

Ex-AJK PM case puts off
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The lower court of Islamabad on Thursday adjourned the case of Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, former prime minister of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), till April 12, regarding the misuse of diplomatic passport. Judicial Magistrate Ahmed Shehzad Gondal heard the case, which centers on claims that Ilyas improperly used his diplomatic travel privileges.



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SC acquits two convicts
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has acquitted two convicts awaiting death penalty in murder of a five years old kid and abduction for ransom case happened in Charsadda district of KP some 17 years ago. A three-member bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan was hearing the appeals of the two prisoners awaiting capital punishment.

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PM reaffirms Pak's commitment to eradicate terrorism

Shehbaz to convene APC amid surge in terror attacks

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif while reaffirming Pakistan's steadfast commitment to eradicating terrorism, stated that any attempt to destabilize the country through treachery will be met with the full and unyielding might of the state.

He was speaking at a high level security conference at the Chief Minister's Secretariat here on Thursday. Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Information Attaullah Tatar, Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, Chief Minister Balochistan Saffraz Bugti, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, NI(M), along with senior civil and military officials and leaders and representatives of political parties, attended the security conference.

During the briefing, participants were comprehensively apprised of the prevailing security situation in Balochistan, ongoing counter terrorism efforts and an update on the successful conduct of recent operation related to Jaffer Express. Participants reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering resolve to uphold a policy of zero tolerance against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Leaders and representatives of political parties, federal and provincial ministers, government officials and the attendees of the conference unanimously condemned the barbaric act of terrorism against Jaffer Express and offered Fateha for the Shuhada of the attack, honoring their ultimate sacrifice.

While interacting with members of the Balochistan Assembly and politicians from across the political spectrum, the Prime Minister appreciated

Premier for a roadmap to take Pak-Uzbek trade volume to \$2b

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday underscored the need to devise a roadmap to work towards the enhancement of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Uzbekistan to USD 2 billion, as had been agreed between the leadership of both countries. The prime minister, in a meeting with Ambassador of Uzbekistan Alisher Tukhtaev, who paid a courtesy call on him here, particularly highlighted Pakistan's interest in enhancing cooperation with Uzbekistan in mining and minerals, railways, including the Trans Afghan Railways project, Special Economic Zones, banking, tourism, culture and renewable energy.

the resolve of political leaders and representatives against terrorist organizations and their commitment to legislating comprehensive long-term reforms and development plan for Balochistan.

The Prime Minister termed it an unforgivable atrocity. He asserted that such deliberate and inhumane acts against innocent civilians expose the true nature of these insurgents and shatter any pretense of legitimacy they claim. The participants emphasized that every attempt to destabilize Pakistan will be met with the full force of the state. Pakistan's Armed Forces have already taken swift and decisive action, rescuing hostages and neutralizing the terrorists' nefarious ambitions. Those responsible, along with their facilitators, will be hunted down and eliminated without hesitation or mercy. The Prime Minister stated: "Let there be no doubt that any attempt to destabilize our homeland through such treachery will be met with the full and unyielding might of our state. It is not merely a battle against militant outfit but a war against an ideology of lawlessness and despair." The necessity of preventing inimical elements from vitiating the social space was also emphasized. The Prime Minister met with the

brave participants who conducted the operation against the terrorists and lauded the bravery and professionalism of the security forces. He also assured the bereaved families of the Shuhada of the state's full support and reiterated that the sacrifices of martyrs will not be in vain.

Later, the Prime Minister and COAS visited the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Quetta, where they met the injured victims and affected families. Earlier, upon his arrival in Quetta, the Prime Minister was warmly received by the Chief Minister of Balochistan and the COAS.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said a meeting of the country's leadership would be called to hold consultation on the issue of terrorism as was done after the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. He was addressing a meeting here on the issue of law and order in Balochistan in the backdrop of the recent train hostage incident. He said, "We needed unity and national solidarity which will provide support to the armed forces to fight against terrorism and Khawarij."

(Continued on Back Page)



QUETTA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir interacting with soldiers, who got injured in Jaffer Express hijack operation.

Putin backs US truce idea for Ukraine

MOSCOW (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin's top foreign policy aide said on Thursday a 30-day ceasefire proposed by the United States to pause the war in Ukraine would give Russia "nothing" while gifting Kyiv's forces a much-needed battlefield respite.

Russian forces have been advancing since mid-2024 and control nearly a fifth of Ukraine's territory, three years after sending tens of thousands of troops into its neighbour in a war that US President Donald Trump has said he will halt.

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff arrived in Moscow on Thursday for talks. Russian officials said US national security adviser Mike Waltz had provided details on the ceasefire idea on Wednesday and Russia was ready to discuss it. Trump had said in the White House on Wednesday that he hoped the Kremlin would agree to the US proposal for a 30-day ceasefire that Ukraine said it would support.

Yuri Ushakov, a former ambassador to Washington who speaks for Putin on major foreign policy issues, told Russian state TV that he had spoken to Waltz on Wednesday to outline Russia's position on the ceasefire. "I stated our position that this is nothing other than a temporary respite for the Ukrainian military, nothing more," Ushakov said.

"It gives us nothing. It only gives the Ukrainians an opportunity to regroup, gain strength and to continue the same thing," he later added, saying he felt the proposal needed to be updated to take account of Russia's interests. Ushakov, who has served alongside Putin in the Kremlin since 2012, stopped short of rejecting the US proposal outright, however, saying the president would likely speak to the media later on Thursday and outline Russia's position in more detail.

Ushakov said Moscow's goal was "a long-term peaceful settlement that takes into account the legitimate interests of our country and our well-known concerns."

10 terrorists killed in Tank, S Waziristan

F.P. Report

TANK: Khwarij attempted to attack a Security Forces post in general area Jandola, on the seam of South Waziristan and Tank Districts.

The attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted by own troops, which forced the khwarij to ram an explosive laden vehicle into the perimeter wall.

Own troops fought bravely, effectively engaged the assailant and after an intense fire exchange all ten khwarij including a suicide bomber were sent to hell, outside the perimeter wall of the post. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Kharij found in the area as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday appreciated the officers and personnel of security forces for

foiling attack of terrorists of Fitna al-Khawarij on their check post in Jandola, Tank. He lauds the professional capabilities of officers and personnel of security forces for eliminating 10 Khawarij including a suicide bomber who unsuccessfully tried to attack the post.

The prime minister said the government would continue to foil designs of the terrorists who were ying to create unrest in the country. He said the war against menace of terrorism would continue till its complete elimination from the country. The prime minister said the whole nation stood with the armed forces of Pakistan in their determination to wipe out terrorism from the country.

President Asif Ali Zardari Thursday lauded the security forces for repulsing the attack of Khawarij on their check post in Jandola. He appreciated the security forces for eliminating 10 Khawarij during the operation. He

said the brave armed forces were carrying out successful operations for eradicating Fitna al-Khawarij. The President expressed determination to continue operations till complete elimination of terrorism. He said the whole nation stood with the security forces in the war against terrorism.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday praised the security forces for their swift action in thwarting an attack on the Jandola FC fort in Tank.

Expressing his pride in the brave soldiers, Governor Kundi said that their courage and dedication are commendable. He emphasized that those targeting innocent people and the state are backed by anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan forces. He further affirmed that the people of Pakistan stand firmly with the Pakistan Armed Forces, acting as a united front in the defense of their homeland.

FO: Kabul trying to setup checkpoint in Pak territory Pakistan asks Afghanistan to act against train attack masterminds

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has urged the Afghan government to take swift action against the masterminds of the train hostage tragedy. The Foreign Office also said that Islamabad had taken notice of the reports that the Donald Trump administration was likely to impose a ban on the entry of Pakistanis in the USA.

Addressing his weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, FO spokesman Shafqat Ali Khan said right now there was no confirmation of these entry ban reports. "These are merely rumours," he added.

On the Jaffer Express

incident, the spokesman said that Pakistan was targeting those terrorists who had sanctuaries outside its boundaries.

"Those who carried out the attack had links with their collaborators abroad," he added. "We urge the Afghan government to take action against the people who had masterminded the Jaffer Express incident because they had their safe havens in Afghanistan," he added.

Rubbishing reports that Pakistan wanted to close its border with Afghanistan at Torkham, Shafqat said it was merely propaganda. "The truth of the matter is that Afghanistan had tried to set up a checkpoint

inside our territory," he added. The spokesman went on to say that four Pakistanis had been released on a court order in Spain. "We had requested for the consular access to other detained Pakistanis. But so far we have not been given that access," he informed.

On an incident that took place at Los Angeles Airport involving Pakistan's ambassador to Turkmenistan KK Ahsan Wagan, he said the ambassador was on a private visit to the USA, and that he had been allowed to go following second screening. "However, we are investigating the incident," he added.

Asif criticizes PTI fake narrative on Jaffer Express terrorist attack

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Thursday criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) fake narrative on the Jaffer Express terrorist attack, accusing the party's social media platforms of misrepresenting the tragic incident and undermining national unity.

Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, the minister expressed deep sorrow over the loss of innocent lives in the attack, emphasizing that such tragedies cause immense grief, which is further aggravated by the spread of misinformation. "The entire nation witnessed how PTI's social media interpreted the incident," Khawaja Asif said. "Instead of acknowledging the bravery and sacrifice of our armed forces, they promoted a false narrative, claiming that the terrorists themselves released the hostages."

He alleged that this misleading account was circulated by verified PTI-affiliated accounts, particularly those operated by supporters living abroad. Without naming individuals, Khawaja Asif criticized those who, according to him, fled the country but continued to malign national institutions from overseas. "These people lack the courage to return and face the law, yet they dare to question others," he added. Khawaja Asif also highlighted the irony of PTI leaders, many of whom, he claimed, were products of past martial law regimes. "Some of those pointing fingers today were the beneficiaries of three martial laws in

NA unanimously passes resolution vowing to eliminate terrorism

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Thursday unanimously passed a resolution reaffirming the country's unwavering commitment to eliminating terrorism from every corner of the nation and safeguarding its sovereignty. The Resolution tabled by Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Fazal Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary firmly condemned the hijacking of the Jaffer Express and all acts of terrorism that endanger the lives of citizens and disrupt the peace of the nation. The resolution expressed resolve to take every possible measure to eliminate terrorism from every corner of our nation and affirms that no group, no individual, and no ideology that seeks to undermine our nation's peace, security prosperity, and sovereignty will be allowed to spread fear, hatred, or violence within the territorial limits of the country. Furthermore, pledges not to allow any terrorist activity to go unchecked in any part of our country and commits to working relentlessly to root out terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, ensuring that those who attempt to destabilize the country face the full force of the law. This House expresses deepest respect and gratitude to the brave men and women who have sacrificed their lives in this tragic incident, recognizing their courage, sacrifice, and patriotism.

our history," he added. "Their forefathers abrogated the Constitution and deprived the nation of its democratic rights."

Khawaja Asif admitted that his party had supported a military regime in the past. "I have apologized for it multiple times in this very House, and I do so again today. But at least we have the decency to acknowledge our past mistakes," he said. He stressed the need for political leaders to collectively recognize and learn from historical mistakes for the nation to move forward. "Until we own up to our collective failures spanning 77 years, we cannot progress," he said.

The Defence Minister accused PTI

of continuously undermining state institutions while practicing double standards in politics. "Pakistan's political history has seen its share of contradictions, but the magnitude of PTI's hypocrisy in recent years is unprecedented," he said. Recalling the era of General Pervez Musharraf, he pointed out that many current PTI leaders had remained silent or even supportive of the dictatorship. "They stood with Shaukat Aziz and others during Musharraf's regime. We all remember their roles," he said. Khawaja Asif condemned PTI's alleged attempts to politicize recent terrorist incidents in the Baluchistan province.

Bilawal urges PM to form National Action Plan 2

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to revive the national action plan to take on the scourge of terrorism.

Speaking in the National Assembly on Thursday, Bilawal Bhutto said "Pakistan's enemies are operating in tandem and in retaliation we should also close ranks and work as a cohesive team." He further said "The prime minister should frame a national action plan as the country has suffered enough from terrorism. The terrorists are exploiting our weaknesses."

Turning his guns at the PTI, the PPP chairman said "Whatever the national issue this party's only demand is to first free prisoner no 804. Our supporters and activists have nothing to do with the prisoner no 804. The KP government must fulfil its responsibilities other than focusing on prisoner no 804."

Bilawal called for national unity and political consensus to effectively combat terrorism in the country, saying Pakistan had paid a heavy price in its fight against terrorism, with sacrifices made by every segment of society, political leadership, ordinary citizens, military officers, and police personnel.

"There is no section of society that has not made sacrifices in this struggle," he stated. He reminded the House of the unity demonstrated by the nation in the wake of the 2014 Army Public School (APS) Peshawar tragedy. "Despite our political differences, whether it was the politics of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) or other parties, we set aside our agendas to prioritize the national interest," he said. "We endorsed the National Action Plan (NAP), fought terrorism in all four provinces, and declared that we had broken the terrorists' back."

He said, "Today, we are passing through an even more dangerous phase than before. Unlike in the past,

we lack the unity and political consensus that made us successful." He added, "The enemies of Pakistan and its oppressed people are taking advantage of our lack of unity."

Referring to recent attacks, Bilawal said, "These terrorists have no ideology. Their only objective is to destabilize Pakistan and target innocent citizens." He reiterated that the PPP had always opposed terrorism in all its forms and had paid a heavy price in the struggle. "We have consistently resisted terrorism, whether in the form of religious extremism or political violence," he said. "We not only opposed terrorism but also suffered grave losses because of it." Bilawal Bhutto recalled that following Benazir Bhutto's assassination, Pakistan faced a renewed wave of terrorism that engulfed all four provinces. He praised the resilience and unity of the Pakistani people in combating terror. "What the world could not achieve in Afghanistan, the people of Pakistan—its citizens, police, and armed forces—made pos-

sible," he said. "We defeated terrorism together and set Pakistan back on the path of progress."

Strongly condemning recent terrorist attacks, particularly in Balochistan, he asserted that the perpetrators sought to destabilize Pakistan and derail its development. "These terrorists, who claim to fight for rights and independence, are actually obstructing the country's development and playing into the hands of international forces bent on destruction," he said. Bilawal questioned the motives behind attacks on innocent civilians, citing the recent tragedy involving passengers on the Jaffer Express. "What was the fault of those innocent people martyred on that train? What was their connection to regional politics or Pakistan's governance system? They were ordinary citizens, brutally killed by terrorists," he lamented.

Calling on all political parties to set aside their differences, Bilawal proposed a single-point agenda to defeat terrorism. "While we may con-

tinue our politics on other matters, let us at least agree that the enemies of our people—the terrorists from Kurram to Gwadar—must be confronted with collective resolve," he urged. "They are playing with the blood of our citizens, and we must unite to stop them."

Bilawal acknowledged the efforts of the federal government and provincial leaderships in combating terrorism. "I commend our Defence Minister for recognizing the role of the Chief Minister of Balochistan," he said. "Despite my criticism of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, I am ready to support them if they need assistance in fulfilling their responsibilities."

He emphasized the need for collaboration among all stakeholders, offering his party's cooperation. "If there are shortcomings in our provincial governments or leadership, tell us—we are ready to join hands and fight this menace together," he added. "We did it before when Nawaz Sharif was Prime Minister, and we can do it

again under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif." Bilawal called for the revival of the National Action Plan (NAP). "There is no reason why Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif cannot reinstate a comprehensive National Action Plan, as we did in the past," he said. "Mere meetings are not enough. We need decisive action, unity, and consensus—just as we demonstrated when the PPP was in power."

He lauded President Asif Ali Zardari's address to Parliament, describing it as a historic and unifying speech aimed at fostering consensus rather than division. "This was the eighth time President Zardari addressed the joint sitting of Parliament," Bilawal said. "It wasn't just another political speech. It was historic because he chose to deliver a message of unity and consensus instead of deepening divisions." Bilawal regretted that some members, engaged in protests during the address, missed the essence of the President's message.



SEPA launches vigorous drive to combat air pollution

Cracking down on vehicular emissions and noise pollution in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has initiated a robust campaign to combat the escalating air pollution crisis across Sindh, with a particular focus on vehicular emissions and noise pollution in Karachi.

In a recent operation at busy spots across the city, SEPA teams despite having limited monitoring resources, inspected 40 vehicles, primarily MAZDA and HINO models, revealing that 36 vehicles passed emissions standards while 4 failed.

The failed vehicles exhibited emissions ranging from 60% to 80% above permissible limits, resulting in a total challan amount of 4,040 rupees. Additionally, noise level monitoring conducted at key locations in Karachi revealed disturbing data: Art Council registered 78 dB, Shaheen Complex 80 dB, Regal Chowk and Impress Market both 85 dB, Saddar 84 dB, and MA Jinnah Road and Numash both reached a concerning 90 dB. It may be mentioned here that permissible noise level according to Sindh Environmental Quality Standards is 65dB in residential and 70dB in commercial areas.

This proactive enforcement and monitoring effort underscores SEPA's unwavering commitment to safeguarding public health and environmental sustainability. Recognizing the urgent need for action, SEPA has deployed its dedicated field teams to conduct rigorous inspections, enforce stringent regulations, and engage with industries and communities to ensure a cleaner, healthier future for all residents. This initiative underscores the agency's dedication to creating a sustainable environment for generations to come.

Field teams have undertaken thorough inspections of factories, brick kilns, and other industrial units throughout Sindh, meticulously assessing their compliance with environmental regulations. Taking the efforts further, multiple units in District Korangi have been inspected, with those found in violation being called for personnel hearings before the Director General of SEPA under section 21 of the SEPA Act-2014.

Additionally, roadside checks are being expanded throughout Sindh to ensure vehicle emissions comply with established standards, with notices issued to those exceeding permissible pollution limits. Industries found to be exceeding these limits have also received formal notices demanding immediate corrective measures.

In a significant move within District

Tharparkar, environmental monitoring of fifteen brick kilns at Wango Morr has commenced. This operation, led by the district office's Chemist and Environmental Inspector, aims to enforce the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014, with a focus on emissions control and the use of efficient fuels. Recognizing brick kilns as a major contributor to air pollution, SEPA has made it clear that legal action will be taken against any violators.

Similarly, the SEPA District Office Umerkot has taken decisive action by issuing immediate stoppage orders to six open kiln units that had previously been warned about non-compliance. This action sends a strong message that repeated violations will not be tolerated, and those who disregard the law will face prosecution.

SEPA acknowledges the multifaceted nature of air pollution in Sindh, recognizing key sources in both urban and rural areas. In urban centers, vehicular emissions, industrial emissions from factories and manufacturing plants, dust and particulate matter from construction activities, and the widespread practice of roadside garbage burning are major contributors. In rural areas, traditional brick kilns, emissions from sugar mills during processing, and the burning of agricultural waste are significant sources of pollution.

The alarming rise in air pollution has led to a surge in respiratory illnesses, including asthma, eye infections, ENT issues, nerve problems, coronary diseases, and other respiratory ailments. SEPA recognizes the severe health consequences and is committed to protecting the citizens of Sindh. The agency urges all stakeholders, including industries, businesses, and the public, to join hands in this crucial endeavor. By working together, a healthier and more sustainable future for Sindh can be achieved.

SEPA resolutely reaffirms that this comprehensive drive to combat air pollution will continue unabated throughout Sindh. Every moving and non-moving emission unit will be subjected to rigorous monitoring across the board. The agency is determined to ensure that all industries, vehicles, and other sources of pollution adhere strictly to environmental regulations. Units that persist in non-compliance, even after receiving warnings and reprimands, will face stringent legal action. SEPA is committed to enforcing the law to its fullest extent, ensuring that the health and well-being of the people of Sindh are protected from the harmful effects of air pollution.

Tribesmen in Wana deprives from Ramazan package

F.P. Report

WANA: As the holy month of Ramadan progresses, residents of Wana, are grappling with severe financial distress due to skyrocketing inflation and rising unemployment. Many families are struggling to afford even the most basic necessities for Sehri and Iftar, casting a shadow over their ability to fully embrace the spiritual and communal essence of Ramadan.

Despite the pressing situation, neither the government nor philanthropic organizations have stepped forward to provide free Iftar meals or Ramzan relief packages in Wana, exacerbating the plight of low-income and deserving families. Local elders and community leaders have voiced their concerns, urging authorities to extend the same support to Wana that has been provided in other districts.

With mounting frustration among the public, appeals have intensified for immediate intervention. Citizens are calling on the government to initiate free Iftar and ration distribution programs from the second half of Ramzan, ensuring that struggling families can observe the holy month with dignity and ease. As the crisis deepens, all eyes are now on the authorities to address the growing humanitarian need in the region.

Awareness seminar held

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: An awareness seminar organized at the Family Health Clinic Toba Tek Singh under the leadership of District Population Welfare Officer. A large number of women, including the staff of the Family Health Clinic, participated in the seminar. On this occasion, Psychologist Adolescent Center Population Welfare Department Ayesha Nazish gave a detailed lecture on women's rights and their welfare. She highlighted the social challenges faced by women and their solutions and said that provision of education and health facilities is very important for women empowerment.

The participants termed the seminar as a positive step and said that organizing such information programs is very important for awareness of women's rights in the society and their welfare. She appreciated the efforts of the Population Welfare Department and expressed hope that such awareness programs will continue in the future as well.

Police arrests drug peddlers

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Police arrested five alleged drugs pushers and recovered of narcotics worth of rupees Millions from their possession during crackdown launched against drugs smuggling.

