors and improv-

ing investment conditions. He assured that Afghanistan would facilitate cooperation in line with

its mining laws, ensuring a favorable environment for international business partnerships.

## Sakina's stark message: Don't sacrifice girls

BAMYAN (Pajhwok): Being a seventh grader, Sakina cherished her childhood dreams, looking for her innocent aspirations and high hopes in the pages of her textbooks.

But primitive traditions snatched her books, took away the pen from her hand and put her on a path where she had no right to choose.

Sakina (not a real name) was unaware of the true meaning of marriage when her fate was sealed by a tribal jirga. No one spared a thought for her future, much less her feelings.

She was subjected to forced marriage without her consent. No one bothered asking her whether she was willing to be used as a dis-

pute settlement tool.

Three years ago, Sakina's fate changed in a jiffy when her brother abducted a girl. To resolve the dispute, she was given in marriage to the brother of the girl.

Sakina's partner, more than twice her age, is suffering from physical disabilities and mental health issues.

He cannot even understand her presence in his life.

At that time, Sakina was only 13, but in a single night, a collective decision by tribal elders robbed the girl of her childhood.

Speaking with a broken voice and her eyes welling up, she told Pajhwok

Afghan News: "I had no fault, but I was made a victim for my brother's mistake.

"I have been forced into living with a disabled man who is more than twice my age and is suffering from mental issues," she protested.

Now, she lives in a mud house in a village in Bamiyan City with a 10-member family of her husband, enduring a life full of privations and pain.

In her husband's house, she is not treated as a wife or a family member. For all practical purposes, she is seen as an unwanted burden.

She is not allowed to visit her parents or other

family members and does not participate in family ceremonies.

Sakina's movements during the interview were involuntary — her hands clenched, gaze anxious and eyelids fluttering quickly. She appeared to be haunted by an indefinable fear. Utter hopelessness and grief stemmed from each of her gestures.

In a melancholy tone, she complained: "My spouse and all his family members treat me roughly. On a daily basis, I am humiliated and subjected to violence... I never felt being treated as a human."

Sakina has this impassioned request: "Please, stop victimising girls.

Don't punish them for the crimes they haven't committed. We should not pay for the mistakes of others."

Ghulam Reza, a relative of Sakina, agreed she was a victim of an act she never committed.

"Tribal councils take decisions without considering the future of girls. No one asks what will happen to the girls. All they care about is to resolve disputes, even if the price is the destruction of a human life."

He claimed the tribal elders, who decided Sakina's fate, never thought that she would live in a hell for the rest of her life.

Although her husband has mental health issues

and is more than 30, Sakina was forced to marry him. He was unable to perform heavy tasks due to health problems.

**A tradition still rampant**

In some parts of the country, the practice of "bad marriage" is still rampant as a way of resolving family and tribal conflicts.

Kareem Rasooli, a local tribal elder, says: "Girls are usually given in bad in cases of murder, rape and elopement."

According to him, one of the ways to settle such disputes is to give girls in bad to avoid future violence and dire consequences.

Some religious scholars emphasise such marriages go against the grain of reli-

gious teachings and human dignity.

Ali Juma Rizwani, one of the scholars, said underage or forced marriage, without the consent of the parties and their parents, was against Shariah.

Girls were often underage in bad cases and married against their will, he acknowledged, declaring it was not permissible in Islam.

He suggested cases of murder, rape and runaway girls be resolved through judicial and legal channels, so the real criminals could be punished and innocent girls were not made victims.

At the same time, Vice and Virtue Department head Maulvi Mahmood Al

Hasan Mansouri said the interim government had prohibited forced and underage marriages.

Legal action would be taken against violators, promised Mansouri, whose department documented more than 30 cases of sexual abuse, domestic violence, non-provision of financial support (nafaqah), and forced marriage during the current year.

Of these, 10 cases have been referred to judicial authorities and 15 others have been resolved, while the rest are still under investigation.

He assured all legal complaints registered with the department would be promptly addressed.



# Duterte arrested on an ICC warrant over drug killings

MANILA (AP): Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was arrested at Manila's international airport Tuesday on order of the International Criminal Court in connection with a case of crime against humanity filed against him, the Philippine government said.

Duterte was arrested after arriving from Hong Kong and police took him into custody on orders of the ICC, which has been investigating the mass killings that happened under the former president's deadly crackdown against illegal drugs, President Ferdinand Marcos' office said in a statement.