According to details, police recovered 1,460 grams of hashish from a suspicious person, Usama Siddiqui, resident of Attock City, during patrolling. Similarly, 580 grams of hashish from a drug dealer, Aizaz Khan resident of Waisa and 2,100 grams of hashish recovered from a drug dealer, Muzaffar Khan resident of Domail.



KARACHI: A large number of people break their fast at CHIPA iftar.

Sindh govt taking all steps to treat kidney patients: CM

F.P. Report

KARACHI: On the occasion of World Kidney Day, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in a statement on Thursday emphasized the importance of adopting preventive measures to avoid kidney diseases.

The Chief Minister stated that the Sindh government is taking all possible steps for the treatment of kidney patients. He mentioned that after the SIUT in Karachi, a new center equipped with modern facilities has been established in Sukkur, allowing kidney patients to receive treatment in their own city.

He further added that the network of free dialysis centers is being expanded to benefit more patients.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said that timely diagnosis of kidney diseases can prevent complications. The Chief Minister urged the adoption of a healthy lifestyle, drinking more water, and taking measures to protect the kidneys. He stated that it is our responsibility to raise public awareness on World Kidney Day to prevent kidney diseases.

Meanwhile, the Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah extended his greetings to the Hindu community on the occasion of Holi, stating that the land of Sindh has always been a symbol of love, tolerance, and harmony.

The chief minister mentioned that Holi heralds the arrival of spring and is a celebration of colors, spreading a message of joy and peace. He empha-

sized that the Holi festival in Sindh is celebrated with a spirit of brotherhood and harmony.

Shah remarked that Holi is not just about colors but is a beautiful festival of happiness, peace, and brotherhood. He stated that the message of Holi is based on love, unity, and mutual respect, and we should promote these values.

He further said that festivals of all religions symbolize unity, tolerance, and brotherhood. The Chief Minister affirmed that Sindh has always been a cradle of interfaith harmony and love. These thoughts were expressed by the Chief Minister in his message issued on the occasion of Holi. He invited all communities to understand the importance of the festival and its message.

Future of Indus River under threat as experts call for action

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Environmental experts and community activists today raised concerns over the deteriorating condition of the River Indus, warning that its survival is at risk due to pollution, poor water management, and climate change. They called for urgent policy interventions to address the crisis threatening one of the world's major river systems.

The concerns were articulated during a webinar titled "The Future of the Indus River and Space for Community Action for River Preservation," held to mark the International Day of Action Against Dams and for Rivers, Water, and Life.

Mahmood Nawaz Shah from the Sindh Abadgar Board highlighted inefficiencies in water usage in agri-

culture, urging for better management practices. He opposed canal constructions that threaten water sustainability and stressed the need to keep regions like Cholistan ecologically intact.

Nasir Ali Panhwar, an environmental expert, noted Sindh's vulnerability due to its dependency on rainfall and highlighted the severe impact of water shortages on agriculture. He emphasized the decline of the Indus River's ecosystem, pointing out reduced water flows and pollution affecting wetlands and forests. A World Bank study was cited, identifying Sindh as a climate hotspot in South Asia. Community activist Fatima Majeed expressed frustration over the political indifference to these issues, advocating for the restoration

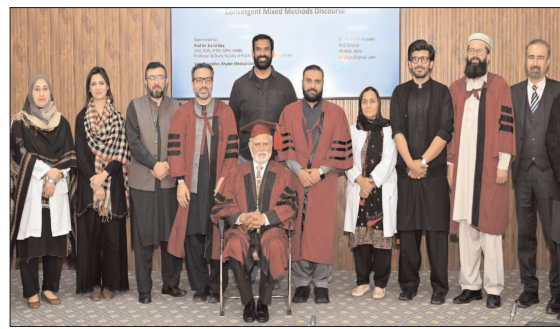
of the river and highlighting the ecological importance of river water for marine life. She criticized political influences that hinder local communities' environmental justice efforts. Azhar Lashari and Zulfiqar Lund further stressed the need for recognizing the river as a living entity with inherent water rights.

Zeenia Shaukat, Director of The Knowledge Forum, criticized policymakers for developmental choices that harm the river and its communities. She pointed out the environmental damage from projects like Thar coal and Jamshoro coal power plants, alongside existing hydroelectric interventions. Shaukat lamented the suppression of local protests against such destructive projects by vested interests.

Dr. Basharat Hussain defends PhD thesis at KMU-IPH&SS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Basharat Hussain Successfully Defends PhD Thesis at K M U - I P H & S S D r. Basharat Hussain, a PhD scholar at the Khyber Medical University (KMU) Institute of Public Health and Social Sciences (IPH&SS), has successfully defended his doctoral thesis titled "Structure, Attributes, and Covariates of Patient Safety Initiatives at Tertiary Healthcare Level in Peshawar: A Convergent Mixed Methods Discourse." The defense took place at Alexander Fleming Hall, KMU. Dr. Hussain completed his research under the supervision of Prof. Dr.



Zia Ul Haq, Vice Chancellor of KMU. His thesis was evaluated by Dr. Muhammad Farooq Umer from the College of Dentistry, King Faisal University, Hofuf, Saudi Arabia, as the External Examiner, while Dr. Khalid Rehman, Associate Professor and Director

IPH&SS, served as the Internal Examiner. Vice Chancellor KMU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, extended his heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Basharat Hussain for his remarkable achievement, particularly for completing his PhD at the age of 72 years. He emphasized that Dr. Hussain's dedica-

tion exemplifies that the pursuit of knowledge knows no age limit. "By earning his PhD at this stage of life, Dr. Basharat Hussain has set an inspiring example for young scholars, proving that a youthful spirit and unwavering commitment to education can contribute significantly to society. His research will play a crucial role in enhancing patient safety and improving healthcare services at tertiary care hospitals," said Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq. Dr. Basharat Hussain's accomplishment is a testament to lifelong learning and academic excellence, reinforcing KMU's commitment to advancing healthcare research and education.

Thar Coal & Energy Board concludes public hearing



FP Report

KARACHI: The Thar Coal & Energy Board (TCEB) successfully held a public hearing today regarding the tariff petition filed by Sino Sindh Resources Pvt. Ltd. (SSRL) for the determination of the Commercial

Operations Date (COD) Stage Tariff for its 7.8 million tons per annum (Mtpa) lignite mine located at Block-I of the Thar Coalfield. The hearing took place at the local hotel, Karachi, and was attended by various stakeholders, experts, and members of the

public. Tariq Ali Shah, Managing Director TCEB/Presiding Officer. Mr. Ammar Habib Khan, Member Finance/Power and Dr. Fahad Irfan Siddiqui, Member Mining Thar Coal Tariff Determination Committee conducted the hearing.

SITUATION VACANT

The services of Pakistani male and female are required for the following positions under a donor-funded project on a temporary / fixed-pay basis, as per the details provided below.

Sr #	Position	Eligibility / Experience
1.	Knowledge Broker (01) Peshawar based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masters/Bachelor's in Health Policy, Public Health, Social Sciences or Economics • Ability to synthesize and adapt information. • Strong communication, interpersonal, and networking skills. • Understanding of the contexts of both knowledge producers and users. • Critical thinking and strategic planning skills. • Knowledge of relevant fields (e.g., health financing, social health protection). • Facilitating dialogue and collaboration between researchers and policymakers. • Connecting with other knowledge hubs nationally and internationally.

- Eligible candidates must send their CVs to shpi.kmu2024.26@gmail.com by **28th March, 2025** with specify the position and district you are applying for in the subject line.
- Shortlisted candidates will be called for an interview.
- No TA/DA shall be admissible for appearing in the interview.
- The Project Director reserves the right to increase or decrease the number of positions and to cancel the recruitment process.

PROJECT DIRECTOR

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICER MARDAN LADY HEALTH WORKERS (LHWs) PROGRAM FOR FAMILY PLANNING & PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Lady Health Workers Program for Family Planning & Primary Health Care invites applications from suitable female candidates for appointment on fixed pay purely on contract basis against gender specific approved seats of **LHWs BPS-05** for District Mardan under **"The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regulation of Lady Health Workers Program and Employees (Regularization and Standardization) Act, 2014."**

The details of vacant seats from pre-identified vacant pockets/uncovered catchment areas, along with the names of Villages and Union Councils, are displayed at the Office of the District Health Officer, Mardan and (FLCFs) Health Centers in the following Union Councils:

Name of the Post	Eligibility Criteria Qualification/Experience
Lady Health Worker BPS-05	<p>Basic Qualification: Middle preferably Matriculate</p> <p>Age limit: 18 to 45 years for married and 20 to 45 years for unmarried women</p> <p>Female preferably married and must be permanent resident of the area for which she is to be appointed.</p> <p>Married females/women with past experience in community development, having the required qualification, will be given preference.</p> <p>Candidate should be willing to carry out the services from her home which will be designated a "Health House" ensuring effective linkage between the community and the public health care delivery system.</p>

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Only applicants having domicile of District Mardan and permanent residents of the relevant Union Council may apply.
- Candidates should meet eligibility criteria by the **last date of application submission**.
- Age relaxation will be as **per government rules**.
- Incomplete applications or those received after the due date will not be entertained.
- Recruitment will be made through a **Selection/Recruitment Committee** from uncovered areas/populations.
- Only eligible candidates will be allowed to take written test, after scrutiny of all the applications.
- Candidates who secure at least 50% marks in written test shall be called for interview.
- Shortlisted candidates must provide **original documents** at the time of the interview.
- Spot verification** will be conducted after the recommendation of the Selection/Recruitment Committee to ensure their **residential status & uncovered catchment area**, as per rules.
- Government/Semi-Government employees should apply through proper channel.
- The number of posts **may increase or decrease** as per requirements.
- The authority reserves the right to **cancel/reject applications at any stage**.
- Providing false information will lead to **disqualification**.
- Verification fees for documents of selected candidates will be borne by them.
- Reserved quotas: 2% Disabled, 5% Minorities.
- No TA/DA will be paid for the test and interview.**

HOW TO APPLY:

- Applicants should submit their applications which along with all relevant documents (**attested photocopies of academic certification, Domicile, Experience Certificate, CMC, and three recent passport-size photographs**) via any postal services only, on the address mentioned below. Application submitted by hand or at the office will not be accepted.
- The application forms will be available at DHO office only and no other forms or photocopies will be accepted.
- Candidates will have to provide **residence certificate** duly verified from Secretary village council.
- Candidates will be informed through **SMS for test/interview dates, time and venue**.
- Candidates are directed not to give ported/converted phone numbers.
- Applications can submitted within 15 days after publication of this advertisement**

NOTE:

- For further clarification or information, please contact the **Office of the District Health Officer, Mardan.**
- Issued By: District Health Officer, At DHQ Hospital Shamsi Road, Mardan.**



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur giving away cheque of financial assistance and letter of appointment as football coach to Muhammad Riaz.

CM provides Rs1m assistance to football player

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur was called on by football player Muhammad Riaz from District Hangu in Peshawar.

Muhammad Riaz has represented Pakistan in international football competitions, but he had recently been working at a local shop for his livelihood. After a video went

viral on social media, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur took notice and invited him to the CM House for a meeting.

The Chief Minister presented Muhammad Riaz with a financial assistance cheque of Rs. 1 million and appointed him as a football coach under the Department of Sports. Provincial Minister for Sports, Fakhar Jahan, was also present on the occasion. Talking on the occasion, the Chief Minister

stated that athletes like Muhammad Riaz are valuable assets to the nation and need proper support. He emphasized that the current provincial government will fully encourage and support such talented youth. Ali Amin Gandapur further mentioned that instead of focusing on only a few specific sports, the provincial government is taking steps to promote all kinds of sports. Along with mainstream sports, the government is also organ-

izing activities to promote regional and traditional games, providing young people with opportunities to showcase their talents.

He assured that the provincial government will not only encourage talented athletes but also provide them with all possible support.

Muhammad Riaz expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur for inviting him and for extending generous support.

Second meeting of the PA's Standing Committee on Information & Public Relations held

Department's performance reviewed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The second meeting of the Provincial Assembly's Standing Committee on Information & Public Relations was held on Thursday at the Rehman Baba Conference Room in the Provincial Assembly Secretariat.

The meeting was chaired by the committee's chairman and Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA), Malik Adeel Iqbal. Other committee members, including MPAs Shafullah Jan, Sher Ali Afridi, and Abdul Salam, attended the session.

Senior officials from the Information & Public Relations Department, including Secretary Arshad Khan and Director General Information

Saleem Khan, as well as representatives from the Finance and Planning & Development (P&D) departments, were also present.

During the meeting, a detailed review of the decisions taken in the previous session was conducted, and a briefing was given on the actions taken by the Information & Public Relations Department. Discussions focused on various aspects of the department's financial, administrative, and operational performance.

Chairing the meeting, MPA Malik Adeel Iqbal emphasized the need to enhance the effectiveness of regional information offices. It was decided that the performance of all regional information offices would be thor-

oughly reviewed in the next meeting to improve the dissemination of information across the province.

He highlighted that the timely and accurate provision of information to the public is crucial for government transparency and accountability.

He further stated that the Information Department acts as a vital bridge between the government, journalists, and media organizations, ensuring that the public remains informed about government decisions and development initiatives.

Malik Adeel Iqbal also stressed the importance of effectively communicating the performance of public representatives to the people and relaying public expectations and concerns to the govern-

ment. He underscored the need for further practical steps in this regard.

The committee members agreed that the Provincial Assembly and standing committees play a vital role in making important decisions and legislating for public welfare. Therefore, it is essential to keep the public informed about these developments, with the Information Department playing a key role in this effort.

During the meeting, the performance of various regional information offices was reviewed, with particular appreciation given to the Kohat Regional Information Office for its efficiency in disseminating timely information and effectively communicating government initiatives.



PESHAWAR: People buying mosquito nets from a roadside vendor. — INP Photo

Sacrifices made by PTI unparalleled: Qasim

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Social Welfare, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, stated that the sacrifices made by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers for true freedom during the peaceful protest in Islamabad on November 26 are unparalleled.

He expressed confidence that these sacrifices would bear fruit soon, and PTI founder Imran Khan would be released from jail.

He shared these thoughts while speaking to PTI

workers at the residence of Ibrahim Khan, a party worker from PK-81 Bhana Mari, Mohalla Ghiyasabad, Peshawar, who was recently released from Attock Jail.

He further mentioned that Ibrahim Khan, along with other PTI workers, was wrongfully arrested during the peaceful protest in Islamabad on November 26 and imprisoned in Attock Jail.

His release was secured last night, and after spending 105 days in jail, he has now returned home.

Provincial Minister Syed

Qasim Ali Shah commended the released worker, appreciating his remarkable sacrifice. He also expressed gratitude to the Insaf Lawyers Forum team for their personal efforts in securing the workers' release.

Syed Qasim Ali Shah added that he was pleased to see the enthusiasm and spirit of PTI workers and the youth.

He expressed pride in such dedicated party members, assuring them that their sacrifices would not go in vain. He also expressed hope that the

remaining PTI workers would be released soon.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah expresses condolences

On Thursday, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Social Welfare, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, visited Kotla Mohsin Khan, Peshawar, to offer condolences to Arbab Hamidullah on the passing of his brother and Arbab Qalandar Khan's cousin. He spent some time with the grieving family and recited Fatiha, praying for the forgiveness of the deceased.

Pir Musavir makes surprise visit to Divisional Forest Office

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Forests, Environment, Wildlife, and Climate Change Pir Musavir Khan made a surprised visit to the Divisional Forest Office Khyber yesterday.

During the visit, he reviewed the open auction process of confiscated timber under the supervision of

the auction committee. On this occasion Chief Conservator of Central Southern Forests, Khurshid Khan, was also present.

During the visit, the Special Assistant engaged with individuals participating in the auction, discussing the transparency of the process and seeking their suggestions.

The participants expressed complete satisfaction with the auction process. Pir Musavir Khan

instructed the officers to ensure full transparency in the auction process.

He emphasized that efforts were being made to promote transparency and curb corruption in the Forest and other departments.

He stated that the open auction of timber would not only generate profits for the government but would also create employment opportunities for the people. He directed the officers to

complete the timber auction process on time.

Pir Musavir Khan further stated that the sustainable development of forests would not only help to tackle climate change but would also have economic benefits.

It is noteworthy that the auction committee, under successfully sold 3,869 cubic feet of Kail timber in 12 out of 14 lots to successful bidders during the auction of confiscated timber.

State-of-the-art cath lab inaugurated at KTH

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A state-of-the-art Cath Lab has been installed and inaugurated for the first time at Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH). This advanced facility will cater to cardiac patients by offering angiography, angioplasty, and other essential heart-related procedures. The Cath Lab is initially equipped with an 8-bed, with plans for future expansion.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Mr. Ehtesham Ali, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Health, as the chief guest.

On his arrival, Dr. Zafar Afridi, Director of KTH, and Dr. Sajjad Dawar,



Acting Medical Director, warmly welcomed the honorable guest. Professor Dr. Anbar Ashraf, Chairperson of the Cardiology Department, provided a detailed briefing on the Cath Lab's advanced features and technical capabilities.

The event was attended by leading cardiologists from Lady Reading

Hospital, Peshawar Institute of Cardiology, and Hayatabad Medical Complex, highlighting the significance of this milestone in the region's healthcare sector.

Speaking to the media, Mr. Ehtesham Ali commended Professor Anbar Ashraf and her team for their dedication and termed the establishment

of this cutting-edge Cath Lab as a landmark achievement.

He reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to strengthening the healthcare sector and announced that similar Cath Labs will be set up in Swat, Dir, Dera Ismail Khan, and Chitral to enhance cardiac care across the province.

Furthermore, he emphasized that all services provided at the Cath Lab will be covered under the Sehat Card Plus program, ensuring maximum accessibility for patients in need of advanced cardiac care. This initiative is expected to significantly improve heart disease management in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

SABCO Petroleum seeks compliance of PHC's orders

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: M/s SABCO Petroleum Services seeking compliance of Peshawar High Court (PHC) orders on 20 February 2025 and has sent legal notice to Collector Customs Appraisement Dry Port and Deputy Collector National Logistic Cell Dry Port Quetta in this regard.

M/s SABCO Petroleum Services has been regularly importing one of the Naphtha products namely: Light Aliphatic Hydrocarbon Solvent from Iran vide declared in its monthly Sales Tax Returns of September, October, November and December, 2024. Being satisfied, its license was renewed twice up-to 31.12.2025, the legal

notice stated.

In the meanwhile, M/s SABCO Petroleum Services imported about ten consignments pending clearance at NLC Dry Port, Quetta out of which on two consignments the Petitioner has already paid duties and taxes whereas your office without any reason vide letters dated 16.12.2024 and 19.12.2024 initiated the issue casting uncalled for doubts on M/s SABCO credentials and in pursuance of which the Director General

Department of Explosive, Ministry of Energy, Petroleum Division without assigning any reason arbitrarily cancelled Form-L License vide Office Memorandum No. PED/612/P-L/223 dated

08.01.2025.

The illegal stoppage of imported consignments which led to cancellation of Form-L License were challenged before the Peshawar High Court (PHC) through the subject Petition seeking prayers from the Court against the Directorate and Collectorate Officials party in the Petition including releasing of imported consignments.

Thereafter the Court after detail preliminary arguments and issuing notice to the Respondent (including your office) granted the interim relief vide order dated 20.02.2025 and categorically directed to the customs authorities quoted verbatim: "The respondents

are directed to release the items as mentioned and subject to payment of sale tax and custom duty in accordance with law.

Now after clear directions of the Peshawar High Court. In compliance, Petitioner was made to pay due duties on four consignments, however, were not allowed to be out of charged which conduct is glare violation and disobedience of the PHC order which constitute contempt of court.

In view of the above, it is hereby advised that order of the Peshawar High Court may kindly be complied with letters and spirit and immediately released tall the consignments so as further legal complications be avoid to all concerned.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Livestock Fazal Hakim Khan Yousafzai chairing meeting regarding livestock and fisheries.



In brief

DC visits Girls Degree College F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner has visited Government Girls Degree College Dara Adam and inspected the classrooms, cleanliness, quality of education and attendance of teachers in the college. He also reviewed the teaching and learning process of the students in the classrooms. DC on this occasion also planted saplings under the plantation campaign and urged the students, teaching and administration staff to actively participate in the plantation campaign so that the beloved country can be made green and beautiful by protecting it from pollution and effectively deal with the pollution, flood risks and other impacts caused by climate change. DC Abdul Akram urged the teaching staff to further improve the educational activities in the college and pay special attention to the education and training of the children so that the children can become the best citizens of the society. Meanwhile, he also visited the Tunnel Joint Check Post set-up to prevent smuggling. He encouraged the staff and given necessary directions of keeping vigil eye on the movement of essential daily use items and unregistered vehicles to preventing the smuggling.

One killed other critically injured F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: An elderly man was killed and his companion received bullet injuries when rivals attacked them near Abakhel area in Lakki Marwat district. According to details, Mashal Khan and Muhammad Azeem were attacked when they going to Zangikhel on a motorcycle after attending a local court at the Judicial Complex Tajazai. Azeem received critical bullet injuries and died instantly. The injured man Mashal Khan told that their rivals including Abbas Khan and his son Fidaullah suddenly appeared and opened fire on them. He said that the attackers left the scene after the incident. Police said that the victim party had a murder enmity with the killers. They said that the body and injured were transported to the Government City Hospital for post mortem examination. Police registered a case against the killers under relevant sections of law and began an investigation. Meanwhile, policemen took part in a shooting competition held at the police lines in the District Headquarters Complex Tajazai. The competition was organised on the special instructions of District Police Officer Muhammad Jawad Ishaq. The participating police officials exhibited their shooting skills and target hitting. They also showed their skills to operate advanced weapons especially thermal sniper guns.