"Upon his arrival, the prosecutor general served the ICC notification for an arrest warrant to the former president for the crime of crime against humanity," the government said. "He's now in the custody of authorities." The surprise arrest sparked a commotion at the airport, where lawyers and aides of Duterte loudly protested that they, along with a doctor and lawyers, were prevented from coming close to him after he was taken into police custody. "This is a violation of his constitutional right," Sen. Bong Go, a close Duterte ally, told reporters.

Duterte's arrest and downfall stunned and drove families of the victims of his bloody crackdowns against illegal drugs to tears. "This is a big, long-awaited day for justice," Randy delos Santos, the uncle of a teenager killed by police during an anti-drug operation in August 2017 in the Manila metropolis, told The Associated Press.

"Now we feel that justice is rolling. We hope that top police officials and the hundreds of police officers who were involved in the illegal killings should also be placed in custody and punished," delos Santos said. Three of the police officers who killed his nephew, Kian delos Santos, were convicted in 2018 for the high-profile murder, which prompted to Duterte at the time to temporarily suspend his brutal anti-drugs crackdown.

The conviction was one of at least three, so far, against law enforcers involved in the anti-drugs campaign, reflecting the concerns of families of victims of suspected extrajudicial killings that they would not get justice in the Philippines, hence,



their decision to seek the help of the ICC. It was not immediately clear where Duterte was taken by the police. The government said the 79-year-old former leader was in good health.

The ICC began investigating drug killings under Duterte from Nov. 1, 2011, when he was still mayor of the southern city of Davao, to March 16, 2019, as possible crimes against humanity. Duterte withdrew the Philippines in 2019 from the Rome Statute in a move human rights activists say was aimed at escaping accountability. The Duterte administration moved to suspend the global court's investigation in late 2021 by arguing that Philippine authorities were already looking into the same allegations, arguing the ICC - a court of last resort - didn't have jurisdiction.

Appeals judges at the ICC ruled in 2023 the investigation could resume and rejected the Duterte administration's objections. Based in The Hague, the Netherlands, the ICC can step in when countries are unwilling or unable to prosecute suspects in the most heinous international crimes, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who succeeded Duterte in 2022 and became entangled in a bitter political dispute with the former president, has decided not to rejoin the global court. But the Marcos administration has said it would cooperate if the ICC asks international police to take Duterte into custody through a so-called Red Notice, a request for law enforcement agencies worldwide to locate and temporarily arrest a crime suspect.

## Punjab CM looting national treasury: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that yet another corruption scandal involving Maryam Nawaz's project is circulating in the media. Reports indicate that the contract for the "Model Cart Project" was awarded to favored individuals, causing an estimated loss of 50 million rupees to the national treasury.

Barrister Dr. Saif remarked that no project in Punjab is free from corruption. He accused the "fake Chief Minister" Maryam Nawaz of being the "mother of corruption," claiming that she has broken all records of corruption over the past year. He alleged that Maryam Nawaz is squandering public tax money due to corruption and incompetence.

He further stated that the Sharif family plans commissions and corruption before initiating any project. According to him, the "fake Chief Minister of Punjab is looting the national treasury. He also alleged that while the uncle (Shehbaz Sharif) is engaged in corruption at the federal level, the niece (Maryam Nawaz) is running a corruption racket in Punjab.

Barrister Dr. Saif emphasized that misusing public tax money for corruption and commissions is an injustice. He claimed that the people have rejected the Sharif family due to their corruption, but they have formed a "fake government" through Form 47 and are once again looting the nation. He concluded that the only solution for the country's well-being is the immediate removal of the "illegitimate government," warning that otherwise, the Sharif family will continue to consume the nation like termites.

## Israel confirms release of five Lebanese detainees

BEIRUT: Israel confirmed the release of five Lebanese detainees held by its military, Israeli media reported on Tuesday, citing the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

They were captured during Israel's ground offensive in southern Lebanon that began on Oct. 1 last year, and after the Nov. 27 ceasefire went into effect. This move followed deliberations by the committee overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah.

It came as a direct result of intensified Lebanese diplomatic pressure on the supervisory committee. "President Joseph Aoun met US Gen. Jasper Jeffers, head of the international committee monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, along with his team, the US Ambassador to Lebanon Lisa Johnson, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East Natasha Franceschi, and the US Defense Attaché in Lebanon Col. Joseph Becker," a source inside the Presidential Palace told Arab News.