Police inks MoU with schools F.P. Report

MARDAN: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with 14 private schools and police for provision of free education to children of martyrs in Mardan, on Thursday. The MoU signed with educational institutions, including Leeds School, Iqra School & College, Concept School, Ghazali School, Ghazali College, Hira School, Dar-e-Arqam, Smart School, Pak Land School, and others. Representatives from Jamaat-e-Islami, including Abdullah Sahib, Abdul Razzaq Sahib, former District Naib Nazim Muhammad Ibrahim Buland, and others, were present at the signing.

National institutions at the verge of collapse, says Siraj

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Former Jamaat-e-Islami chief and ex-senator Siraj-ul-Haq has criticized the Prime Minister, calling him a "dummy PM" and accusing the government of surrendering the country's sovereignty to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Addressing an Iftar dinner in Timergara, he warned that national institutions were deteriorating and stressed the urgent need for fair and transparent elections. He claimed that lawlessness had eroded the government's authority, pushing the nation into chaos.

Siraj-ul-Haq blamed the country's prolonged crisis on a lack of adherence to Islamic principles, government mismanagement, and poor economic policies. He accused the ruling elite of endangering national interests to appease the IMF, resulting in economic instability and increased hardship for the masses. He also alleged a systematic conspiracy targeting the Pashtun population and said the government had failed to address the situation.

Commenting on electoral reforms, he emphasized that only a genuine democracy free from external influence could resolve the country's challenges. He also strongly opposed the implementation of the Customs Act in Malakand Division, vowing to resist it. He announced plans for

a grand jirga involving all political parties after Eid-ul-Fitr to discuss the neglect of development projects in the region. Regarding the arrest and extradition of Sharifullah, he criticized the government's inaction in securing Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's release, calling it an effort to appease former U.S. President Donald Trump.

Female teachers hold protest: A group of female teachers from Basic Community Schools in Lower Dir staged a protest outside the Elementary Education Foundation office in Balambat against the non-payment of their salaries for the past three years. The teachers, some accompanied by their children, held placards demanding immediate salary disbursement. They threatened to stage a sit-in at the Chief Minister's House if their dues were not cleared within a week.

The teachers revealed that 42 educators serve across 36 community schools in Lower Dir, but have been left without salaries, forcing them into extreme financial distress.

They lamented that, with Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr approaching, they lacked even basic necessities. Shopkeepers have reportedly stopped extending credit, worsening their plight. They noted that teachers in other districts had received payments, while those in Lower Dir remained neglected.

Urging Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur to intervene, the protesters demanded an immediate resolution. They warned of escalated demonstrations if the issue remained unresolved.

Newly built WAPDA building begins to leak: A three-story WAPDA building near Sadu grid station, Timergara, constructed two years ago at a cost of Rs. 50 million, has begun leaking after recent rains, severely disrupting office operations. The 30-room structure, housing the WAPDA Executive Engineer's office, revenue offices, and sub-divisional offices, has developed cracks due to alleged use of substandard materials. The leaks have caused difficulties for both staff and consumers, who visit the facility for electricity-related matters.

The deteriorating condition of the building has raised serious concerns among citizens, with furniture including tables and chairs becoming unusable. Residents have urged authorities to investigate those responsible for substandard construction and demanded immediate replacement of office furniture.

These issues, ranging from political discontent to administrative failures and public service concerns, highlight the growing frustration among residents of Lower Dir, demanding accountability and urgent action from the government.

Minister frames attack on train a coward act

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Provincial Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Balochistan, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, strongly condemned the martyrdom of security personnel, engine driver, and passengers in the terrorist attack on Jaffer Express, as well as the act of holding innocent and helpless passengers' hostage. He described it as a cowardly, barbaric, and unforgivable act of terrorism. He stated that the act of holding innocent passengers and railway staff hostage is not only an attack on the state's authority but also a vile conspiracy to disrupt the peace of the entire Balochistan.

In his statement, the Minister of Agriculture emphasized that taking innocent people hostage is a serious crime, and the terrorists involved, who are

nurtured by foreign masters, do not deserve any leniency. These elements are exploiting the vulnerable minds of mentally backward individuals, luring them with a few coins, and attempting to harm the peace of Pakistan for the malicious objectives of their masters. However, the government and the people will never allow these heinous designs to succeed.

He further said that the Balochistan government and law enforcement agencies will not allow such elements to have a free hand under any circumstances, and these terrorists will be brought to a decisive end. Provincial Minister Mir Ali Hassan Zehri added that law enforcement agencies are taking immediate and strict action against those responsible for this incident, and every possible step will be taken to eliminate terrorism in Balochistan. He

expressed his heartfelt sympathy and complete solidarity with the martyrdom, hostages and their families, saying that the people of Balochistan will not be intimidated. We will unite and firmly confront these enemy elements.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri concluded by stating that the land will be made uninhabitable for the terrorists and their facilitators who are trying to destabilize the peace of Balochistan. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said more that we will ensure the protection of our people at all costs and will not accept any form of blackmail or pressure. He added that a few shortsighted elements, sitting abroad and acting on the instructions of their foreign masters, are spilling the blood of innocent people in Balochistan, and this should be condemned in the strongest terms.



QUETTA: Students holding banners during awareness walk on the occasion of World Kidney Day.

Najm Ul Saqib defends PhD thesis



F.P. Report

KOHAT: A Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph. D) Scholar Najm ul Saqib has successfully defended his research from the Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology in the field of Management Sciences.

His PhD evaluation committee included external professor Dr. Jawad Malik from the University of Malakand, supervisor Assistant Professor Dr. Ilyas, and Professor Dr. Naveed.

Crackdown launched

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The Halal Food Authority has launched a crackdown to ensure availability of safe and quality food items for citizens.

As part of efforts, the authority's team paid a visit to Topanwala Bazaar and conducted an inspection of various sweet shops, bakeries, and halwa stores.

During the visit, several shopkeepers were fined for violating relevant regulations and for poor hygiene conditions. The food authority says that such actions will continue to ensure that the residents have access to safe and quality food.

Youth Minister Gideon praises Peshawar team

F.P. Report

MURREE: Youth Minister Gideon Joseph praised the hard work and dedication of the Youth Challenge Peshawar team, stating that this achievement is a positive step towards a bright future for Pakistan's youth. He announced that the awareness campaign against drug abuse will be expanded to other cities and districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, enabling more young people to benefit and contribute to the creation of a drug-free society.

Youth Minister for Minority Affairs Gideon Joseph participated in the five-day Pakistan Emerging Leaders' Summit organized by Social Awareness and Leadership Training (SALT) and Pakistan Partnership Initiative (PPI) in Muri.

The summit brought together emerging young leaders from different provinces of Pakistan. Accompanying Youth Minister Gideon Joseph was Youth MPA Samir



Aqel and Parliamentary Secretary for Minority Affairs.

During the summit, participants met with CEOs and directors of renowned NGOs in Pakistan, political and religious leaders, bishops, education and health experts, and other social personalities.

A Youth Challenge Pakistan Expo was also held during the summit, where representative teams from 16 districts of Pakistan presented their social and welfare projects. The expo aimed to highlight the positive initiatives taken by young people and provide opportunities to

expand their projects.

The Youth Challenge Peshawar team presented their project, "Awareness Campaign against Drug Abuse," which was well-received by the judges and experts. The team secured first position at the national level, competing against 16 districts, and was awarded a prize money of Rs. 200,000 by Youth Minister Gideon Joseph.

Additionally, the project also won Rs. 50,000 at the provincial level. This achievement has not only strengthened the role of Youth Challenge in Peshawar but also across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Police threaten journalists for covering robbery, looting

F.P. Report

LARKANA: The owner of the motorcycle stolen from citizens few days ago, while holding a press conference at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana, on this occasion protester Rasool Bakhsh Mugheri said that, few days ago, unknown people broke the lock and stole my motorcycle from the emergency ward of the hospital.

Instead, as yesterday we meet with the Civil line police station SHO Mazar Khan Mahar but he asked

us to leave the office as soon as we heard the cry and on the occasion the journalist Abdul Khaliq Jagirani, general secretary of the Larkana Press Club, saying that who are you to talk to me and leave here, otherwise I will register a case against all of you.

After that we meet with the SSP Larkana Ahmed Faisal Chaudhary but he did not any response, he demanded from DIG Larkana that SHO Mazar Khan Mehar, who misbehaved with the senior journalist, should be dismissed

from his job as he could not do injustice to any other as well as with journalist.

DBA holds protest: District Bar Association (DBA) Larkana protested in front of the press club against the canal from the Indus River by the District Bar Association Larkana.

Addressing the demonstration, President of the District Bar Association Advocate Mohammad Ismail Abro, Vice President Javed Ahmad Buledi, General Secretary Ghulam Mustafa Magasi and others said that new canals over the Indus River.

Reimagining education: Case for creativity as a cornerstone of learning

Baseer Ali Rahman Khan

In a time when learning is rigid and restrictive, education needs a major transformation—one that places creativity at its core. Traditional teaching methods, focused on memorization and one-way instruction, limit flexible thinking and hide the ever-changing nature of knowledge. By making creativity a priority, education becomes a space for innovation, helping students think critically and solve problems in new ways. This shift breaks away from outdated academic traditions, creating a dynamic learning environment where imagination and critical thinking come together, preparing students for a constantly changing world.

Creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson challenged the way we educate our children, championing a radical rethink of how our school systems cultivate creativity and acknowledge multiple types of intelligence. In reflecting on the intricate relationship between creativity and education emerge three overarching themes with notable clarity, each carrying profound implications that may be lightly touched upon:

First, the vast expanse of human creativity has been prominently showcased in recent times, reaffirming the limitless scope of human imagination and its unparalleled ability to generate novel ideas, artistic expressions, and innovative solutions. This compelling demonstration of creative potential underscores the imperative of fostering and nurturing such capacities within educational institutions and broader societal frameworks.

For instance, the implementation of a Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)-based exam system serves as a prime example of how structured assessments can encourage critical thinking and creativity rather than rote memorization. Unlike traditional exams that emphasize recall, an SLO-based system evaluates students on their ability to apply knowledge, analyse complex problems, and generate innovative solutions. For example, in a literature course, instead of merely recalling plot details, students might be asked to reinterpret a classic story in a modern setting, showcasing their imaginative skills. Similarly, in a science class, students could be tasked with designing a sustainable energy solution for their community, reinforcing both creativity and problem-solving abilities. By shifting the focus from rigid memorization to meaningful learning experiences, an SLO-based exam system nurtures human creativity and prepares students for real-world challenges.

Second, despite the extensive intellectual discourse and accumulated expertise spanning decades, an inescapable reality persists: the future remains inherently unpredictable. The trajectory of human progress is marked by uncertainty, with rapid technological advancements and evolving global paradigms rendering conventional predictive models increasingly inadequate.

For instance, the rise of the internet and digital technology in the late 20th century reshaped global economies and social structures in ways few had anticipated. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic upended long-standing assumptions about public health, global supply chains, and

remote work, forcing rapid adaptation across multiple sectors. The unpredictability of breakthroughs like artificial intelligence, which has outpaced regulatory frameworks and ethical considerations, further exemplifies this uncertainty. It is within this context of unpredictability that education assumes paramount importance, as it serves as the principal mechanism through which successive generations are equipped to navigate an ever-changing world. By fostering critical thinking, adaptability, and interdisciplinary knowledge, education ensures that individuals and societies can respond effectively to unforeseen challenges and emerging opportunities.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, there is a widespread recognition of the remarkable ingenuity inherent in children—an innate capacity for innovation that is too often overlooked. Time and again, we witness extraordinary demonstrations of youthful brilliance, exemplified by individuals whose talents captivate and inspire. Consider Gitanjali Rao, who, at just 15 years old, was named Time Magazine's first-ever "Kid of the Year" for her invention of a device that detects lead contamination in water.

Similarly, Kelvin Doe, a self-taught teenager from Sierra Leone (a country located on the west coast of Africa), built his own radio station and battery-powered generators from discarded electronics to provide power in his community. However, rather than viewing these instances as anomalies, we must acknowledge that all children possess extraordinary potential. The true failure lies not in their abilities but in an educational system that system-

atically diminishes creativity in favour of rigid conformity—an issue highlighted by Sir Ken Robinson, who famously argued that schools prioritize standardized testing over fostering original thought, ultimately stifling children's natural curiosity and problem-solving skills.

It is against this backdrop that I direct attention to the intersection of creativity and education. It is my firm conviction that creativity should be regarded as an indispensable pillar of education, on par with literacy. However, traditional educational paradigms, shaped by historical and industrial imperatives, have relegated the arts and creative disciplines to the periphery, prioritizing subjects perceived as more pragmatic for workforce preparation. This hierarchical structuring of knowledge has led to a systemic undervaluation of diverse intellectual aptitudes, thereby stifling the very qualities essential for progress and innovation.

Children, by their very nature, exhibit an uninhibited willingness to explore, experiment, and take risks. Unencumbered by the fear of failure, they generate original ideas with remarkable fluidity. Yet, as they progress through conventional educational pathways, they are gradually conditioned to avoid mistakes, ultimately eroding their creative capacities. This cultural aversion to error extends beyond academia into professional environments, where risk aversion constrains innovation and limits transformative potential. Consequently, both the educational system and the professional landscape inadvertently suppress the very attributes that drive ground-breaking advancements.

The renowned artist Pablo

Picasso once observed that "every child is an artist; the problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up." This assertion encapsulates a fundamental flaw in prevailing educational models: rather than cultivating creativity, they systematically diminish it. Rooted in the demands of industrial economies, contemporary education prioritizes narrowly defined academic proficiency, marginalizing talents that do not conform to rigid evaluative frameworks. As a result, countless individuals with exceptional creative and intellectual gifts are led to believe they lack ability, merely because their strengths do not align with traditional academic metrics.

Moreover, the world is undergoing an unprecedented transformation, rendering obsolete the antiquated structures of education. The proliferation of higher education has led to the devaluation of academic degrees, necessitating an urgent reassessment of how intelligence and success are defined. Intelligence is not a monolithic construct but rather a multifaceted phenomenon that manifests in various forms—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and abstract—each of which holds intrinsic value and practical applicability. To harness the full spectrum of human potential, educational institutions must adopt a more inclusive and adaptive approach, one that recognizes and nurtures diverse modalities of intelligence.

A poignant illustration of this principle is found in the life of Gillian Lynne, the renowned choreographer from Bromley, Kent, England, whose artistic contributions revolutionized the world of dance. As a child, she struggled within conventional

academic settings, prompting concerns about a potential learning disorder. However, a perceptive specialist discerned that her restlessness was not a deficit but rather an expression of her natural inclination for movement. By embracing her strengths and channelling them into dance, she was able to realize her full potential and achieve global acclaim. This narrative serves as a compelling testament to the necessity of broadening educational frameworks to accommodate and cultivate the unique gifts of every individual.

In light of these considerations, I propose a fundamental re-evaluation of our educational philosophies. Just as Al Gore, an American politician, environmentalist, and former vice president of the United States from 1993 to 2001 under President Bill Clinton, eloquently articulated the urgency of rethinking our ecological responsibilities, so too must we adopt a renewed conception of human ecology—one that acknowledges and fosters the full richness of human capability. The prevailing educational model, akin to an extractive industry, has sought to mine intellectual resources in a reductive and unsustainable manner. Moving forward, we must embrace a holistic, inclusive, and adaptive educational paradigm that accords creativity and innovation the same esteem as traditional academic disciplines. Only through such a transformation can we equip future generations with the tools necessary to navigate an uncertain world, empowering them to contribute meaningfully and creatively to the evolving landscape of human progress.

The writer is public servant in Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



Why Syrian Druze are placing faith in Damascus

LONDON: One day after the surprising agreement between the Syrian Arab Republic's interim government and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, there are reports of a similar pact in the offing between the government and Druze representatives in the Suwayda province.

The imminent agreement allows the Syrian authorities' security forces access into the Druze stronghold in southern Syria, through liaison and cooperation with the two military leaders Laith Al-Bal'ous and Suleiman Abdul-Baqi, as well as local notables. The agreement includes allowing the Suwayda population to join the government's defense and security forces, and secure government jobs. It also grants the Druze community full recognition as a constituent part of the Syrian people.

In return, all security centers and facilities throughout the province will be handed to the interim government's General Security Authority. The announcement by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Tel Aviv was committed "to protecting the Druze community in southern Syria" did not come as a surprise.

This was particularly so for observers who have been watching the unfolding saga closely since the 2011 Syrian uprising against the Bashar Assad regime. Several factors must be taken into consideration when attempting to understand what is going on.

Importantly, one needs to remember that the 54-year-old regime of the Assads has not helped to safeguard freedoms, democracy and human rights. The sectarian and police state gave huge

advantages to the Assad clan's Alawite minority, at the expense of the Sunni majority that makes up more than 75 percent of Syria's population.

The regime, given its minority base, also had to rely on the support of other religious minorities in confronting the continuing frustration of the Sunnis. The 1982 Hama Massacre against the Muslim Brotherhood intensified the animosity and distrust, and pushed the country further down the road of political and sectarian polarization.

However, during that period the strong leadership and tactical savviness of Hafez Assad, who ruled between 1971 and his death in 2000, kept opposition at bay. The regime had worked hard to reassure religious and sectarian minorities that its heavy-handed campaign in Hama was necessary to save them from supposed Islamist fundamentalism.

Hafez Assad's shrewd reading and handling of the regional situation convinced the Iranian regime — his trusted ally since the 1980 to 1988 Iran-Iraq war — that its vision in the Near East was in safe hands. That situation began to change when Hafez Assad's grip on the regime began to weaken. There was first the death of his eldest son and heir apparent Basil in a road accident in 1994, and then his health deteriorated until his death in 2000.

Hafez Assad's second son Bashar, a medical doctor, who was groomed to be the heir after Maher's death, became the de-facto leader with most of the political responsibilities, alliances and personnel. However, Bashar did not have his father's savviness and expertise. He further

lacked widespread respect inside his father's regime, and with the latter's regional allies.

Many of his father's veteran political and military lieutenants were marginalized. In addition, there was a sidelining of many of his father's allies in Syria, as well as Lebanon, which had become a politically subservient entity. More importantly, perhaps, Bashar did not gain the respect and trust of Iran, which by 2004 had become a powerful regional player, both in Lebanon through Hezbollah, and the post-Saddam Hussein Shiite-dominated Iraq.

In fact, Iran became the real power broker in both Lebanon and Iraq, leaving Bashar's regime as a facade of influence. In the meantime, Israel, which was keenly monitoring the change at the top in Syria, was preparing to deal with more Iranian involvement. Israel had been reassured of its peaceful borders with Syria since the war of 1973. Tel Aviv always believed that, despite the tough rhetoric, the Assad regime would pose no threat to its occupation of the Golan Heights.

However, Iran's direct involvement in Lebanon required extra attention but the Israelis were not too worried. They believed Iran would never challenge the US in the region. Still, Iran's constant supposed blackmail was not a comforting scenario, against the background of its nuclear ambitions. Moreover, Hezbollah became a serious irritant.

Following the assassination of Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, Hezbollah had increasing power, influence and confidence. — Arab News

4 killed when a car listed as stolen crashes into a tree

CLEVELAND (AP): Four people were killed when a car listed as stolen crashed into a tree in Cleveland, police said. Police received a call reporting the crash around 12:30 a.m., Cleveland police said in a statement. The car was traveling northbound at what appeared to be excessive speed when it lost control and crashed into a tree, ejecting three occupants, police said. The driver was not ejected.

All four people died at the scene, police said. Police did not identify them, noting that notifications to family were still pending. Images from the crash scene showed crumpled pieces of a car and debris strewn around the front yards of homes. Police said the car was listed as stolen.

Erdogan welcomes Syrian deal with Kurdish forces

ANKARA (Reuters): Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan welcomed an agreement between the Kurdish-led and US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Syria's new government, saying its full implementation would contribute to security and stability in the country. The SDF, which controls much of Syria's northeast and which Ankara views as a terrorist organisation because of links to Kurdish militants in Turkey, signed an agreement to join Syria's new state institutions, the Syrian presidency said.

The accord provides for SDF-controlled civilian and military institutions in northeast Syria to be integrated with the state, and for border crossings, an airport, and oil and gas fields there to come under the Damascus administration's control. "The full implementation of the agreement reached yesterday in Syria will contribute to the country's security and stability. The beneficiaries of this will be all our Syrian brothers and sisters," Erdogan said.

"We attach great importance to the territorial integrity of our neighbour Syria, the preservation of its unitary structure, and the strengthening of its unity and stability," Erdogan added in televised comments. Earlier, a Turkish official said Ankara was "cautiously optimistic" about the deal but focused on its implementation. The SDF has "made promises before, too, so we are looking at implementation rather than at the expression of intent here," the official told Reuters.

The accord comes at a critical moment for Damascus as it grapples with the fallout from mass killings of Alawite minority members in western Syria - violence that Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa said threatened his effort to unite Syria after 14 years of conflict. Ankara has become one of the main foreign allies of Sharaa's new Islamist government since rebels - some of them backed over many years by Turkey - ousted former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad last year to end his five-decade rule. Turkey, which still controls swathes of territory in Syria's north after cross-border operations against the YPG militia that spearheads the SDF, has repeatedly demanded that the YPG disarm and disband, and for any non-Syrian fighters in the militia to leave the country.

The Turkish official said talks at the weekend between Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Jordan in Amman regarding security cooperation between the four countries, including establishing an operations centre, sharing intelligence and handing over prison camps where Islamic States fighters are held by the SDF, were influential in the SDF-Damascus deal being agreed as well. The official said the Amman talks had conveyed the message that the presence of the YPG in Syria would not be tolerated. The agreement between the SDF and Damascus also comes after the outlawed Kurdish PKK militant group said earlier this month that it would halt hostilities against the Turkish state, following an appeal from its jailed leader to disarm.



NEW YORK: Demonstrators holding placards as they protest on the day of a hearing on the detention of Palestinian activist and Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil.

Judge blocks deportation of arrested Palestinian Columbia student

NEW YORK (Reuters): A US judge ordered that Palestinian Columbia student Mahmoud Khalil not be deported for now as part of US President Donald Trump's crackdown on some anti-Israel protesters, and set a court hearing in the case.

Trump publicly denounced Khalil and said more arrests would follow. Khalil has been moved to a federal jail for migrants in Louisiana to await deportation proceedings, according to his lawyers and a US detainee database. Demonstrators on the streets of New York City, the state attorney general and the American Civil Liberties Union have denounced his arrest by US Department of Homeland Security agents as an attack on free speech.

Police and hundreds of protesters briefly clashed in lower Manhattan and at least one person was detained, according to a Reuters witness. Khalil, who had held legal permanent resident status and was arrested, has been a prominent figure in Columbia's pro-Palestinian student protest movement that set off campus demonstrations across the United States and around the world last year. Trump branded Khalil a "Radical Foreign Pro-Hamas Student" on social media. US District Court Judge Jesse Furman put a hold on his deportation "unless and until the Court orders otherwise."

Khalil's lawyers also urged Furman to order Khalil's return to New York. They accused the government of seeking to deprive Khalil of access to legal counsel by sending

him far from New York. Trump said on social media that Khalil's "is the first arrest of many to come." The Trump administration has not said Khalil is accused of or charged with a crime, but Trump wrote that his presence in the US was "contrary to national and foreign policy interests."

The Education Department sent letters to 60 US universities, including Harvard, Columbia, Yale and four University of California schools, warning them of cuts in federal funding unless they addressed allegations of antisemitism on campus. Even before Khalil's arrest, students say federal immigration agents have been spotted at student housing around Columbia's Manhattan campus, a day before the Trump administration announced it was canceling \$400 million in federal grants and contracts awarded to the school because of what it described as antisemitic harassment on and near Columbia's New York City campus. The federal agents have been trying to detain at least one other international student, according to the Student Workers of Columbia labor union. Spokespeople for DHS and ICE declined to answer questions about the union's account, which Reuters was unable to independently verify. A spokesperson for the Department of State said visa records are confidential under US law and so the department could not comment.

Agents from the Department of Homeland Security arrested Khalil in front of his wife, a US citizen who is

eight months pregnant, telling him his student visa had been revoked, according to Amy Greer, a lawyer for Khalil. His wife showed the agents Khalil's green card and they also threatened to arrest her if she did not leave her lobby, Greer said. They then said the green card was also revoked and handcuffed Khalil, Greer said.

Hours before his arrest, Khalil told Reuters he was concerned that the government was targeting him. Khalil and other activists note that Jewish students are among the protest organizers, and say their criticism of Israel and its US government support is being wrongly conflated with antisemitism. Jewish faculty at Columbia held a rally and press conference in support of Khalil outside a university building, holding signs saying "Jews say no to deportations." "There is a chill in the air. It's a chill of fear and despair," said Marianne Hirsch, professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, who grew up in Romania as a child of Holocaust survivors.

While the Trump administration has cited concerns over antisemitism, the president and his allies have themselves been accused of enabling antisemitism. Following a 2017 white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, where some demonstrators carried torches and chanted "Jews will not replace us," Trump said there were "fine people on both sides." Trump, who denies allegations of being antisemitic, also faced criticism in 2022 for dining with white supremacist Nick Fuentes.

USAID staff told to shred and burn classified documents

NEW YORK (BBC): Staff at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) have been told to shred and burn classified documents and personnel files. The request raised alarm among employees and labour groups amid the ongoing dismantling of the agency.

Acting Executive Secretary Erica Y Carr sent an email that thanked staff for clearing out classified safes and personnel documents from a Washington DC office and told them to meet in the building's lobby for an all-day disposal event. "Shred as many documents first, and reserve the burn bags for when the shredder becomes available or needs a break," her email to staff read.

Typically, documents placed in burn bags for disposal are sealed and then taken to a secure site for incineration. The email asked staff not to overfill the burn bags and label them with the words "SECRET" and "USAID (B/IO)" - which stands for bureau, or independent office - using permanent markers. The BBC has viewed a copy of the email, which was also reported by its US partner, CBS News. It was first reported by

ProPublica. The US State Department did not immediately return a request for comment. It was not immediately clear if the agency had preserved copies of the documents marked for destruction. The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), a union representing USAID staff, was aware employees had been asked to shred documents, spokesperson Nikki Gamer told the BBC. The union said it was "alarmed" by the reports and warned that such documents "may be relevant to ongoing litigation regarding the termination of USAID employees and the cessation of USAID grants". The Trump administration faces multiple lawsuits over its dismantling of USAID, which began shortly after Trump took office in January. Unions and other groups have challenged the administration's power to shut down an agency and freeze funds that had been established and approved by the US Congress. AFSA noted that federal law dictates that government records must be preserved as they are "essential to transparency, accountability, and the integrity of the legal process". The union warned

that "the unlawful destruction of federal records could carry serious legal consequences for anyone directed to act in violation of the law." Government agencies do occasionally destroy paper records of classified materials and other documents, but strict procedures govern the process. The Federal Records Act of 1950 sets out guidelines for the proper disposal of documents and creating backup or archival records, including electronic records.

The email sent by Carr did not contain some of the details traditionally found in a records disposal request, raising concerns about procedure, experts told the BBC. "There is no indication in this email order that any thought is being given to proper retention or even identifying which records can be destroyed and which records cannot," said Kel McClanahan, executive director of the National Security Counselors, a non-profit law firm in Washington. Mr McClanahan filed a complaint with the National Archives and Records Administration, asking them to "take immediate measures" to stop the destruction of records.

Russian court accuses veteran journalist of 'justifying terrorism'

MOSCOW (AFP): Russian prosecutors accused a veteran journalist of "justifying terrorism" a charge punishable by up to seven years in prison as her trial opened amid a widespread crackdown on independent media. Moscow has hugely stepped efforts to quash dissent as it fights in Ukraine and regularly accuses anyone deemed not to toe the official line of "justifying terrorism".

Prosecutors accuse Nadezhda Kevorkova, a respected 66-year-old journalist who specialises in the Middle East, of "publicly justifying and calling for terrorism... with the aim of shaping public opinion". The accusation is based on two social media posts, one from 2020 on the Taliban and a re-post from another journalist in 2018 about a 2005 Islamist raid on the

Russian city of Nalchik. Kevorkova, who was arrested in May, has written for Russia's top media outlets including Novaya Gazeta and has also written for pro-Kremlin media such as Russia Today.

At court, Kevorkova, who had her hair tied back in a bun and wore a black dress with white stripes, waved to a group of around 20 supporters, including fellow journalists, from behind the glass defendant's cage. She told the judge she understood the charges against her, and is expected to testify at a hearing later this week. Her lawyer Kaloy Akhilogov said a verdict could be delivered within days. The Taliban is officially banned by Moscow, though Moscow has forged ties with the Islamist authorities that now govern

Afghanistan.

Akhilogov said any mention of the group is "very sensitive" for security services, especially after the March 2024 Crocus City Hall terrorist attack. "The Talibs, as you know, come to Russia, meet with high-ranked representatives of our country," Akhilogov told AFP. "But formally the Taliban from 2003 is on a list of banned terrorist organisations... And formally, of course, any mention of the Taliban in a positive context suggests that this is a justification of terrorism." The Kremlin has exerted a tight grip on Russian media under President Vladimir Putin's long rule, but its control of the press since launching the 2022 Ukraine offensive has drawn comparisons with Soviet-era censorship and propaganda.

Putin orders army to eject last Ukrainian troops from Russian territory

MOSCOW (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian troops to clear a new buffer zone inside Ukraine's Sumy region, which is adjacent to Kursk, to guard against any future potential Ukrainian incursions. He also said foreign citizens fighting with Ukrainian forces captured in Kursk were not entitled to enjoy the protection of the Geneva Conventions, and that Ukrainian soldiers captured in Kursk should be treated as "terrorists."

"Our task in the near future, in the shortest possible timeframe, is to decisively defeat the enemy entrenched in the Kursk region and still fighting here, to completely liberate the territory of the Kursk region, and to restore the situation along the line of the state border," Putin said.

"And of course, we need to think about creating a security zone along the state border," Valery Gerasimov, the chief of Russia's General Staff, was

shown telling Putin that Russian forces had pushed Ukrainian forces out of over 86% of the territory they had once held in Kursk, the equivalent to 1,100 square kilometres (425 square miles) of land. Ukraine's plans to use Kursk as a bargaining chip in possible future negotiations with Russia had failed, he added. Kyiv's gambit that its Kursk operation would force Russia to divert troops from its advance in eastern Ukraine had also not worked. Gerasimov said Russian forces had retaken 24 settlements and 259 square kilometres of land from Ukrainian forces in the last five days along with over 400 prisoners.

Russian units had also crossed into Ukraine's Sumy region where he said they were expanding "a security zone." Reuters could not independently verify his assertions. Reuters was however able to verify video published by Russian bloggers and

state media showing troops standing with a Russian tricolour flag on a square in the centre of Sudzha, a town near the Ukrainian border on a highway used by Ukraine as a supply route.

Deep State, an authoritative Ukrainian site that charts the frontlines of the war, updated its battlefield map to show Ukrainian forces were no longer in control of Sudzha. However, it said fighting was continuing on the outskirts. Ukraine's top army commander said that Kyiv's troops will keep operating in Russia's Kursk region as long as needed and that fighting continued in and around the town of Sudzha.

Skadovskiy Defender, a Ukrainian military blogger, posted on Telegram: "Ukraine's Armed Forces are leaving Kursk. There will be no Ukrainian soldier there." The same channel said, however, that Ukraine was continuing to conduct heavy strikes on Sudzha.

Portugal elections loom as PM loses confidence vote

LISBON (BBC): The government of Portuguese Prime Minister Luis Montenegro has lost a vote of confidence, almost certainly pitching the country into its third general election in barely three years. MPs voted against him by 142 to 88 with no abstentions, toppling his right-of-centre minority government. While Portugal's President, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, is not obliged to dissolve the assembly, he had made clear that he would if the government lost vote, with fresh elections likely in May.

The confidence motion was tabled by the government itself, after the opposition Socialists announced plans for a parliamentary inquiry into Montenegro's business dealings. A company called Spinumviva, set up

by Luis Montenegro, continued to receive sizeable sums from clients he had previously secured, even after he was elected Social Democratic Party (PSD) president and leader of the opposition in 2022, and had transferred ownership to his wife and two sons. The legality of the transfer to his wife was questioned by the opposition, given that the marriage is one in which assets are jointly held; the couple have since made their sons sole owners.

But questions remain about the sources of the company's income - which until a few days ago included 4,500 (£3,800) a month from hotels and casino group Solverde, whose gambling concession is up for review - as well as the identity of

other clients, which the prime minister has declined to reveal, and the services Spinumviva offers. The prime minister, a trained lawyer, says the firm provides consultancy services relating to data privacy laws, outsourcing work to external experts - given that his wife is a childminder, one son a student and the other a new graduate.

The Bar Association is now looking into whether the company is illicitly offering services that only lawyers may offer. In recent days, Montenegro's cabinet has approved a battery of spending and other measures, in what is being seen as a bid to show that it is working hard for the country.

The situation might seem to offer ideal conditions for far-right Chega, the third-

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Toxic tariff policy heralds US recession

IT is Washington's firm belief that the United States only stands to win in the tariff war it is waging against the rest of the world. That has made it addicted to weaponizing tariffs in a bid to "make America great again".

But that conviction is nothing but wishful thinking, as in the interconnected world no economy can sustain its growth by inflicting pain on others, as evidenced by the boomerang effects the tariff war has had on the US economy.

After the market saw the US leader would not change his mind at the last moment and the US would go ahead with a 25 percent additional tariff on all imported steel and aluminum on Wednesday, all three major US stock indices fell by a large margin. On Tuesday, the S&P 500 index fell 9.3 percent from its historical high in February, while the Nasdaq fell 13.6 percent from its historical high in December.

The negative effect on relevant industries will be felt soon, not to mention the impacts on other US sectors, including agriculture, as a result of the retaliatory tariffs to be imposed by other parties. Take the steel and aluminum tariff hikes as an example. They cannot boost steel and aluminum production in the US or create more jobs, instead they will harm downstream US companies and US consumers. Their effects will be felt in the automotive, electrical machinery, and construction equipment industries, among others, weakening the global competitiveness of US products in these markets.

If the US puts its president's "reciprocal" tariff threat into practice next month, it will further fuel the market panic and turn inflation in the US from a concern to a practical challenge.

Even some insiders of the economic and financial policymaking circle in the US have expressed their collective concerns about the possible impacts of the administration's tariff war on the US economy.

Conscious of that, the US president and his senior advisers met with leading US business figures at the White House on Monday to comfort the market, during which several CEOs of high-tech companies expressed concerns about the administration's tariff policies, warning that imposing tariffs would be detrimental to the US technology industry.

The US business community and lobbying groups have called senior officials such as the White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles suggesting that the US leader leave room for negotiations to lower tariffs and develop a "more predictable tariff agenda" to calm market tensions.

But US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said in an interview on Tuesday that even if the US economy eventually falls into recession, the US president's tariff policies will be "worth it", claiming that the tariff policies are "the most important thing America has ever had".

That was in stark contrast to Lutnick's remarks in an interview with the media on Sunday, when he said emphatically that the US would not experience an economic recession, adding that US people "should never" prepare for it. Regarding the criticism from the outside world that the US' tariff policies are inconsistent, Lutnick said "anybody who bets against Donald Trump probably is a fool".

All of which has served to intensify the market's panic that the administration is suggesting a recession is inevitable, without explaining how it will end it and in what way that heralds a brighter future.

Although the World Trade Organization said in the latest issue of its "Goods Trade Barometer", released on Wednesday, that the global goods trade sentiment index remains almost unchanged from December last year, it pointed out that the increasing uncertainty of trade policies and the prospect of new tariffs may put pressure on midterm trade, warning that the increase in trade policy uncertainty may temporarily promote trade, as businesses and consumers will import ahead of possible measures, which may reduce demand later this year.

It will take time for the systemic impacts of the US' tariff policies to be manifest in the global economy. But history has and will continue to prove tariff wars have no winners. If the US administration relies on extortion, bullying and coercion as its art of a negotiated deal, it is not going to make America great again.

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Saving Sudan's children must be a global priority

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

AS Sudan's brutal war approaches the end of its second year, children remain particularly vulnerable to the ongoing violence, displacement and humanitarian collapse.

The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has created a devastating humanitarian crisis, displacing millions and leaving millions more at risk of starvation, disease and violence. While war affects all civilians, children bear the heaviest burden. They are being killed, raped, forcibly recruited and left to die from preventable diseases. Many have lost their families and are now trapped in an endless cycle of suffering, with no access to education, healthcare or basic human necessities.

Since fighting erupted in April 2023, Sudan has plunged into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The violence has displaced more than 11 million people, with over half of them being children. The war has forced families to flee their homes, often leaving children stranded in unfamiliar and dangerous environments. Many have been separated from their parents or orphaned, meaning they are left to fend for themselves in overcrowded displacement camps, war-torn villages or urban centers under constant bombardment.

Beyond displacement, Sudan's children face other horrific consequences of war. Reports indicate that more than 200 children, including infants, have been raped. Rape is most likely being used as a weapon of war, leaving survivors traumatized, stigmatized and at risk of life-long physical and psychological harm. The breakdown of law and order means that children are more exposed to sexual violence, trafficking and forced marriage.

At the same time, disease is spreading rapidly. In White Nile State, a recent cholera outbreak claimed nearly 100 lives in just a few weeks, including at least 18 children. The destruction of essential infrastructure — such as water purification plants — has forced families to drink contaminated water, fueling the spread of deadly waterborne diseases. The collapse of Sudan's healthcare system means that medical treatment is virtually nonexistent, leading to thousands of preventable deaths.

The discovery of a mass grave near Khartoum containing more than 500 bodies has further underscored the war's horrific toll. Many of the dead, including children, had been subjected to torture before their execution. The conflict's brutality has left no safe haven for Sudan's youth, who continue to be the primary victims of war crimes, starvation and displacement.

Children are always the most vulnerable during conflicts, but Sudan's war has exposed them to unprecedented dangers. Unlike adults, children lack the ability to protect themselves, find food or escape violence. Their survival depends entirely on the presence of a functioning society — something that has completely collapsed in Sudan.

Children in conflict zones suffer from severe malnutrition at alarming rates. The combination of food shortages, supply chain disruptions and deliberate attacks on humanitarian aid efforts has left millions of children at risk of starvation. UNICEF warns that Sudan is facing one of the worst child malnutrition crises in the world, with a third of all children under the age of five suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Many of these children will

not survive without immediate medical intervention and access to food.

Additionally, education has come to a complete halt for millions of Sudanese children. Schools have been destroyed, occupied by armed groups or turned into shelters for displaced families. Teachers have fled or been killed and a lack of resources has made virtual or alternative education impossible. With no access to schooling, an entire generation is at risk of growing up without education, further deepening poverty and instability in Sudan's future. Children are also at high risk of recruitment by armed groups.

The suffering of Sudan's children is not just a tragedy, it is a failure of the international community. Despite the scale of the crisis, Sudan has received far less global attention and aid than other war-torn countries. Sudan's children should not be forgotten. Their suffering is a direct consequence of global inaction and addressing their needs should be an urgent international priority. There are several critical reasons why the world must prioritize Sudan's children. The international community has a duty to protect the most vulnerable in times of war. The atrocities committed against Sudan's children — including mass rapes, executions and forced starvation — are clear violations of international humanitarian law. The world cannot turn a blind eye to these crimes.

A prolonged crisis in Sudan will contribute to greater instability in Africa, increased refugee flows, cross-border violence and extremist recruitment. By prioritizing Sudan's children, the international community can help prevent future conflicts. The current response to Sudan's crisis is insufficient. Aid agencies are struggling to provide even basic necessities due to funding shortages and security threats. Sudan's children need more than just temporary relief, they need a coordinated international effort to ensure their long-term survival and well-being. To address this crisis, world leaders and the African Union must take the following urgent steps.

A lasting ceasefire must be negotiated and enforced to allow humanitarian aid to reach those in need. The fighting must stop to give Sudan's children a chance at survival.

The international community must also significantly increase funding for food, healthcare and education programs. Sudan's children cannot wait while bureaucratic processes delay lifesaving aid. The Jeddah Declaration was a step in the right direction, but it must be strengthened and fully implemented. More pressure should be placed on the warring parties to honor their commitments and allow aid to flow freely.

Humanitarian organizations on the ground need more resources and protection to reach the most vulnerable communities. Governments and donors must support these efforts to ensure aid reaches children in need. In addition, the international community must take action against those responsible for war crimes against children, ensuring justice and deterrence against further atrocities. In a nutshell, as the war in Sudan drags on, the country's children continue to pay the highest price. They have lost their homes, their families, their safety and their future. Every passing day without action means more children will starve, die or fall victim to violence. Sudan's children are not just statistics, they are the future of a nation. Their suffering should push the international community to act immediately.

Houthi's four-year honeymoon is over

Dalia Al-Aqidi

THE US State Department last week reinstated the Foreign Terrorist Organization designation for Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi group, fulfilling an order announced by President Donald Trump shortly after he took office. This action underscores Washington's commitment to countering Iran's proxies and addressing the growing threat posed by the Houthis, whose violent actions have destabilized Yemen and the broader Middle East.

As part of this move, the State Department's Rewards for Justice program announced it would pay up to \$15 million for information leading to the disruption of Houthi financing, signaling a focused effort to cut off the financial resources that sustain the group's violent campaign.

This decision is a significant step in the ongoing efforts to combat terrorism and limit Iran's influence in the region.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio emphasized that the Houthis have repeatedly targeted commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, in addition to posing a direct threat to US service members. He underscored that the US will not tolerate any nation engaging with terrorist organizations like the Houthis, especially under the pretense of legitimate international trade. This stance reaffirms his country's commitment to holding such groups accountable and protecting global maritime security.

The Houthis, who seized control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014, have expanded their reach through a combination of military aggression and support from Iran's Quds Force, which has enabled them to carry out sustained attacks, not only against Yemen's legitimate government but also against civilian infrastructure across the region.

This is not the first time the terrorist group has faced significant actions to curb its influence. In

early 2021, the first Trump administration made the same pivotal decision, marking a critical step in isolating the group from global financial networks. It severely restricted the Houthis' ability to access vital funds, resources and weapons, all of which were essential to sustaining their violent campaign.

However, in an unexpected shift, the Biden administration removed the pro-Iran group's designation shortly after taking office in 2021, claiming that the designation was hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen. This allowed the Houthis to operate with greater freedom and enabled them to continue their violent activities with no solid consequences.

By reinstating the designation, the Trump administration has sought to correct this mistake and reassert its commitment to combating terrorism in the Middle East. The restoration of the designation sends a clear message that Washington will not tolerate the Houthis' acts of terror and that they will be held accountable for their actions. In addition, it will have far-reaching consequences for their supporters, particularly key backer Iran.