"President Aoun urged the committee to pressure Israel into a full withdrawal from the Lebanese border region, particularly from the five hills still under Israeli occupation. He also called for the release of the Lebanese individuals taken hostage by Israel, emphasizing that Lebanon does not hold any Israeli hostages. Therefore, there is no justification for delaying the process under the pretext of a prisoner swap, and holding Lebanese people hostage offers no advantage to Israel," the source added. According to a statement from the president's office, Aoun requested that "these demands be raised during the committee's meeting on Tuesday."

Reports from southern Lebanon indicate that Israel currently holds 11 Lebanese citizens — seven Hezbollah members, three civilians, and a soldier. Earlier on Monday, the Lebanese Army Command announced that "the Israeli Army captured Lebanese soldier Ziad Shibli on the southern border after communication with him was lost. — Arab News



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing the meeting of federal cabinet.

# Gandapur launches Gender Parity Report 2024 of KP govt

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, officially launched the Gender Parity Report 2024 of KP Government at a ceremony held at the Chief Minister's House on Tuesday in connection with International Women's Day.

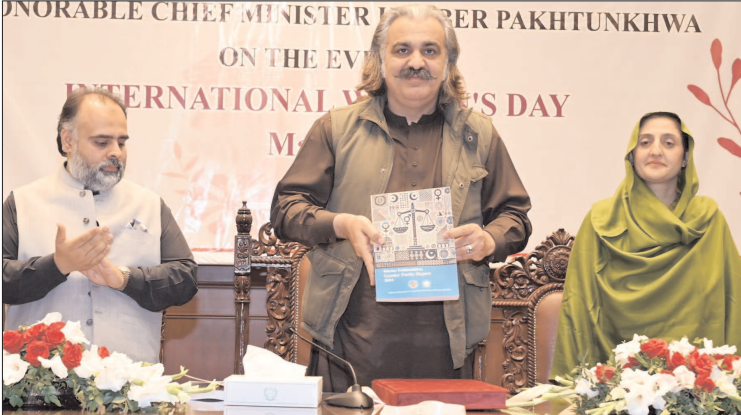
The event, organized by the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women, was attended by Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Suraiya Bibi, officials from the Social Welfare Department, and a large number of women from various fields.

The Gender Parity Report 2024 is a comprehensive data-driven document that highlights gender equality trends in the province, providing insights into access to services, socio-economic participation, and political representation of men and women. The report aims to serve as a guiding document for stakeholders working towards gender equality.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chief Minister Gandapur emphasized the importance of accurate data for policymaking and decision-making, and commended the officials involved in compiling the report, stating that no developmental initiative can succeed without reliable data.

He assured that the issues identified in the report would be addressed on a priority basis, and after endorsement by the provincial assembly, it would be shared with the federal government to encourage nationwide efforts for gender equality.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed his government's commitment to



women's participation in economic and social programs, particularly through the Ehsaas Youth Employment and Ehsaas Skills Development initiatives.

He said that women, who make up more than half of the country's population, are key to national progress and that protecting the rights of women and marginalized groups is essential for prosperity. Highlighting efforts in girls' education, he remarked that the provincial government had established 2,800 Girls' Community Schools, providing education to thousands of girls.

Additionally, a voucher scheme had been launched to enroll out-of-school girls, while scholarships and stipends were being provided to reduce the dropout rate in government schools. Ali Amin Gandapur stated that to improve women's safety and access to justice, the government has set up Women Police Desks in police stations and established Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Courts across the province, and special open forums (Khuli Kacheris) are being organized under the Public Agenda Program to

address women's issues on a priority basis.

The Chief Minister said the provincial government has launched Sahara Card Program, which provides a monthly stipend of Rs. 10,000 to widows aged 45 and above. Additionally, the government is facilitating women's inheritance rights, ensuring they receive their legal share of property.

Gandapur noted that 30% of the users of the BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) service are women, which he described as an encouraging sign of progress. He stressed that the government is focusing on previously neglected sectors to ensure equal opportunities for all. Concluding his address, the Chief Minister emphasized that Islam clearly defines the rights of all individuals, including women, and asserted that adhering to Islamic teachings would help resolve many societal challenges.

The launch of the Gender Parity Report 2024 marks a significant step towards data-driven policymaking for gender equality, reaffirming the provincial government's commitment to women's empowerment and inclusive development.

# US, Ukraine hold talks after drone attack on Moscow

JEDDAH (Reuters): Ukrainian and US officials met behind closed doors for hours of talks in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to find a path towards ending the war with Russia, after Kyiv's forces launched their largest drone attack on Moscow of the war overnight.