The reinstatement will significantly disrupt the Houthis' access to international financial systems. The American government will now have the authority to freeze any assets tied to the Houthis

within US jurisdiction and block any financial transactions that could benefit the group. The terrorist group will be cut off from much-needed funds, preventing it from acquiring weapons, ammunition and other resources that support its ongoing terrorist activities.

This financial pressure may also limit the Houthis' ability to recruit new members and sustain their violent campaign, particularly if it cuts off the supply lines from Iran. By targeting the group's financial networks, the US aims to undermine its capacity to carry out attacks and weaken its operational capabilities.

The American decision will also have military and strategic consequences. It gives the US and its allies a stronger legal basis to take military action against the Houthis. It allows the US to target Houthi military positions and leaders, as well as their weapons supply chains. It also justifies increasing military operations in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, areas where the Houthis have targeted commercial shipping vessels. By protecting these crucial maritime routes, Washington and its allies can help safeguard global trade. Meanwhile, it also provides further legal grounds for rapidly responding to hostile actions against US Navy warships in the area.

Even though this action may complicate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen, the US has stated that it will implement measures to ensure aid reaches those in need without benefiting the Houthis. This includes working with international organizations and ensuring that aid distribution is closely monitored. The goal is to prevent the terrorists from diverting humanitarian resources to fund their brutal activities, while ensuring that the suffering of the Yemeni people does not go unaddressed.

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early 2021, the first Trump administration made the same pivotal decision, marking a critical step in isolating the group from global financial networks. It severely restricted the Houthis' ability to access vital funds, resources and weapons, all of which were essential to sustaining their violent campaign.

However, in an unexpected shift, the Biden administration removed the pro-Iran group's designation shortly after taking office in 2021, claiming that the designation was hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen. This allowed the Houthis to operate with greater freedom and enabled them to continue their violent activities with no solid consequences.

By reinstating the designation, the Trump administration has sought to correct this mistake and reassert its commitment to combating terrorism in the Middle East. The restoration of the designation sends a clear message that Washington will not tolerate the Houthis' acts of terror and that they will be held accountable for their actions. In addition, it will have far-reaching consequences for their supporters, particularly key backer Iran.

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Will Europe swap the US for China?

Mohamed Chebaro

AT a time when uncertainty is growing around the world and when many established foreign policies are being revised, potentially upending the world order, China could emerge from the shadows and present itself as a central force in preserving the status quo. Many would applaud Beijing if it were to step up and show a readiness to fill the strategic vacuum and lead, especially in the Global South, vis-a-vis a retrenching, inward-looking US, and maybe in Europe too.

China's expression of a "resolute" intention not only to push back against the US' unjustifiable tariffs, but also taking a swipe against the Trump administration's policies of withdrawing from international institutions and bodies, must be a very welcome move. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's statement last week that major powers "should not bully the weak" could go a long way and earn China more dividends, not only in the Global South but also across a European continent that is feeling betrayed by its closest ally.

This came as China Premier Li Qiang outlined China's ambitions for growth at the opening of the annual meeting of the National People's Congress.

But where Wang went further was with his overtures to Europe and by taking a swipe at the White House's worldview. His statement that Europe can

be a trustworthy partner — even amid differences with the continent due to Beijing's tacit support of Russia's Ukraine invasion and Europe's concerns over its poor human rights record — can be a foundation to build on.

Maybe it would not be naive to entertain the thought that, as a result of the current erratic and uncertain US policies, such statements could create an opportunity for an EU-China reset and increased cooperation. This would give Brussels an opportunity to boost its economic growth potential and also its security, but only if the Europeans can move past the ideological differences that have often muffled the conversations with Beijing.

This Chinese stance ought to have hit a nerve among traditional American allies in the West. Wang's statement evoked the views recently expressed in pro-Ukraine EU nations, which are feeling increasingly bullied by the US.

Wang's words, while they still need to be coupled with action from Beijing, are encouraging as they could usher in new avenues of discussion between China and Europe, particularly if Beijing is sincere in trying to present itself as a reliable and mature global power. Amid the geopolitical turmoil caused by the US' withdrawal from international institutions, this surely will appeal to European countries

should double down and urge Beijing to take a more active role in using its economic leverage and political influence over Russia to stop the war in Ukraine, even if it did not do so in the past. This should be in line with Wang's claim that China wants to achieve a "fair, lasting and binding peace agreement" that is acceptable to all parties.

This could give credence to the belief that Beijing wishes to exploit the growing transatlantic rift to bolster its ties with European countries. EU-US ties have been particularly strained by the US' unilaterally imposed roadmap to peace in Ukraine and the White House's trade tariffs.

The despair that is being felt from Kyiv to London is leading some to question all the values that have underpinned the world order that was, until recently, driven by the US itself. Such despair is bringing back into focus human history as a whole, which has often oscillated between Thomas Hobbes' imagined state of nature in calamitous times — when people living without government were involved in a war of all against all and life was "nasty, brutish and short" — and that of a life lived in more peaceful times, such as when John Locke wrote about the state of nature involving a social contract between rulers and the ruled that permits the pursuit of life, liberty and property. Locke's ideas became enshrined in US political

culture and the so-called American dream and they are still embraced in many parts of the world today.

That Lockean tradition guided the formation of world governance and institutions like the UN, followed by the Bretton Woods principles, which cemented the post-Second World War quasi-peace for Europe, America and the rest of the world. However, we are now seeing the unravelling of this system in front of our eyes in a matter of weeks, as the White House is trying to circumvent it. Wang's words appeal to those same common human values, even if China's ideological system and its actions do not always reflect them.

European leaders are under no illusion that the world is changing under the new Trump administration — and faster than first thought. Despite initial positive assessments of the limits of Trump's transactionalism — that maybe it will not go as far as undoing the historic US-Europe alignment — recent weeks have left Europe exposed to a US policy of divide, rule and grab.

So, will Europe dare to dream of an enhanced trade and development rapprochement with China that could usher in a new era of cooperation to counterbalance the US' withering interest?

I believe Europe should shift its emphasis and show pragmatism, rather than surrender and accept the end of a values-led world.

How Trump's trade war could quickly spiral out of control

The comprehensive plan has, unfortunately excluded, recovery of Gaza's ancient medieval and historical cultural heritage destroyed and damaged by Israeli military action. From the outset of the conflict archaeologists and historians have voiced concern over Israeli targeting of monuments, ancient sites, and heritage. On 18 April, 2024, UN experts warned, "The foundations of Palestinian society are being reduced to rubble, and their history is being erased." Eradicating cultural heritage of the Palestinian people is one of the war crimes charged against Israel by South Africa in

On 6.Feb, Palestinian Minister of Tourism Hani al-Hayek announced that of 316 sites, 138 sustained major damage, 61 moderate damage, 27 slight damage, and 90 no damage. The ministry's findings were based on a field study of all sites

Whether random or targeted, Israel's attacks began soon after the 7.Oct, 2023, Hamas attack on southern Israel. Air strikes have ravaged Gaza's schools and universities, museums, libraries, mosques, churches, monasteries, archaeological excavations, cultural centres, remained when Israeli bombs struck. Fortunately, they had been digitalised and are stored at the British Library. Churches were not spared. The Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius was damaged on 19.Oct, 2023, when bombs struck

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— *The National*

“Human behavior is very difficult to model and predict. Trade economists had it pretty easy for 30 years. But

"The president is in a tight spot, and every tariff (or threatened tariff) makes his position more difficult," says Simon Johnson, head of MIT's Global Economics and Management group, told CNN in an email. "If he keeps going in this direction, prices will rise and the economy will slow even further."

US should improve ties for own good

Although the SDF's exact organic relationship with the PKK is not clear, the group does not

Although the SDF initially said that Ocalan's call did not concern it, his move has created momentum that was difficult to ignore. If the

Syrian state, whereby the state guarantees its right to citizenship and all other constitutional rights." In another part of the statement, the state guarantees the rights of "representation and participation in the political process and all government agencies" of "all Syrians, irrespective of the aspirations of all components of Syrian society.

Despite this universal support for the agreement, discussions over the details may delay its full implementation. The last paragraph of the agreement instructed "the executive committees" to implement it

This calls for speedily empaneling the executive committees stipulated in the agreement, but also a fuller engagement with the US on the status of its forces in the SDF-controlled region, as well as the fate of the Daesh prisons and refugee camps.

Based on practical examples, modern economic theory posits that competitive trade enhances economic output and income while trade barriers hinder them. Recent evidence has shown that tariffs raise prices and reduce the quantity of goods and services supplied by the foreign country. This eventually diminishes the income of both businesses and workers. Higher prices lessen the return on labor and capital, discouraging American people from working and investing, leading to lower production and living standards. Regardless of the global developments, China should prioritize three key areas in its domestic policy. First, it should enhance its competitiveness, adhering to the well-known Chinese saying: "To forge iron, one must be strong oneself." Second, it should stimulate domestic demand and foster the growth of the domestic market to reduce reliance on exports and external market conditions. And third, it should vigorously promote technological innovation, focusing on improving the synergy between innovation and industry. The implementation of Trump's discriminatory policies will hinder the success of MAGA; in fact, it will undermine it. China and the US are interdependent economies, and their cooperation will enhance the wellbeing of their people and those in the rest of the world. New tariffs will hinder the US economy's development and impact American people's life. More important, it is not too late for the US to reconsider and embrace wisdom and common sense.



SCCI calls for reshaping policies for industry, economic growth

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fazal Moqem Khan called for reshaping policies for industrialization and to avoid enforcement of anti-business initiatives and actions.

SCCI chief, addressing during a visit of pre-service training of PMS Officers from the Industries Department here at chamber house on Thursday demanded a special fiscal relief package for war-affected businesses and industry of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He also stressed bringing new people under the tax net instead of burdening existing taxpayers with additional taxes.

The group of Pre-service training PMS officers was headed by Deputy Director,

Industries Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wajid Aman and other officers.

Moqem was of the view that bureaucracy has played a pivotal role in framing policies.

He, however, asserted the business community and relevant stakeholders should be consulted during formulation of the economic policies.

Meeting was attended by SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, SCCI officers and others.

The visiting PMS pre-service training officers briefed through a multimedia presentation about importance, origin of the chamber, main objectives, relief initiatives for the business community, and targets for future and various projects.

Moqem said the busi-

ness community is highly upset under the prevailing circumstances.

He said industrial and business growth is sluggish in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa whereas brain drain has also sharply increased from this province.

SCCI chief said industrial and economic activities slowed down, which has resultantly pushed unemployment in K-P.

He blamed government policies, harsh initiatives and unfriendly attitude of the department, bureaucracy for the rapid shift of business and industry from KP to other provinces.

The natural resource-rich KP, including oil, gas, minerals, is lagging behind in the race of progress with other provinces, Moqem remarked.

He added despite

resources and huge investment opportunities, investment is very low in KP, because investors have fed up due to the current scenario and are compelled to shift industry and business to Punjab and other provinces.

Moqem asked pre-services PMS officers to play a role in framing business-friendly policies.

He urged the government and relevant authorities to avoid implementation of such initiatives and actions that would cause de-industrialization from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

SCCI chief called for complete abolishment of Infrastructure Development Cess on export from KP to boost up export and stabilize provincial economy and lead the province toward sustainable progress.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan addressing during a visit of pre-service training of PMS officers from Industries Department at Chamber's House.

Gold prices up by Rs.2,800 to Rs309,300

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.2,800 and was traded at Rs.309,300 on Thursday as compared to its sale at Rs306,500 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.2,400 to Rs 265,174 from Rs 262,774 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up by Rs.2,201 to Rs.243,085 from Rs 240,884 respectively. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs3,440 and Rs.2,949 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$27 to \$2,942 from \$2,915 whereas that of silver remained constant at \$33.00, the Association reported.

Pak-Ireland keen for economic engagement

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Ireland expressed a keen interest in fostering deeper economic engagement and unlocking new avenues for mutual growth.

Declan Johnston, Deputy Head of Mission, Ireland, visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), where he met with President Usman Shaikat, SVP Khalid Farooq Qazi, VP Fahad Barlas, Former President Raja Amer Iqbal, Executive Committee Members and esteemed RCCI members, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

The discussions centered on boosting bilateral trade, investment prospects, and sector-specific collaborations, with a focus on facilitating RCCI members in exploring business opportunities in Ireland.

Output of LCVs, vans and jeeps increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The production of Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs), vans and jeeps in the country has witnessed 69.43 percent increase during the first eight months of the fiscal year 2024-25 against the output of the same period of last fiscal year.

As many as 22,503 LCVs, vans and jeeps were manufactured during July-February (2024-25) as compared to the production of 13,281 LCVs, vans and jeeps during July- February (2023-4), according to official data by PAMA.

During the period under review, the production of trucks also rose from 1,256 units to 2,470 units, showing an increase of 96.65 percent while the production of buses increased by 45 percent, going up from 300 units to 435 units.

However, the production of farm tractors decreased by 30.04 percent from 31,008 units last year to 21,692 units during the period under review.

The production of cars increased to 67,135 units during this year from 46,419 units during last year while the production of motorcycles and three-wheelers also surged from 740,210 units to 962,315 units, showing an increase of 30 percent.

PSX turns bullish, gains 1,009 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 1,009.70 points, a positive change of 0.89 percent, closing at 115,094.24 points as compared to 114,084.54 points on the last trading day.

A total of 382,791,629 shares were traded during the day as compared to 299,630,187 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs25,407 billion against Rs20,262 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 444 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 232 of them recorded gains and 156 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 56 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab with 48,802,683

shares at Rs13.45 per share, Barkat Frisian Agro with 24,680,233 shares at Rs28.40 per share and Fauji Cement with 19,660,929 shares at Rs45.29 per share.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs85.30 per share closing at Rs3,199.88 whereas runner-up was PIA Holding Company LimitedB with Rs64.22 rise in its share price to close at Rs928.47.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs122.40 per share price, closing at Rs23,217.20, whereas the runner-up was Services Industries Limited with Rs36.15 decline in its per share price to Rs1,383.77.

Rupee sheds 08 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 08 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.05 against

the previous day's closing of Rs279.97.

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 decreased by Rs 1.25 to close at Rs304.43 against the last day's closing of Rs305.68, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.89, whereas an increase of 49 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs362.82 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs362.31.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal went up by 03 and 01 paise to close at Rs 76.25 and Rs 74.66 respectively.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where six ships, Maersk Capetown, CMA CGM La Scala, Dublin Eagle, Oasis, Bristol Trader and Amir Gas scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice/Cement, Chemicals and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Engro Vopak Terminal and Sui Southern Gas Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Teno, Nord Utopia and Propell Progress with Container, Cement and

Rice also arrived at outer anchorage on during last 24 hours.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Maersk Capetown and Al-Thakhira left the port on Thursday morning, while four more ships, CMA CGM La Scala, VT Queen, Toiny and Amir Gas were expected to sail on Thursday.

Cargo volume of 121,196 tonnes, comprising 76,757 tonnes imports cargo and 44,439 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,190 Containers (1,771

TEUs Imports 2,419 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 9 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Propel Progress, Bentley-1 and Teno another containers ship 'ONE Recommendation' scheduled to load/offload Rice, Palm oil and Container are expected to take berths at FAP, LCT and QICT were respectively on Thursday, while two more container ships, SSL Brahma Putra and Mol Presence are due to arrive at outer anchorage on Friday.

AKU approved as official site for examination



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University (AKU) has achieved a significant milestone by becoming accredited as an official examination site for MRCP(UK) Part 2 Clinical Examination (PACES). This prestigious recognition, granted by the Royal Colleges of Physicians (RCP) in the UK, reinforces AKU's role as a leader in medical education and assessment in the region.

To secure this accreditation, AKU's Centre for Innovation in Medical Education (CIME) successfully hosted a 'Pathfinder' mock PACES examination, evaluating its world-class simulation facilities, examiner expertise, and logistical capabilities. Conducted in collaboration with AKU's Medical College, this assessment ensured that the University met the rigorous international standards

required for the exam.

"This is wonderful news for AKU and for hundreds of young medical trainees in Pakistan," said Dr Faisal Ismail, Regional Director, CIME, South Asia. "Hosting the MRCP(UK) PACES exam at CIME underscores our ability to conduct high-stakes international assessments, and enables local candidates to access globally recognised qualifications closer to home."

As part of this initiative, 14 faculty members from AKU's Medical College have also been certified by RCP, UK, as official MRCP(UK) PACES examiners, attesting to the high quality of AKU faculty and further enhancing the University's ability to deliver high-quality clinical examinations.

The first official PACES exam at AKU-CIME is scheduled for August 2025, providing Pakistani and

regional candidates with a cost-effective and accessible option to take this crucial examination without the need for international travel.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II, Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No 139/1. Institution 12/7/ 2024. Date of hearing. 25/4/2025. Bahadur Sher VS Akbar Ali etc. Notice to No. 6.Zarshed. 7.Zahid Ali sons of Ali Bahadur (late) resident of Daggar Tehsil Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 25/4/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Shareholders of Soneri Bank approve 2024 annual results



F.P. Report

LAHORE: The annual audited financial statements of Soneri Bank Limited for the year ended 31 December 2024 were approved by the shareholders of the Bank in their 33rd AGM held in Lahore and through video-link via Zoom on Thursday. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Amin A. Feerasta, Chairman of the Board, with Muh-tashim Ahmad Ashai, President and Chief Executive Officer and other members of the Board of Directors and Senior Management also in attendance.

The Bank posted profit before tax (PBT) of Rs. 12,638 million and profit

after tax (PAT) of Rs. 5,901 million in the year 2024, as compared to Rs. 12,357 million and Rs. 6,075 million respectively in 2023. Earnings per share (EPS) for the year was reported at Rs. 5.35 per share for the current year, as compared to Rs. 5.51 for the comparative prior year. During the meeting, as recommended earlier by the Board of Directors, the shareholders approved the final cash dividend @ 17.50 percent, i.e., Rs. 1.75 per share, in addition to the interim cash dividend of 12.50 percent, i.e., Rs. 1.25 per share, already declared and paid, thus total 30 percent, i.e., 3.00 per share for the year ended 31 December 2024.

The Bank's Net Interest income for the year was reported at Rs. 24,948 million, increasing by 9.62 percent from Rs. 22,759 million recorded for the prior year, while non-interest income increased by 4.58 percent to end at Rs. 6,755 million as against Rs. 6,459 million for the last year.

The Bank's Non-markup expenses were reported at Rs. 19,525 million for the current year as against Rs. 15,471 million reported for the comparative prior year. Despite high inflation levels and the ongoing branch expansion drive, growth in expenses was restricted at 26.20 percent as compared to the previous year mainly

due to prudent cost control policies and discipline. Building on its strategic drive of footprint expansion, the Bank is now operating with a network of 544 branches (December 2023: 443 branches) and has added 101 more branches nationwide.

The Bank's Deposits registered an increase of 4.88 percent when compared to 31 December 2023, ending at Rs. 543,146 million on 31 December 2024. Year-end CASA mix improved to 82.56 percent as against 79.60 percent at 31 December 2023.

During the year, net reversals against loans, advances and investments amounted to Rs. 461 million, as against net provisions of Rs. 1,389 million booked in the previous year. Resultantly, the Specific provisioning coverage improved to 90.02 percent at 31 December 2024 (December 2023: 80.01 percent) and overall coverage including the Expected Credit Loss provision under IFRS 9, Financial Instruments, clocking at a remarkable 102.90 percent.

The Bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio as at 31 December 2024 stands at 17.69 percent, while the Leverage Ratio is at 3.45 percent.

Govt to stabilize economy, provide relief to public, traders

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, has stated that the government is taking significant steps to stabilize the national economy and provide relief to the public and business community.

He emphasized that economic recovery is essential for national progress, and the government's policies are moving in the right direction to achieve this goal. Resolving traders' issues is a priority, and every possible measure is being taken to facilitate them, he said.

Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs expressed these views while addressing the partici-

ipants of an Iftar dinner hosted by Secretary-General of United Businessman Group (UBG) Zafar Bakhtawari and the Bakhtawari family in honor of himself, newly elected President of the Islamabad High Court Bar Wajid Gilani, President of the Islamabad District Bar Naem Gujar, President of PFUJ Afzal Butt, and Chairman of Islamabad Stock Exchange Haroon Paracha. The event witnessed a large gathering from various sectors, including business leaders, members of the District and High Court Bars, PFUJ, National Press Club, ICCI, senior officials, and other distinguished personalities.

Prominent attendees included Federal Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Magsi, MNA Malik Abrar, Senator General Abdul Qayyum, MNA Farah Naz Akbar, former Provincial Minister Dr. Jamal Nasir, former Federal Minister Sardar Shahjahan Nasir, ICCI Council Members Zubair Ahmed Malik, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Ejaz Abbasi, Zahid Maqbool, Chaudhry Masood, ICCI Vice President Nasir Meh-mood Chaudhry, President Talagang Chamber Malik Shabbir Awan, Fad Wahid, and legal experts like Wajid Ayub, Samina Faisal, and Aleem Abbasi Advocate.

Additionally, ambassadors and diplomats from Turkmenistan, Türkiye, Morocco, Nepal, Malaysia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Zimbabwe, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Libya, Myanmar, Rwanda, Austria, Bangladesh, Somalia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan also attended the event.

Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry highlighted the importance of resolving Islamabad's challenges, stating that as the nation's capital, it is our collective responsibility to ensure its development.

He commended the government's initiatives to provide essential public services, improve infrastructure, and enhance urban development. He also emphasized that maintaining law and order remains a top priority and paid tribute to Pakistan's security forces for their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism.

"I commended our security forces who work tirelessly to eliminate terrorism. Their sacrifices are unforgettable, and the entire nation stands with them," he stated.