Ukrainians and anxious allies watched for any signs of an improvement — or further deterioration — in Kyiv's troubled transatlantic ties after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's disastrous talks with US President Donald Trump last month. Under Trump, Kyiv's one-time staunchest ally has upended its policy on the war and piled pressure on Ukraine, declining to provide security guarantees as part of any peace deal, while pausing military aid and intelligence sharing with Kyiv.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters en route to the talks in Jeddah that the meeting would be important to gauge if Ukraine is willing to make concessions to reach peace. More than three hours into the meeting, Mike Waltz, the US national security adviser, emerged for a break with Rubio and told reporters:

"We're getting there."

Andriy Yermak, Zelenskyy's chief of staff who is leading the Ukrainian delegation, said earlier that the meeting had "begun very constructively". British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, a close Kyiv ally, told Trump on Monday that he hoped that US military assistance and intelligence sharing could be resumed as a result of a "positive outcome" at the talks.

"Dear Americans, dear Ukrainians, don't waste this chance. The whole world is watching you in Jeddah today. Good luck!" Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk wrote on X. As the diplomacy plays out, Ukraine's battlefield positions are under heavy pressure, particularly in Russia's Kursk region where Moscow's forces have launched a push to flush out Kyiv's troops, which had been trying to hold a patch of land as a bargaining chip.

Ukraine overnight launched its biggest drone attack on Moscow and the surrounding region yet, showing that Kyiv can also land major blows after a steady stream of Russian missile and drone attacks, one of which killed 14 people

on Saturday. The attack, in which 337 drones were downed over Russia, killed at least three employees of a meat warehouse and caused a short shutdown at Moscow's four airports, Russian officials said.

Ukraine said its drones struck an oil refinery near Moscow and a facility in Russia's Oryol region, while Hungary said crude oil shipments via Russia's Druzhba pipeline were suspended following the attack. Ahead of the talks, Zelenskyy suggested an initial truce with Russia in the air and at sea, in an effort to show he is working towards Trump's objective of ending the war at lightning speed and that the obstacle to that goal is Moscow, not Kyiv.

Zelenskyy says the truce idea would be a chance to test Moscow's willingness to end the war. Zelenskyy's Oval Office clash with Trump left the signing of a bilateral minerals deal in limbo and Kyiv's bid to obtain security guarantees from Washington adrift. Ahead of the talks, Yermak told reporters that security guarantees remained key for Ukraine, but suggested they might only look at that in a preliminary way on Tuesday.

# Israeli fire kills 4 Palestinians in Gaza

GAZA (AP): Israeli fire has killed four people and wounded 14 in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, Palestinian officials said, even as a fragile ceasefire with Hamas has largely held.

Israeli strikes have killed dozens of Palestinians who the army says had approached its troops or entered unauthorized areas in violation of the January truce. Israel last week suspended supplies of goods and electricity to the territory of more than 2 million Palestinians as it tries to pressure the militant group to accept an extension of the first phase of their ceasefire. That phase ended March 1. Israel wants Hamas to release half of the remaining hostages in return for a promise to negotiate a lasting truce.

Hamas instead wants to start negotiations on the ceasefire's more difficult second phase, which would see the release of remaining hostages from Gaza, the withdrawal of Israeli forces and a lasting peace. Hamas is believed to have 24 living hostages and the bodies of 35 others. Meanwhile, the discrimination and attacks against American Muslims and Arabs rose by 7.4 percent in 2024 due to heightened Islamophobia caused by US ally Israel's war in Gaza and the resulting college campus protests, a Muslim advocacy group said on Tuesday.

The Council on American Islamic Relations said it recorded the highest number of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab complaints — 8,658 — in 2024 since it began publishing data in 1996. Most complaints were in the categories of employment discrimination (15.4 percent), immigration and asylum (14.8 percent), education discrimination (9.8 percent) and hate crimes (7.5 percent), according to the CAIR report.

Rights advocates have highlighted an increase in Islamophobia, anti-Arab bias and antisemitism since the start of Israel's devastating assault on Gaza. The CAIR report also details police and university crackdowns on pro-Palestinian protests and encampments on college campuses.

# Can civilians be tried in a mly court, questions SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail on Tuesday said in his remarks that if civilians have fundamental rights, can they be tried in military courts?