He also expressed gratitude to the Bakhtawari family for their continued contributions toward economic development, social welfare, and support for the business community. "Their efforts are commendable, not just for Islamabad but for the entire country."

Federal Minister Khalid Magsi highlighted Pakistan's vast resources and talented individuals, emphasizing that with unity, no challenge is insurmountable. He stressed the importance of government measures for economic growth, stating that "the business community is the backbone of our economy, and their prosperity is directly linked to Pakistan's progress." He also acknowledged the sacrifices of Pakistan's security forces in the fight against terrorism. "It is due to their

dedication and bravery that Pakistan is moving towards peace and stability," he remarked.

Zafar Bakhtawari expressed his appreciation for Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry's appointment as a Federal Minister, stating that his leadership would benefit Islamabad, which has long been neglected. "Islamabad's markets need an uplift, and I am confident that under your leadership, positive changes will be seen," he said.

He also congratulated Wajid Gilani, President of Islamabad High Court Bar, Naem Gujar (President of Islamabad District Bar), Afzal Butt, President of PFUJ, and Haroon Paracha (Chairman of Islamabad Stock Exchange) on their elections.

"I extend my gratitude to all ambassadors, diplomats, business community leaders, and distinguished guests for attending this Iftar dinner," he added.

Chairman of Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari stated that Pakistan is actively engaged in the fight against terrorism, and in this holy month, we must pray for the success of our security forces.

"I appreciated the efforts of the government and the Prime Minister, Pakistan's economy is back on track and foreign exchange reserves have increased, exports are rising, electricity rates have been reduced, and interest rates have decreased. Have faith in Pakistan—our economy will continue to strengthen," he emphasized.



German juniors seal hockey series with a 4-1 victory



ISLAMABAD (APP): Germany's junior hockey team capped off their tour of Pakistan in a spectacular fashion, securing a decisive 4-1 victory over Pakistani juniors at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium Islamabad on Thursday.

The win completed a clean sweep of the four-match series as they defeated Pakistan in Lahore 2-1, 2-1 and 4-3 in the first three matches.

The series was a showcase of the German team's skill and cohesion. From the opening whistle, the visitors demonstrated a level of precision and teamwork that the Pakistani side struggled to counter. Despite moments of resilience and spirited play from the hosts, the consistency and efficiency of the German squad proved too much to overcome.

The series was designed to provide the Pakistani junior team with crucial international exposure as they gear up for the 2025 Hockey Junior World Cup, taking place in India, later this year.

Competing against a top-tier team like Germany offered invaluable lessons for the young players.

The matches were held in both Lahore and Islamabad, marking a significant

step in Pakistan's efforts to revive international hockey within the country.

While the results may have been disappointing for the home fans, the series represented a crucial opportunity for the Pakistani junior team to gain experience against a world-class opponent. The exposure to high-level international competition will help pay dividends.

The match was followed by a grand concluding ceremony wherein the visitors were awarded a glittering trophy.

German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas, Secretary Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination Zahoor Ahmed, Director General Pakistan Sports Board Yasir Pirzada, President Pakistan Hockey Federation Tariq Hussain Bugti, former hockey greats Shehbaz Ahmed Senior, Khawaja Junaid, Asif Bajwa and others also attended the ceremony.



ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA: Captains, Melbourne Mavericks Amy Parmenter, Kate Moloney, Melbourne Vixens, West Coast Fever, Jess Anstiss, Adelaide Thunderbirds Hannah Petty, Sunshine Coast Lightning Steph Wood, Giants Jamie-Lee Price, Queensland Firebirds Ruby Bakewell-Doran and NSW Sifts Maddy Turner during a 2025 Suncorp Super Netball Season Media Opportunity at Pinky Flat on March 13, 2025 in Adelaide, Australia.

Pakistan qualifies for Davis Cup Jr semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan team have advanced to the semi-finals of the Davis Cup Juniors at Kuching, Malaysia.

On the third day of the Davis Cup Juniors, Pakistan team delivered a dominant performance, securing a 3-0 victory over Bangladesh to advance to the semifinals.

In the first singles match, Hamza Roman

defeated Khabbo Gayen 6-3, 6-1 while in the second singles, Mikaeel Ali Baig outclassed Muntanvir Tushar 6-2, 6-0.

In the doubles match, the duo of Hamza Roman and Abubakar Talha overcame Khabbo Gayen and Muntanvir Tushar with a solid 6-4, 6-1 win. With this victory, Pakistan advances to the semifinals, where they will face Vietnam on Friday.

Pakistan team reach

ITF Masters 45+ World C'ship semis

The Pakistan team has secured a spot in the semi-finals of the ITF Masters 45+ World Championship after an impressive performance in the tournament at Manavgat, Turkey.

The team, comprising Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, Aqeel Khan, and Shehryar Salamat, has showcased exceptional skill and determination throughout

the championship, said a press release.

Pakistan dominated the group stage, securing convincing 3-0 victories against Romania and host nation Turkey. In the quarterfinals, the team displayed resilience, overcoming the Czech Republic 2-1 to advance to the final four.

With this outstanding achievement, Pakistan will now face France in the semifinal.

PCB chairman Naqvi orders review of National T20 Cup pay cut

L A H O R E (ESPNCricinfo): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi has issued orders to review the decision to reduce match fees of players and reserves selected to play in the National T20 Cup.

It is understood that the fees are expected to go back up to the previous edition's sum of PKR

40,000 per match, and PKR 20,000 per match for reserves. Originally, the fees had been slashed 75%, to PKR 10,000 (USD 35 approx), and PKR 5000 for reserves. Even the figure of PKR 40,000 is a fall compared to 2022, when players had been paid PKR 60,000 per match.

The decision to reduce match fees of players, as decided by the PCB's

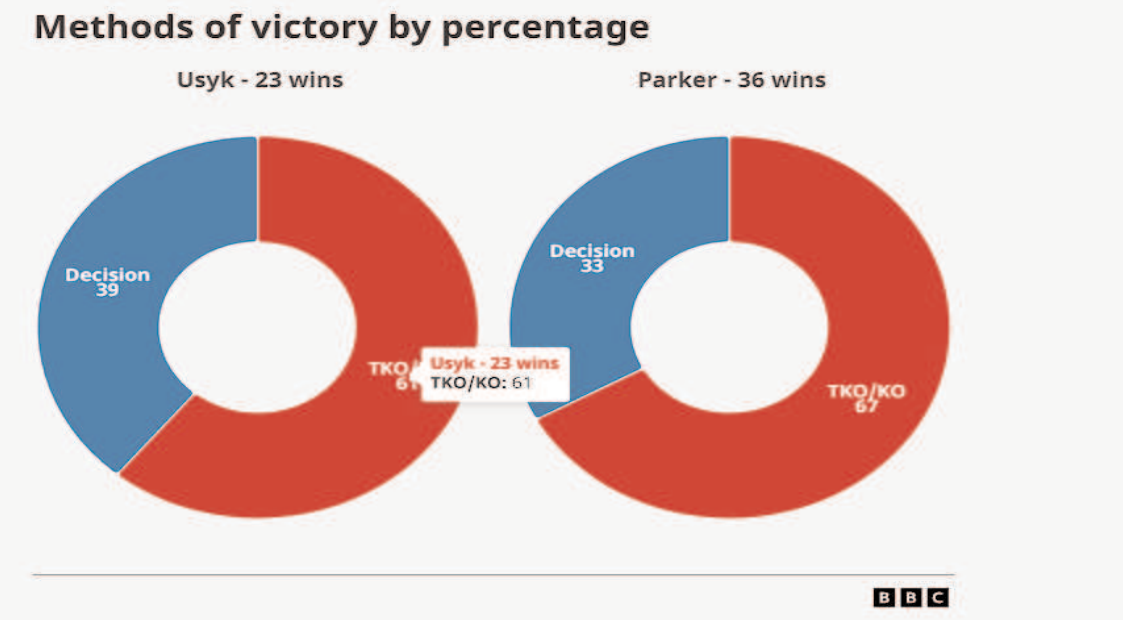
domestic department, led to a hue and cry in cricket circles, leaving fans and critics wondering whether the board was facing a financial crunch.

PCB sources, however, claim that the expense cuts have been executed because of an increase in domestic tournaments this season, leading to greater earning opportunities for players.

The National T20 Cup starts on March 14, with 39 matches across three cities: Faisalabad, Lahore and Multan.

The final will take place in Faisalabad on March 27. Several leading Pakistan international cricketers will be unable to feature, with the national side having left for New Zealand for five T20Is and three ODIs.

WBO orders champion Usyk to face Parker next



LONDON (BBC): World heavyweight champion Oleksandr Usyk has been ordered by the WBO to begin negotiations with Joseph Parker for a mandatory title defence.

Parker, 33, retained his interim WBO title in February with a second-round knockout win against Martin Bakole.

Ukrainian Usyk is the WBC, WBA (Super) and WBO heavyweight champion thanks to his second successive victory against Tyson Fury in December.

Usyk, 38, and Parker have 30 days to find an agreement or the WBO will order purse bid proceedings.

Britain's Daniel Dubois, who holds the IBF heavyweight belt, is already in talks to face Usyk for the undisputed heavyweight title.

Dubois was set to face Parker on 22 February but withdrew because of illness and is not looking to reschedule that fight.

New Zealand's Parker held the WBO title between

2016 and 2018, beating Andy Ruiz Jr to claim the vacant belt before losing it to Anthony Joshua following two successful defences.

After suffering the third defeat of his career against Joe Joyce in 2022, Parker has won six in succession, including a victory against former WBC champion Deontay Wilder.

Usyk is yet to lose in 23 fights as a professional, winning 14 by knockout.

Saudi Arabia has hosted most of the big heavy-

weight bouts in recent years, with Usyk's two most recent contests against Fury taking place in Riyadh.

Usyk was undisputed champion at cruiserweight before stepping up to heavyweight and achieving the same feat.

However, the Olympic gold medalist vacated his IBF title following his first win over Fury in 2024, which meant interim champion Dubois was upgraded to full champion before his victory over Joshua in September.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise Quetta Gladiators has named Pakistan's Champions Trophy winning captain Sarfaraz Ahmad as Team Director.

Sarfaraz led Gladiators to their only Pakistan Super League (PSL) title in 2019 and has been one of the key performers for the franchise ever since the start of the league, said a press release.

"Today I would like to announce Sarfaraz as Team Director of Quetta Gladiators," Quetta Gladiators owner Nadeem Omar said during the signing ceremony of Stile as official sponsors of Gladiators.

"Sarfaraz led QG really



well as a captain and I am hopeful he will do the same as Director too."

The combination of Moin Khan as Head Coach and Sarfaraz as Team Director would do wonders for us."

Quetta Gladiators co-owner Hasan Omar said that induction of Sarfaraz in team management marks a significant step in franchise history.

"The induction of Sarfaraz clearly shows that we are looking to induct young blood in our management as well. There was no better choice to bring in for the role as Sarfaraz is admired and loved by everyone associated with our franchise whether it's us or the fans."

Mark Wood ruled out for four months after knee surgery

LONDON (ESPNCricinfo): Mark Wood will miss four months of cricket following an operation on his left knee, effectively ruling the fast bowler out of England's Test series against India this summer, while keeping him in the hunt for the Ashes this winter.

The 35-year old underwent surgery on Wednesday morning in London after scans confirmed medial ligament damage, which came to the fore during England's Champions Trophy group stage defeat to Afghanistan in Lahore at the end of last month.

Wood was forced to leave the field after pulling up midway through his fourth over after experiencing "locking" in his knee. He returned 38 minutes later but could only bowl four of his remaining six before leaving the field for good. The Durham quick's left knee was heavily strapped throughout the tournament, as it had been since the start of 2024.

The timeframe for Wood's recovery means it is highly unlikely he features in the five-match series against India, which begins at Headingley on June 20. A seamless rehabilitation could see him available for the final Test at the Kia Oval (starting July 31), with Durham's County Championship fixture against Somerset (July 22) a potential return to competitive action. That round begins a day before the fourth Test at Emirates Old Trafford. At this juncture, the ECB believe Wood will be fully fit to tour Australia this winter. Speaking at Lord's last week, men's managing director Rob Key stated England will "work back from the Ashes" regarding decisions around the fast bowler's fitness.

The double-kick penalty that cost Atletico Madrid in shootout

MADRID (BBC): Julian Alvarez slipped as he struck the penalty, but the ball flew into the top-left corner.

It looked like it was 2-2 in the Champions League last-16 shootout between derby rivals Atletico and Real Madrid.

What happened next was another one of those fine-margin VAR calls - but for a very unusual reason.

On review, Atletico's Alvarez was judged to have touched the ball twice.

That is against the rules so it was chalked off - with no option for a retake.

UK users can watch a video of the incident at the top of this page and see if they can spot the second touch.

Real then went 3-1 ahead before winning the shootout 4-2. All the talk afterward was about that decision.

Atletico midfielder Conor Gallagher's strike after 27 seconds levelled the tie at 2-2 on aggregate.

Neither side could then find the decisive goal in normal or extra time, leaving penalties to decide the outcome between the rivals for a sixth time in

knockout games.

After the first three penalties were successfully converted, former Manchester City forward Alvarez stepped up with the chance to make it 2-2.

The Argentina forward slipped as he took his shot, but still managed to beat Thibaut Courtois.

Atletico fans were celebrating, but seconds before Federico Valverde fired home Real's next penalty, Polish referee Szymon Marciniak indicated Alvarez's spot-kick had been ruled out as the video assistant referee (VAR) had got involved.

A review of the incident showed the forward touched the ball twice in one movement as he slipped while shooting.

The scoreboard in the ground displayed 2-2 after Alvarez's effort, no doubt leading to confusion in the stands, but at that stage Real actually led 3-1.

Although Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak saved Lucas Vazquez's spot-kick to briefly give Atletico hope, Marcos Llorente hit the bar for the

hosts and Germany defender Antonio Rudiger sent Real through in a tense finale.

Article 14.1 of the IFAB (International Football Association Board) laws of the game concerns penalties.

The rules state: "The kicker must not play the ball again until it has touched another player."

That is the same law that stops people scoring a rebound if their own penalty hits the post.

If the same happened from a penalty during regular play, an indirect free-kick would be awarded to the opposition.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone cast doubt on the decision, but hoped the officials had made the right call.

"The referee said when Julian got to the penalty spot he touched the ball with his standing foot, but the ball did not move," he said.

"I've never seen a penalty where they've called the VAR, but well, they would have seen that he touched it. I want to believe they saw he touched it."

"Did you see him touching the ball twice? Please whoever

was present in the stadium and saw him touching the ball twice, the ball moving, please come forward and raise your hand. I don't see anybody with their hand raised so that's all I have to say... next question."

But Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti was satisfied the correct decision was made.

"They detected it. When we realised there was this doubt they had already detected it on VAR," he added.

"I saw it, I think he touches it with his left foot, a second touch."

Real Madrid goalkeeper Courtois accepted it was unfortunate for Atletico, but the rules meant it was correctly disallowed.

He told Uefa.com: "I felt that there was something weird going on, so we said it straight to the referee and then it was confirmed that there was a double touch and it didn't count, so that obviously gives us the edge."

"[Alvarez] slipped and he touched the ball twice and that is a missed penalty. You cannot touch the ball twice. That's bad luck but it's the rules."

Former Newcastle and Republic of Ireland goalkeeper Shay Given said on BBC Match of the Day: "Sometimes you see it happen where the ball is kicked off the other foot and then goes in a completely different direction."

"Here the ball doesn't really change direction but [Alvarez] does kick the ball off his [left] foot. The laws of the game are clear."

Has this happened before? Yes - twice in the Premier League.

In 2017, Leicester's Riyad Mahrez had a penalty disallowed for a similar offence in his side's 2-1 loss to Manchester City, who he later joined.

The Algeria winger slipped as he took a penalty and the ball hit his standing foot before looping into the net.

"The shot was strange but the rule is clear. Two touches, the same as golf," said City manager Pep Guardiola at the time. "It is not normal."

And in January 2023, Fulham striker Aleksandar Mitrovic did the same thing, accidentally kicking the ball

on to his standing foot as he slipped while striking it. The Cottagers lost the game 1-0 to his former club Newcastle.

But later that year, a penalty stood under similar circumstances in the Scottish Premiership.

Bojan Miovski seemed to slip as he took a late penalty for Aberdeen against St Mirren, with an apparent double touch taking it into the net in a 2-2 draw. A VAR review, though, allowed the goal to stand.

'Mbappe wasn't right' Spanish football expert Guillem Balague, who was at the Metropolitano Stadium, told BBC Sport:

"There was a typical exchange of strong words in the tunnel after the match, but nothing different to what happens after every match."

"It was a tense game - very much how Atletico wanted to play it - with the added bonus of having scored so early. The idea was to defend deep and counter-attack."

"Real Madrid won a penalty but Kylian Mbappe was not right. He struggled with his

ankle and with a toenail that is coming off."

"You had the penalty missed by Vinicius Jr in normal time. Mbappe said to Vinicius, 'I don't feel like kicking this. I am not ready' and walked away from it, Vini took it and it went high."

"Then the penalty shootout. It was difficult for people to understand what went on. There were not instructions from VAR for people to understand what was going on."

"But, nobody complained and said this is not fair. Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak even said if I doubt the decisions then it is a disaster because you cannot trust anything then."

"So he touched it twice, the penalty was disallowed and Endrick had come on with the intention of taking the fifth penalty. But Carlo Ancelotti looked at Endrick and thought he wasn't ready so asked Antonio Rudiger to take it."

"Oblak told me he saw it late and couldn't stop it. He will try to forget what happened, but a very hard moment to take."



In brief

Police nab 3 gang members

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have arrested three members of an organized gang involved in motorcycle theft and pickpocketing, recovering four stolen mobile phones and a motorcycle from their possession. A public relations officer told APP that a special team from Margalla Police Station, using advanced technical and human intelligence sources, apprehended the suspects—identified as Imran, Aamir, and Saddam. The accused have multiple cases registered against them and confessed to several crimes during initial interrogation. Further investigation is underway. The crackdown on criminals depriving citizens of their belongings will continue, said Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq. DIG Tariq stated that ongoing operations against criminals have significantly reduced theft incidents.

Murder case PO arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Cantt Police on Thursday arrested a proclaimed offender who had murdered a citizen due to an old enmity. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the accused Niaz Khan, along with his accomplices, shot dead Mushtaq in June last year in the limits of Cantt Police Station and went into the hiding. The police registered a case and kept on searching for him. Using all means including human intelligence, the police traced and arrested the accused on Thursday.

72,422 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 72,422 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 56,742 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1404.5 feet and was 2.5 feet higher than its dead level of 1402 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 19,600 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1069.5 feet, which was 19.5 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 12,720 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 25,799, 26,951, 19,100, and 7100 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,400 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera.

Shahida's death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 22nd death anniversary of renowned Pakistani singer Shahida Parveen is being observed on Thursday. She was born in 1952, she began her musical journey at an early age and quickly rose to prominence. Her versatility in blending traditional and contemporary styles made her a household name. Even years after her passing, her timeless melodies continue to resonate with listeners. She lent her voice to numerous songs, though an exact count remains undocumented. Her repertoire includes notable tracks such as "Deepak Raag Hae Chahaat Apni," "Sohney Yaar Bajoon," and "Wo Dil-E-Nawaz Hae." In recognition of her significant contributions to Pakistani music, Shahida Parveen was posthumously honored with the Pride of Performance Award by the President of Pakistan in 2004.

IFA discards 652kg of food in crackdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) carried out 507 inspections across markets, Ramadan bazaars, and food outlets during the first 10 days of Ramadan (March 2–11), issuing fines totaling Rs. 748,000 and discarding 652 kilograms of unsafe food.

Talking to APP, Deputy Director Operations of IFA, Dr. Tahira Siddique said that the food safety teams (FSTs) inspected 507 food establishments, including 166 stalls in Ramadan-specific bazaars.

She said that the IFA issued 226 written warnings for hygiene violations and provided 167 verbal instructions to vendors for immediate corrective action. Meanwhile, three businesses were temporarily sealed for repeated non-compliance.

A total of 64 fines were imposed, with the highest penalties targeting vendors selling expired or substan-

dard items. Seven food samples were collected for laboratory testing to verify quality.

Food Safety Teams (FSTs) remained active 24 hours daily, focusing on sehri and iftar times, she added.

Dr. Tahira said that the officials monitored 45 sehri points and 228 iftar points, ensuring proper food handling during peak hours.

Deputy Director of Operations Dr. Tahira Siddique emphasized zero tolerance for violations. "Our teams are prioritizing high-risk areas, including street vendors and Ramadan bazaars, to prevent foodborne illnesses," she said.

During the inspection drive, the IFA issued 53 new licenses to food vendors meeting safety criteria. Nine public complaints related to overpricing, hygiene, and food quality were resolved.

A total of 652 kilograms

of food—including spoiled meat, expired dairy products, and unhygienic cooked items—were destroyed. The bulk of discarded items came from unlicensed vendors operating near iftar zones.

Fines ranged from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 50,000, depending on the severity of violations. Repeat offenders faced higher penalties or temporary closures.

She said Ramadan-specific markets, set up to offer affordable groceries, underwent daily inspections. Over 160 stalls were checked for accurate pricing, weight measurement, and storage conditions. Vendors flouting rules were barred from operating until improvements were made.

Dr. Siddique reaffirmed the IFA's mandate: "Safe food is a right, not a privilege. We will escalate action against those endangering public health."

Communications ministry drives major reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Communications has made remarkable strides in modernizing infrastructure, improving services, and strengthening regional linkages during the past year. Several important initiatives have been rolled out, focusing on key sectors such as transportation, e-governance, and public outreach.