Justice Mandokhail asked the question during the hearing of intra-court appeal against the military trial of civilians by the seven-member constitutional bench of the Supreme Court. The bench includes Justice Amin-uddin Khan, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarat Hilali, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan.

Counsel for Defense Ministry Khawaja Haris submitted that Salman Akram Raja and Uzair Bhandari discussed the FB Ali case. He requested to place relevant paragraph of the FB Ali case before the bench. Justice Afghan observed that the decision in the FB Ali case was made under the 1962 Constitution. The FB Ali case cannot be seen in the context of the 1973 Constitution.

Khawaja Haris said that the paragraph on the basis of which the arguments were given by the other side in the FB Ali case is ineffective. Justice Mandokhail asked him whether he was also chal-

lenging the FB Ali case. He submitted that he was stating that there are no reasons for this paragraph. In the FB Ali case, it was said that military trial is right and one gets the right to a fair trial.

The court remarked that fundamental rights are not applicable in the laws under Article 8(3) A of the Constitution. Under the article those laws cannot be declared null and void in the context of fundamental rights. The 1962 Constitution has Article 6 while the 1973 Constitution has Article 8. In the FB Ali case, it was said that fundamental rights do not apply to members of the armed forces. Justice Mandokhail said that the FB Ali case mentioned Clause D, under which civilians will get fundamental rights. How can civilians be tried in military courts in the context of the FB Ali case.

Advocate Haris replied that suppose if Article 8(3) A of the Constitution is also applied to civilians, then they will also not get fundamental rights. In this context, this plea under 184(3) would be considered inadmissible in the Supreme Court. He contended that the FB Ali case could not have been handled the way the other side presented it in its arguments.

Justice Mandokhail remarked that the Supreme

Court does not necessarily rely on the arguments of any party. Justice Afghan observed that reference is given of the FB Ali case in the current appeal. This case cannot be linked to the current appeal. This case is the first of its kind.

Khawaja Haris argued that the question in the FB Ali case was not about fundamental rights. A retired army officer went to the Supreme Court saying that he is a civilian, he cannot be tried [in military court]. The Supreme Court had ruled that a civilian can also be tried. Justice Mandokhail remarked that the question is simple: if civilians have fundamental rights, can they be tried in military courts? For this purpose, we have to read Article 8 of the Constitution in full. Earlier, members of the armed forces were tried in military courts. Later, Section D was included in the Army Act [to try civilians in military court].

The court remarked that trials were held in military courts where armed forces and civilians hatched a conspiracy. In criminal law, even abusing is a crime and its punishment is prescribed. So will a trial be held in military courts for abusing members of the armed forces by a civilian? Later, the Supreme Court adjourned the hearing of the case until today.

# PHC extends PTI's two MPs bail including Minister

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has extended protective bail of Provincial Minister for Education Meena Khan Afridi and Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Iftikhar Mashwani, and issued a notice to the federal government to provide details of the cases registered against them, on Tuesday.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Naeem Anwar and Justice Farah Jamshed, heard the petition filed by Meena Khan Afridi. The petitioner's lawyer informed the court that cases had been registered against the petitioner in Islamabad, and requested the court to provide details of the cases.

The court had earlier directed the relevant authorities to provide details of the cases, but no response had been received from the federal government. The court extended the protective bail

of the petitioner and issued a notice to the federal government to provide the required information.

Similarly, a two-member bench, comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Aurangzeb Khan heard the petition filed by MPA Iftikhar Mashwani. The petitioner's lawyer informed the court that the petitioner was an MPA and cases had been registered against him. He requested the court to grant protective bail in the cases.

Justice Sahibzada Asadullah observed that the petitioner's case related to the Omni Bus issue was still pending. The petitioner's lawyer Rahmat Kundi informed the court that the case was about to be disposed of. The Deputy Attorney General, Dawlat Khan, informed the court that details of the cases registered by the FIA and NAB had been received, but a report from the Ministry of Interior was still awaited.

The court extended the protective bail of the petitioner and restrained the authorities from arresting him. The court also issued a notice to the federal government to provide the required information.

**Court orders to submit minutes of federal cabinet meeting:** A divisional of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Aurangzeb Khan has ordered the federal government to submit minutes of the cabinet meeting that lead to ban Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), on Tuesday.

The counsel Ata Ullah Kundi and Jehanzeb Mehsud advocates argued that the federal government had imposed the ban on PTM without following the law. They claimed that the government had not provided any evidence to support its claim that PTM was involved in anti-state activities.