The key achievements during the one year of the government included significant reforms and improvements across various sectors. The Ministry implemented amendments to align with the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Act, 2023, fully adopted e-Office, and abolished 40 vacant posts, saving Rs. 36 million annually. The agreements with Belarus, Russia, China, and other countries were signed to enhance regional connectivity and infrastructure.

According to official documents, National Highway Authority (NHA) has made substantial progress with initiatives

like the widening of the N-5 highway and securing funding for key road improvements. The NHA also increased toll revenue by Rs. 9 billion and proposed new road projects, including the Karachi-Hyderabad and Kharian-Rawalpindi motorways, with feasibility studies currently in progress.

The National Highway & Motorways Police (NH&MP) played a key role in road safety by implementing the Axle Load Control Regime and issuing more than 20,000 driving licenses. The NH&MP also launched safety programs to ensure better protection for road users.

The Pakistan Post Office Department (PPOD) exceeded its revenue targets by 30%, modernized its services, and enhanced e-commerce and remittance networks, making significant strides in its operations.

The Construction Technology and Training Institute (CTTI) helped train thousands of students and

achieved international recognition by securing 3rd place in a global competition, showcasing its role in skill development. These efforts highlight progress in infrastructure, service modernization, and regional cooperation.

The Ministry conducted various public relations and outreach activities to engage citizens and stakeholders. On October 24, 2024, NHA held an inauguration ceremony for the new Hub River Bridge, attended by key ministers. Media campaigns were launched to raise awareness on toll rate revisions, new projects, and infrastructure maintenance.

A flood emergency awareness campaign in July 2024 was instrumental in saving lives, additionally, campaigns to promote M-Tag usage on motorways were held throughout 2024, leading to a 98% usage rate on the Sialkot-Lahore Motorway. A new campaign is currently underway to expand M-Tag use nationwide.

Police arrest 38 suspects in search operation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police conducted a grand search and combing operation in various areas under the jurisdiction of Polic Satation Golra, shifting 38 individuals to the police station for verification.

The large-scale operation was carried out under the supervision of SP Saddar Zone Abdul Qayyum, with heavy police deployment, including lady police officers.

A spokesperson told APP on Thursday that police personnel were briefed before the operation.

During the search, 170 suspicious individuals, 140 houses, shops, inns, hotels, and motels were checked, along with 30 motorcycles and 20 vehicles. Law enforcement also recovered two pistols of different cal-

ibers, a rifle, and ammunition.

The operation aimed to curb crime and enhance security in the area. The Inspector General (IG) of Islamabad Police has ordered grand search operations across the district to eliminate criminal activities.

Citizens are urged to cooperate with police during security checks and report any suspicious activity. Ensuring public safety remains the top priority of Islamabad Police.

Islamabad Police nab 16 in crackdown on illegal arms, drug trade

Islamabad Capital Police have intensified their crackdown on illegal weapons and drug dealers, arresting 16 suspects in the last 24 hours and registering cases against them.

A police spokesperson

told APP on Thursday that during the operation, law enforcement recovered six pistols of different calibers, two Kalashnikovs, and a significant quantity of ammunition from the arrested individuals.

Additionally, police seized 2,090 grams of heroin, 525 grams of hashish, 1,110 grams of opium, and 739 grams of crystal meth (Ice) from drug dealers. The suspects have been booked, and further investigations are underway.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police Muhammad Jawad Tariq stated that the operation is part of ongoing efforts to curb crime in the federal capital. DIG Tariq reaffirmed that ensuring the safety of citizens' lives and property remains the top priority of Islamabad Police.

ICT admin dismisses security rumors — confirms normal city operations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The district administration of Islamabad has addressed circulating reports about public safety, clarifying that all commercial, educational, and civic activities remain undisrupted amid unverified claims of unrest.

The spokesman of ICT administration confirmed that markets, offices, and business hubs across the city are operating on regular schedules. "No disruptions have been reported in commercial zones,"

He urged the citizens to disregard speculative social media posts.

All schools, colleges, and universities in the federal capital are open as per their academic calendars,

with attendance reported as routine.

The ICT administration emphasized that educational activities have not been impacted by recent rumors.

Meanwhile, security protocols around mosques, government buildings, and key installations remain unchanged, with standard measures in place. Surveillance and patrols are ongoing, mirroring daily procedures followed across the city.

The administration reiterated that no credible threat has been identified and urged residents to avoid amplifying unverified information.

"Islamabad's law enforcement agencies are fully

alert and prepared to respond to any situation," the spokesman added.

Three bike lifters held, 13 motorcycles recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Thursday arrested three bike lifters from the areas of Waris Khan and Race Course recovering 13 two-wheelers from their possession.

According to the police spokesman, the Waris Khan Police busted a two-member gang of bike lifters and recovered five stolen motorcycles from them.

The arrested accused were identified as Samiullah and Umair. Similarly, the Race Course Police nabbed accused Owais involved in motorcycle theft and street crimes. Besides eight motorcycles, stolen money of Rs14,000 was recovered from him.

Meanwhile, Islamabad Capital Police have arrested three members of an organized gang involved in motorcycle theft and pickpocketing, recovering four stolen mobile phones and a motorcycle from their possession.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov meeting with Federal Minister for Information Technology & Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

DIG reviews citywide mosque security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police's Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq reviewed security arrangements across the district's mosques during prayer, Taraweeh, and Sehri hours.

DIG also briefed police officers on duty, emphasizing their role in ensuring public safety.

A public relation officer told APP on Thursday that under the special directives of Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq visited various mosques to assess security measures during Ramadan.

DIG Tariq met with police personnel deployed at duty points, commended them for their dedication, and provided guidance on maintaining vigilance. Other senior police officers accompanied him during the visit.

DIG Tariq stated that special security arrangements have been put in place for mosques and imambargahs across the federal capital.

DIG reiterated that Islamabad Police remain committed to safeguarding citizens and ensuring peace in the city.

He further emphasized that all necessary resources are being utilized to maintain law and order, and no one will be allowed to disrupt the security and tranquility of the citizens.

Nine drug dealers held with over 9kg charas

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Thursday continued operations against drug dealers, arresting nine suspects including a lady drug supplier, and recovering more than 9 kilograms of charas.

According to the police spokesman, the Bani Police recovered 1.235 kg charas from accused Kausar while the R A Bazar Police held accused Farooq with 2.1 kg of the contraband item.

Likewise the Chauntra Police nabbed accused Nasir with 1.56 kg charas while the Airport Police recovered 1.48 kg of the contraband item from accused Ashfaq. Similarly the Dhamial Police netted two accused Zeeshan and Amar Sohail with 570 grams and 560 grams charas respectively.

The Sadiqabad Police also recovered 550 grams charas from accused Ibrahim while the Naseerabad Police nabbed accused Niaz with 550 grams charas. The Jatli Police arrested accused Tahir on the recovery of 520 grams charas.

Capital Police host Iftar for journalists — IGP assures Islamabad in safe hands

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi organized a grand Iftar dinner late Wednesday at the Police Headquarters, inviting journalists and police officials.

The event was attended by senior officers, including DIG Ali Raza, SSP Pari Gul Tareen, and a significant number of female police personnel.

IGP Rizvi warmly welcomed the journalist guests, personally engaging with them and inquiring about their well-being. He also interacted with junior officers present at the event.

An official told APP, under IGP Rizvi's directives, daily Iftar arrangements are made at the Police Headquarters for 500 to 600 personnel during the holy month of Ramadan.

Speaking to the APP IGP Rizvi reaffirmed that the

Islamabad Capital Police remain on high alert to ensure public safety, particularly during Iftar, Suhoor, and Taraweeh prayers. He emphasized that he has personally instructed all DIGs, SSPs, and senior officers to be present in their respective areas to oversee security arrangements.

IG Rizvi further asserted that negligence in security duties will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Despite harsh weather conditions, police officers remain steadfast in protecting the lives and property of citizens.

IGP Rizvi reiterated that ensuring the safety of mosques, imambargahs, and other public venues is not just a duty but a sacred responsibility, which he considers an act of worship.

In response to a question from APP regarding open courts (khuli kachehri),

IGP Rizvi expressed his commitment to improving and expanding the initiative, emphasizing its role as an effective bridge between the police and the public.

IGP Rizvi also underscored that the police force has been given strict instructions to remain vigilant at all times, ensuring no lapses in security. He stressed that no negligence will be tolerated in safeguarding religious sites and public spaces.

The event also saw a strong presence of female police personnel. IGP Rizvi took special time to meet with them, inquiring about their well-being and acknowledging their dedication. He commended their commitment to duty despite being away from their families during Ramadan, recognizing their sacrifices and unwavering service to the community.

Turkish Envoy visits COMSTECH headquarters

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Pakistan, İrfan Neziroğlu, reaffirmed his country's commitment to advancing scientific and technological collaboration within the Muslim world.

He was speaking during his visit to the headquarters of the OIC's Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) on Thursday.

In a detailed meeting with COMSTECH Coordinator General Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, both sides explored avenues to enhance cooperation in academic exchanges, technological advancements, education, and healthcare.

A key highlight of the discussion was the proposal to establish the Türkiye-Pakistan Rectors Forum in Islamabad this year. Organized in collaboration with the Turkish Embassy and COMSTECH, the forum would connect rectors and university leaders from both nations to foster academic and research partnerships, strengthening the scientific leadership of OIC member states.

Prof. Choudhary also suggested that Türkiye accommodate Palestinian students under COMSTECH's 5,000-fellowship initiative, offering them access to higher education.

Additionally, he proposed an OIC Technology Festival in Türkiye, inviting leading technological parks from OIC member states to showcase innovations and

promote cross-border collaborations.

The meeting also touched upon COMSTECH's Science and Exile Program, aimed at supporting displaced scientists from conflict-affected regions, with a request for Türkiye's participation.

Ambassador Neziroğlu praised COMSTECH's contributions to the OIC's scientific and technological landscape and assured close collaboration on these initiatives.

He emphasized that technological cooperation is the need of the hour, reiterating Türkiye's dedication to strengthening its partnership with COMSTECH.

Senior officials from both sides were present at the meeting.

SSP assures immediate resolution of issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Security Division Muhammad Sarfraz Virk held an orderly room at his office to ensure the timely resolution of departmental and personal issues faced by Islamabad Police officers.

A public relations officer told APP on Thursday that the session was conducted under the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi. Officers from the

Security Division participated, presenting their concerns to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Virk.

During the session, SSP Virk directed senior officers to re-investigate serious matters and instructed them to prioritize and swiftly resolve the remaining issues.

On this occasion, SSP Virk stated that several initiatives have been introduced for the welfare of police personnel, including improved housing, better

medical facilities, and enhanced educational opportunities.

Addressing the officers, SSP Virk assured them that his office door remains open for any concerns they may have. "We must work together for the betterment of this city," he added.

SSP Virk further emphasized that the primary goal of the orderly room is to address both professional and personal concerns of police officers on a priority basis while boosting their morale.

IESCO issues suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday announced 2-day power suspension programme for Friday and Saturday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and development work.

According to IESCO spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would

remain suspended for the period on Friday, from 7:00 AM to 11:00 AM in the Attok Circle, affecting areas including Azeem Shaheed and Bhatot main feeders.

On Saturday from 7:00 AM to 11:00 AM the outages will take place in the Rawalpindi City Circle and Rawalpindi Cantt Circle. Areas impacted include Benazir Bhutto, Modern

Floor Mill, Shams Cly, Quaid Azam Hospital, Raja Abad, Zarkoon Heights, P&T Wani, Westridge, Golra Feeders, RIC, Gracy Line, Gumti, Old Kalyam, Moorat, Khasala, New Kalyam, Basali, Pind Jhatla, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jatha Hathial, Lab-I&II, Industrial, Reliance Waving Mill, Bhall, and Jarrar Camp feeders, along with surrounding regions.

Man stabbed to death

SHIBERGHAN (Pajhwok): Security forces have arrested two individuals suspected of murdering a 22-year-old man in the capital of northern Jawzjan province of Afghanistan, an official said on Thursday. Police spokesman Qari Abdul Sattar Halimi told Pajhwok Afghan News the incident occurred in the 2nd police district of Shiberghan on Wednesday. Halimi added security forces swiftly moved to detain the suspected perpetrators.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 13, 1446 — Friday, March 14, 2025

Four key MoUs signed

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations signed four MoU with GRS organization, Danish Refugee Council, and Afghanistan Rural Rehabilitation Administration. The mentioned organizations will use the allocated funds for cash assistance distribution, shelter protection and improvement, solar-powered equipment packages, capacity building, and vocational training programs in the provinces of Kabul, Herat, Farah, Nangarhar, Nuristan, and Kunar.

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

Measles cases surged in Afghanistan: MSF report

KABUL (Pajhwok): Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) teams in Afghanistan have reported a surge in measles patients at three hospitals since January.

MSF stated in a press release while measles was endemic in Afghanistan, the high number of cases so early in the year was a cause for concern.

At least one child in Afghanistan has died from measles every day so far in 2025, according to data collected by MSF staff at major hospitals in Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat City and Lashkargah.

This represents almost three times as many deaths as were recorded during the same period last year.

“These are preventable deaths. Measles can be a deadly disease, particularly for children with underlying health conditions such as malnutrition or congenital heart defects,” the MSF

country representative.

Mickael Le Paih, however, added it could also be prevented with a vaccine, although immunisation coverage remained low in Afghanistan.

Rapid and targeted vaccination at the community level in districts most affected by ongoing outbreaks could help reduce the number of measles cases, thereby freeing up hospital beds for children with less preventable conditions.

At the three hospitals in Afghanistan where MSF teams are supporting measles detection and treatment, 4,799 children suspected of having measles have been seen in the first eight weeks of 2025.

This includes both complicated measles cases (25 per cent) that require hospitalisation, and less severe cases (75 per cent) that require outpatient treat-

ment.

At Herat Regional Hospital, MSF has launched an emergency response to cope with the high number of complicated measles cases, expanding its measles isolation ward from 11 to 60 beds, hiring additional staff, and procuring emergency medications.

In the first eight weeks of 2025, 664 patients were admitted, representing a 180 per cent increase in cases compared to 2024.

At Boost Provincial Hospital in Helmand, MSF has seen 1,866 suspected measles cases in the same period, a 369 per cent increase compared to 2024.

At Mazar-i-Sharif Regional Hospital, MSF has treated 1,499 suspected measles patients so far, alongside the Ministry of Public Health, marking a 35.6 per cent increase in cases compared to 2024.

“We are dedicating additional resources, but we are already running out of space for patients suffering not just from measles, but also from seasonal illnesses,” says Le Paih.

MSF runs seven projects in Bamyan, Helmand, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar, Khost, and Kunduz, with a particular focus on providing secondary healthcare services.

In 2024, MSF teams provided more than 404,500 emergency room consultations, 245,557 outpatient consultations, 119,349 inpatient admissions, assisted 45,061 deliveries, and performed 18,149 surgical interventions.

More than 13,030 measles patients were treated, 9,751 children were admitted to inpatient therapeutic feeding centres, and 4,016 children were enrolled in outpatient therapeutic feeding centres.

Foreign investment in emeralds on rise

PANJSHIR (TOLONews): Mohammad Agha Hakim, the governor of Panjshir, says that foreign traders’ interest in investing in and trading emeralds from the province has increased compared to previous years.

According to the governor, in the latest bidding for Panjshir’s emeralds, two traders from India participated.

In addition to presenting a proposal for better emerald extraction from the mines, they also expressed strong interest in investing in this sector.

Mohammad Agha Hakim stated: “Day by day, it is becoming more promising that Afghan emeralds, particularly those from Panjshir, are gaining more global recognition, attracting more foreign traders than before.”

In a recent bidding event organized by the Provincial Mining Oversight Committee, with the participation of domestic and foreign traders, 15,552 carats of emeralds worth \$328,950 were sold to local traders.

Saifuddin Laton, the spokesperson for the Panjshir governor, said: “A total of 15,550 carats of emeralds, including five kilograms of sample emeralds, were sold for \$328,950.”

Some local traders and miners in Panjshir province are urging officials to provide more opportunities for foreign investors in the province’s mines to enhance the importance and value of emeralds.

Mohammad Aman, a manager of one of the emerald mines, said: “The presence of both national and international traders has increased recently, which benefits the miners.

When they come here and see the high-quality emeralds, they show more interest compared to other countries.”

Help boost IEA-Europe ties



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Afghan Ambassador in Abu Dhabi Maulvi Badruddin Haqqani has urged Norway to play a constructive role in strengthening Afghanistan’s ties with the international community, particularly European nations.

He made the request at a meeting with Norwegian Ambassador to Afghanistan Maulvi Badruddin Haqqani emphasised

and Pakistan Per Albert Isaacs and Minister-Counselor in Abu Dhabi Anders Gulbrandsen.

The Afghan Embassy in Abu Dhabi wrote on X discussions focused on Afghanistan’s political and economic relations with regional countries.

Maulvi Badruddin Haqqani emphasised

Norway’s potential role in fostering diplomatic and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and European nations.

For his part, the Norwegian ambassador acknowledged Afghanistan’s recent progress, highlighting a notable improvement in security and stability across the country.

Taliban seek budget for planned jirga, says sources

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban-led Ministry of Finance has received instructions from Kandahar to determine the budget for a planned Loya Jirga (grand assembly) in Kabul and begin securing funds for the event, according to a source within the ministry.

The directive reportedly came from Taliban leadership in Kandahar, where the Taliban’s supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, is based. While the exact agenda of the gathering remains unclear, critics argue that it is an attempt to consolidate Taliban rule rather than address Afghanistan’s political and social challenges.

Some political figures have questioned the legiti-

macy of the event. Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, a veteran political leader, warned that the planned Jirga would not reflect the voices of the Afghan people.

“A Loya Jirga in which only the Taliban and their approved individuals participate will not heal the nation’s wounds. It is a mockery of this historical tradition,” Sayyaf wrote on social media.

Similarly, Mohammad Nazeef Shahrani, a scholar at Indiana University, recalled that the Taliban attempted a similar move during their first rule in the late 1990s, gathering clerics to legitimize Mullah Mohammad Omar’s leadership—an effort that failed to gain international recog-

nition. “If the Taliban’s goal is once again to stage a traditional, artificial, and meaningless assembly to claim legitimacy, I do not believe it will lead to any real outcome,” Shahrani said.

Some observers believe the event is not just about external legitimacy but also about resolving internal rifts within the Taliban.

Hibib Rahman Hekmatyar, son of Hezb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, suggested that the Jirga is primarily aimed at strengthening Akhundzada’s grip on power and sidelining factions within the Taliban that seek change.

“In my opinion, this

Jirga has only one goal: to grant more legitimacy and power to Hibatullah Akhundzada within the Taliban ranks. It is meant to marginalize those within the Taliban who seek change and do not see him as a qualified leader,” Hekmatyar said.

While Taliban officials have denied reports of internal divisions, they have yet to publicly confirm or comment on the budgeting process for the Jirga.

Observers say that if the assembly proceeds, it is unlikely to include voices from Afghanistan’s diverse political spectrum, reinforcing concerns that it will serve as a symbolic rather than substantive event.

A woman’s inspiring plunge into online business



KABUL (Pajhwok): Nargis Badr, an ingenious young woman, has changed curbs on education into an opportunity by launching an online business.

Not only has she achieved financial independence, but has also created job opportunities for other young people.

Nargis Badr, known by her pseudonym “Narcissus Unknown” on social media, had dreamed of studying at Kabul University.

She graduated from

Ayesha Durrani High School and planned to study psychology. After the closure of universities, her hopes of continuing education were set back. However, she did not give up and chose a new path.

Following the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate, schooling for girls above the 6th grade was suspended.

Later, a directive was issued to all public and private universities, ordering the suspension of girls’ education until further notice.

At the time, the authorities announced they were working on a plan to resolve the issue and education for girls would resume in schools and universities. However, more than three years have passed, but this issue remains unresolved.

Choosing a new path

Nargis Badr told Pajhwok Afghan News two years ago, she started her digital commerce. Now she is the owner of a brand, selling her handmade jewellery and bracelets on Instagram and TikTok.

She commented: “For a human being, survival is very important. When their survival is at stake, people are massively impacted and get worried. I can say in the beginning, it was difficult for me too, but I adapted to it gradually.”

“I coped with the situation reading books. Awareness can help us a lot, and I think the awareness I gained was what helped me overcome the challenge.”

During this time, she read more books on psychology and novels. The

Forty Rules of Love by ElifShafak and Pieces of a Consistent Flower by Pona Moeini were the books that motivated her into reading.

She enormously loves Kabul University. If it reopens for girls, she would be ready to sit the exam and would again opt for admission to the Faculty of Psychology.

She says the online business has had a significant impact on her life and the lives of those around her. Calling herself a brave person, Nargis said she overcame the challenge posed by limited resources. “In the market that I entered, there was no such business. I faced a shortage of raw materials. Since quality was important to me, I couldn’t find what I wanted. It was one of the challenges.”

Her initial investment was around 20,000 to 30,000 afghanis, and since some of the raw materials were unavailable in Kabul, she imported them from a neighbouring country.

According to her, the first income she earned brought her indescribable happiness.

She believes one should never give up until they see results. She has now been able to create jobs for 20 to 30 people.

She studied the online business field for at least two years to understand where to start from and what to produce in order to meet people’s needs. She drew inspiration from traders in Iran.

Nargis says that most of her customers are women, as handicrafts and fashion are closely associated with

them. She sends her products via cargo services to all parts of Afghanistan and even abroad.

Nargis hopes to expand her business in the future and open branches abroad. She also plans to ramp up efforts for promoting women’s entrepreneurship.

In her message to Afghan women and girls, she said: “Live in a way that none of your aspirations is left unfulfilled, and try to strive as long as you can to reach your goals.”

Nargis is not the only one who has turned to e-commerce in recent years. Many other women and girls, after the recent restrictions, have chosen new educational paths and career opportunities, including online businesses, to realise their dreams.

Suraya Yousafi, a media

activist, confirmed after the imposition of education restrictions, many girls had turned to online businesses, promoting and selling their products on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

She noted digital commerce in Afghanistan was still in its early stages, but it could still help women strengthen their skills, improve their economy, earn incomes and avoid despair.

Economist Abdul Nasir Rashtia called online business one of the most profitable ventures in the world, providing a unique opportunity for women, especially in Afghanistan.

He added the online business required significant support from governments.

If the authorities provide

financial resources to women, they can further promote their businesses.

Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, a spokesman for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, told Pajhwok the ministry had always supported women entrepreneurs.

He highlighted that thousands of women across the 34 provinces of Afghanistan were actively working in various industries and sectors.

Jawad claimed MoCI had played a significant role in promoting women’s investments at all exhibitions.

According to the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, 65 percent of women entrepreneurs in the country, are also engaged in online businesses.

Afghanistan-Uzbekistan relations: A new era of economic cooperation

KABUL (TOLONews): Since the rise of the Islamic Emirate in the 1990s, relations between Uzbekistan and the Islamic Emirate have gone through various phases. Like other countries around the world, Afghanistan-Uzbekistan relations have also been influenced by political developments, experiencing both positive and negative phases over time. Currently, Kabul and Tashkent enjoy stronger economic relations than ever before, alongside their political ties.

During the first rule of the Islamic Emirate, Uzbekistan expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. Tashkent believed that some of its opponents, such as Qari Tahir Jan Yuldash, Jumma Namangani, and other Uzbek dissidents, were among the ranks of the Islamic Emirate. As a result, Uzbekistan felt threatened and, in response, closed its only trade route with Afghanistan—Hairatan Port—to all forms of travel and trade.

After the US invasion of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan weakened and reduced its ties with the Islamic Emirate. However, in the

second decade of the 21st century, with the establishment of the Islamic Emirate’s political office in Qatar, Uzbekistan once again initiated diplomatic relations with the Islamic Emirate. Uzbekistan’s special presidential envoys regularly met with officials from the political office of the Islamic Emirate in Qatar, and members of the Islamic Emirate’s political leadership also made occasional visits to Uzbekistan.

Strengthening relations after the fall of Kabul

After the fall of Kabul, Uzbekistan was one of the first countries to accept the Islamic Emirate’s ambassador, expanding its relations with the new government, especially in the economic sector. These ties reached new levels with high-ranking visits between the two countries.

On August 17, 2024, Abdulla Aripov, the prime minister of Uzbekistan, along with several ministers and technical teams, visited Kabul. He held discussions with senior officials of the Islamic Emirate on political and economic issues, and several agreements were signed.

Following this visit, and

at the official invitation of the Uzbek Prime Minister, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, deputy economic chief of the prime minister’s office, led a high-level delegation, including several ministers, on a two-day visit to Uzbekistan on February 22. This visit was particularly significant as the delegation of the Islamic Emirate officially participated in formal meetings under its own flag and was recognized as an official representative by the host country.

Key topics discussed during the visit

1. Uzbekistan’s investment in Afghanistan’s mining sector

Afghanistan possesses vast mineral reserves and rare elements that form the foundation of modern industries worldwide. Because of this, the region and global powers are increasingly focused on Afghanistan’s resources.

Uzbekistan expressed its keen interest in investing in Afghanistan’s mining sector, particularly in iron extraction. The officials of the Islamic Emirate also assured full cooperation in this area.

2. 500 kV power trans-

mission project from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan

Uzbekistan needs to sell electricity, and Afghanistan is one of its major buyers. During this visit, both sides emphasized the urgent implementation of the 500 kV power transmission project from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan pledged to start the project within ten days of signing the agreement. It is noteworthy that all documents related to this project have already been finalized by Afghanistan and sent to Uzbekistan for final review.

3. Enhancing trade cooperation and balancing economic exchanges

Trade volume between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan has significantly increased in recent years. In this visit, besides other topics, the two sides discussed creating a balance in bilateral trade.

The Islamic Emirate’s delegation encouraged Uzbekistan to increase purchases of Afghan agricultural and industrial products to help establish a more balanced trade relationship. The Uzbek side agreed and stated that a

preferential trade agreement would soon be signed between the two countries to address this issue.

4. Establishing a joint market in Afghanistan

In discussions between the officials of the two countries, the importance of establishing a joint market inside Afghanistan, similar to the Termez trade hub in Uzbekistan, was emphasized.

This initiative would facilitate easier access for buyers to products from both countries and help create new business opportunities.

Islamic Emirate’s plan for expanding the railway network and strengthening economic cooperation with Uzbekistan

The Islamic Emirate plans to expand its railway network from Hairatan to Herat and from there to Kandahar and Spin Boldak. This will connect Central Asia with South Asia, while also linking Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Pakistan.

According to preliminary research, this new railway route is more cost-effective and shorter than the Afghan-Trans railway network, which starts from

Hairatan, passes through central provinces, and connects to Pakistan in the Kharlachi area of Paktia province.

The “Afghan-Trans” route requires numerous tunnels due to its mountainous terrain, making implementation costly and time-consuming. In contrast, the new railway route passing through Afghanistan’s northern provinces primarily crosses flat land, making it easier to construct.

Survey and design work for the Herat-Kandahar phase of the project began in February. During the recent visit of the Deputy Economic Chief of the Prime Minister’s Office to Uzbekistan, the Uzbek government committed to sending its technical team to Afghanistan to survey and implement the Hairatan-Herat phase at its own expense.

5. Reducing Afghanistan’s economic dependence

Afghanistan has long relied on trade routes through Iran and Pakistan for its imports and exports, with most of its commercial goods transported via these countries’ sea routes to China.

Some neighboring countries have used Afghanistan’s trade dependency as a political tool. For example, during harvest seasons, some nations have blocked trade routes, causing Afghan farmers to suffer millions of dollars in losses.

This railway project is part of a broader plan to connect Afghanistan with China and Russia via Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The new railway will reduce Afghanistan’s dependence on Iran and Pakistan while offering a faster and more cost-effective trade route.

Currently, Afghan goods transported through Iran and Pakistan take at least 40 days to reach China, whereas the new route will cut this down to 12–15 days. Additionally, transportation costs will be reduced by 15–20%.

Given its strategic importance, this railway project was one of the most critical topics discussed during the recent visit of the Islamic Emirate’s delegation to Uzbekistan.

6. Uzbekistan’s investment in Afghanistan’s agriculture

During the visit, Uzbekistan requested land

for agricultural investment in Afghanistan. The northern regions of Afghanistan contain vast, fertile lands irrigated by the Qosh Tepa Canal.

Officials of the Islamic Emirate expressed readiness to allocate land to Uzbekistan to attract investment and strengthen economic ties.

It is still unclear what crops Uzbekistan plans to cultivate in these lands, but given the country’s interest in agricultural investments, it is likely that Uzbekistan will grow cotton or alfalfa for its textile industry.

These crops not only meet Uzbekistan’s industrial demands but also serve as an alternative to poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. According to available information, Uzbekistan processes alfalfa for its own use and exports it to major markets in India.

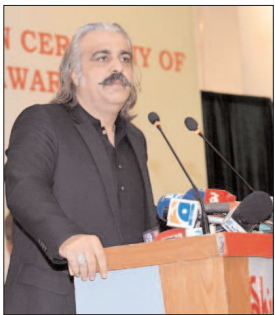
Conclusion

Given the current state of trade and economic relations between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, it is expected that the two countries will continue to expand their cooperation, particularly due to their shared religious, cultural, and linguistic ties.

Govt cares for its people like a mother: KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A ceremony was held in Peshawar on Wednesday to mark the completion of the third phase of the Drug-Free Peshawar program. Chief Minister



drug-free and help addicts return to normal life so they can become productive and responsible citizens. The Chief Minister emphasized that this initiative is not limited to the province alone but is a nationwide and even global program, as people from other provinces and even Afghanistan have benefited from it. "We do not reject anyone based on their province or nationality," he added.

On this occasion, individuals who had successfully completed the Drug-Free Peshawar program's third phase were reunited with their families. This phase of the program was launched in November 2024, during which 1,239 drug addicts were rehabilitated. Among them were 13 women and 28 underage boys. The rehabilitated individuals included 611 from Peshawar, 536 from other districts of the province, 48 from Punjab, 10 from Sindh, and 26 Afghan citizens. This is the largest drug rehabilitation program to date, with a substantial allocation of Rs. 320 million.

Speaking at the event, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur expressed his joy at witnessing the reintegration of rehabilitated individuals with their families. He stated that the program aims to make the province

like a mother. He announced that the drug rehabilitation program will soon be integrated into the Sehat Card (Health Card) initiative. "Deputy Commissioners only need to bring drug addicts to the relevant office, and the government will bear the cost of their treatment," he declared.

He urged the public to hand over drug addicts for rehabilitation, assuring them that the government will ensure their treatment. The Chief Minister also stressed a simple definition of right and wrong: "Anything you cannot do openly is wrong." He further stated that drugs neither bring happiness nor peace; they only lead to destruction. True peace and progress, he said, lie in following the commandments of Allah.

The Chief Minister urged people to fight against drug dealers and expel them from their communities. "The police will support you. Inform them, and they will take immediate action. We must not spare drug dealers, as they are the enemies of our children and youth," he asserted. Ali Amin Gandapur concluded by emphasizing the collective responsibility to eliminate drugs and drug traffickers. He also thanked the business community for providing employment opportunities to rehabilitated individuals.

Syria's al-Sharaa signs temporary constitution

DAMASCUS (AP): Syria's interim president on Thursday signed a temporary constitution that leaves the country under Islamist rule for five years during a transitional phase.

The country's interim rulers have struggled to exert their authority across much of the country since the Islamist former insurgent group, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, or HTS, led a lightning insurgency that overthrew former leader Bashar Assad in December. Former HTS leader Ahmad Al-Sharaa is now the country's interim president — a decision that was announced after a meeting of the armed groups that took part in the offensive against Assad. At the same meeting, the groups agreed to repeal the country's old constitution and said a new one would be drafted.

While many were happy to see an end to the Assad family's dictatorial rule of over 50 years in the war-torn country, religious and ethnic minorities have been skeptical of the new Islamist leaders and reluctant to allow Damascus under its new authorities to assert control of their areas. Abdulhamid Al-Awak, one of the seven members of the committee Al-Sharaa tasked to draft the temporary constitution, told a press conference Thursday that it will maintain some provisions from the previous one, including the stipulation that the head of state has to be a Muslim, and Islamic law is the main source of jurisprudence.

However, Al-Awak, a constitutional law expert who teaches at the Mardin Artuklu University in Turkey, also said the temporary constitution includes provisions that enshrine freedom of expression and the press. The constitution will "balance between social security and freedom" during Syria's shaky political situation, he said. A new committee to draft a permanent constitution will be formed, but it is unclear if it will be more inclusive of Syria's political, religious, and ethnic groups.

Al-Sharaa on Monday reached a landmark pact with the US-backed Kurdish-led authorities in northeastern Syria, including a ceasefire and a merging of their armed forces with the central government's security agencies. The deal came after government forces and allied groups crushed an insurgency launched last week by gunmen loyal to Assad. Rights groups say that hundreds of civilians — mostly from the Alawite minority sect to which Assad belongs — were killed in retaliatory attacks by factions in the counter-offensive.

Russia claims more gains in Kursk

MOSCOW: Ukrainian troops appear on the point of losing their hard-won foothold inside Russia's Kursk region as Moscow claims further advances there and military bloggers on both sides say Kyiv's forces are withdrawing. Ukraine sprang one of the biggest shocks of the war on August 6 last year by storming across the border and seizing territory inside Russia, boosting citizens' morale and gaining a potential bargaining chip.

But after clinging for more than seven months to a gradually shrinking area, Ukraine has seen its position worsen sharply in the past week. Russia's Ministry of Defence on Wednesday reported the capture of five more villages, and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that "the dynamics are good".

A video published by Russian bloggers and state media showed troops standing with a Russian tricolour flag on a square in the centre of Sudzha, a town near the Ukrainian border on a highway used by Ukraine as a supply route. In his first visit to the region since Ukraine launched its shock counteroffensive, Russian President Vladimir Putin, dressed in army camouflage, hailed the recent gains and urged his troops on.

"I am counting on the fact that all the combat tasks facing our units will be fulfilled, and the territory of the Kursk region will soon be completely liberated from the enemy," he said. — Aljazeera



QUETTA: Workers shifting dead body of a civilian of Jaffar Express tragedy.

Commander Bahrain National Guard, Air Chief discuss ties

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Commander Bahrain National Guard, General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force during his visit to Air Headquarters, Islamabad. During the meeting, several key areas of mutual interest focused on enhancing collaboration between the two Air Forces were discussed.

Chief of the Air Staff shared broad contours of PAF's modernization plan of smart acquisitions from allied countries, upgradation of infrastructure and revamping of training in order to address contemporary warfare challenges. The Air Chief highlighted that both the countries enjoy long lasting religious and historic relationships which are manifested through unprecedented brotherly relations. He also reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral ties in military to military cooperation and the training domain. CAS further said, "Pakistan values its strong diplomatic, economic and defence relationship with Bahrain which is based on convergence on all important issues relating to regional peace, security and stability".

The visiting dignitary praised the professionalism of PAF personnel and the exceptional progress made by Pakistan Air Force over the years, especially through indigenization.



Commander of the Bahrain National Guard expressed a keen desire for enhanced Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation between the two countries.

Further emphasizing the importance of collaboration, the visiting dignitary showed a strong interest in the PAF's multi-domain capabilities in order to improve operational readiness of Bahrain Air Force through shared knowledge and technology. Commander Bahrain National Guard expressed interest in assistance from the Pakistan Air Force in establishing Basic to Tactical Level training setups in emerging warfare domains, specifically focusing on Space, Cyber and Electronic Warfare operations.

The dignitary also expressed an earnest desire to procure equipment from the National Aerospace Science & Technology Park reflecting Bahrain's goal to enhance its techno-

logical capabilities and modernize its defence infrastructure. He shared that his visit would be followed by a high level visit of Commander Bahrain Air Force for formal negotiations in areas of mutual interest. Both the dignitaries vowed to further consolidate cooperation in various fields including training, emerging technologies and mutual cooperation in aviation industry.

Later, the dignitary visited National ISR & Integrated Air Operations Centre established at Air Headquarters, where he was briefed about the operational capabilities of Pakistan Air Force. The meeting between Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force and Commander Bahrain National Guard signifies a resolute commitment of both countries to reinforce military partnership, fostering collaboration and promoting robust relations.

PHC grants protective bail former Senator Azam Swati

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted protective bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf former lawmaker Azam Swati and issued a notice to the federal government to provide details of the cases registered against him, on Saturday.

PHC's bench comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Aurangzeb heard the case while the counsel Ali Azim Afridi advocate informed the court that the petitioner had filed a petition seeking details of the cases registered against him. The court

had earlier directed the parties to submit their reports, which have not been received yet.

Assistant Attorney General Dawlat Khan told the court that Azam Swati had already been provided with the details, but he had again approached the court. Justice Sahibzada Asadullah asked if the government would not provide the details now. The Assistant Attorney General replied that they would provide the details, but Azam Swati had already been provided with them earlier.

Justice Sahibzada Asadullah remarked that the court had issued a

notice to the government earlier, and it was expected that the report would be submitted today. The court directed the government to submit the reports on the next hearing and approved Azam Swati's protective bail application.

Azam Swati stated that the current government in Pakistan is being run by ignorant and criminal-minded people while talking to media personnel after appearance before PHC. He added that the country is facing widespread terrorism, and those who have been looting the country for 40 years cannot fix it.

Quake damages buildings in Italy

ROME (AFP): A 4.4-magnitude earthquake struck the volcanic area around Naples overnight, causing several light injuries, damaging buildings and sending terrified residents into the streets, officials said on Thursday.

The quake, which was followed by several much smaller tremors, was the biggest to hit the Campi Flegrei (Phlegraean Fields) area in southern Italy for 10 months. It occurred around 1:25am at a depth of 2.5 kilometres, according to the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV), and raised residents from their beds.

"We can't go on like this, we can't sleep. We're scared," one man told the Local Team news service in the middle of the night in Bagnoli, a seaside district in western Naples. Images broadcast by Italian media showed car windows smashed by falling masonry and damage to a church in Bagnoli, where schools were closed on Thursday.

One woman was hurt when her ceiling collapsed, while two or three other people went to hospital with cuts caused by shards of broken glass, according to Naples mayor Gaetano Manfredi. A total of 11 people went to emergency rooms of local hospitals but several "were cases of panic", he told reporters. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said she was constantly monitoring the situation and was in contact with the relevant officials.

Seismic activity is nothing new in the area, which is an active caldera — the hollow left after an eruption — the largest in Europe. It stretches from the outskirts of Naples into the sea, measuring some 12 by 15km. But many of the 500,000 inhabitants living in the danger zone had already been spooked by a 4.4-magnitude quake in May 2024, which was the biggest for 40 years. At that time, there were no injuries or any major structural damage. Naples mayor Manfredi told RTL Radio that Thursday's quake was a "particularly intense tremor", similar to that of last year but "with an epicentre closer to the city of Naples, so it was felt more in the city".

PM reaffirms

(Continued from Page 1)

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, Chief Minister Balochistan Sarfraz Bugti, Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, parliamentarians and high level officials attended the meeting. The prime minister said, "Today we are together on the occasion when the whole nation was grieving as three days ago, terrorists attacked a train in which more than 400 persons were travelling."

The terrorists did not care about the sanctity of Ramazan and cruelly took the passengers out of the train and held them captive at an abandoned place, he recounted adding the passengers were going to their hometowns to celebrate Eid and visit their loved ones. He said the security forces came up with a strategy and saved lives of passengers including children and eliminated terrorists. He said, "We should be thankful to the security forces under the leadership of Chief of Army Staff and Corps Commander Quetta, intelligence agencies and the Zarar Company which rescued 339 passengers and eliminated 33 terrorists." He said he took more than two hours of briefing on the security situation in Balochistan and visited the injured in the hospital.

The prime minister said, "I on behalf of people and governments of Pakistan particularly Balochistan pay tribute to the security forces for their bravery." He said the governments at the federal and provincial levels and people should work together to ensure peace in the country particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. He pointed out that Balochistan was the biggest province of Pakistan in terms of area and people from all provinces were living there.

The prime minister was of the view that Pakistan would not make progress and achieve prosperity without bringing Balochistan at par with other provinces of the country. He recalled that the finalization of the National Finance Commission award by the leadership of the country headed by Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari in 2010 was a big achievement.

Punjab financially contributed for the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan prior during the approval of the award, he said adding Punjab gave away Rs 600 billion for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over the years but no visible development projects were executed. The prime minister said Pakistan would not be able to make progress without elimination of terrorism from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

He said Pakistan lost 80,000 lives in the war against terrorism and peace was only restored in 2018

after immense sacrifices of the army, police and law enforcement agencies. Pakistan's economy suffered losses of \$ 30 billion because of the war on terrorism, he continued. The prime minister questioned why terrorism raised its head again in the subsequent years and said release of thousands of Taliban from jail had caused the surge in terrorism. The released Taliban included those who were involved in very heinous crimes, he added.

The prime minister said officers and Jawans were sacrificing their lives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan to save people of Pakistan from the scourge of terrorism. He regretted the language used by some elements within the country against the armed forces and Pakistan. Poisoned propaganda against the armed forces was not acceptable and tolerable, he warned.

The prime minister, "We have to honour the sacrifices of our armed forces who leave behind their loved ones to protect future of the country." He said Pakistan's eastern neighbour was unleashing propaganda which was first spewed by some elements within the country. PM Shehbaz Sharif underlined the need to raise a new force, equipped with modern weapons and equipment in Balochistan and said he was ready to provide all necessary resources to counter the menace of terrorism.

Sindh PA passes resolution against six-canal project

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly on Thursday unanimously passed a resolution categorically rejecting the construction of six new canals on the Indus River and its tributaries, including the Cholistan Canal, as illegal and a "direct" violation of the 1991 Water Accord.

"This house demands an immediate halt to any plans, activities, or work related to the construction of the Cholistan Canal and other canals on the Indus River System, until comprehensive discussions, consultations and agreements are held with all provincial governments, particularly Sindh, to ensure that the water rights of Sindh are fully protected and respected," read the resolution.

It further urged the federal government and the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) to honour the terms of the 1991 accord and to ensure that the provinces, especially Sindh, receive their rightful share of water in accordance with the agreed principles of fairness, equity and justice.

The resolution calls on the Centre to immediately initiate a dialogue process with all provincial stake-

holders to ensure the preservation and protection of Sindh's water resources in line with the Constitutional principles of inter-provincial equity and water justice.

Addressing the provincial assembly, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah reaffirmed Sindh's historical rights over the Indus River and expressed serious concerns about the diversion of its waters to other regions. He emphasised that Sindh has consistently maintained its stance on water distribution and warned against any attempts to divert water from the Indus without consent.

In his speech, the CM provided a detailed historical perspective on the development of river systems in the subcontinent, highlighting Sindh's long-standing reliance on these waters for agriculture. He questioned the rationale behind diverting water from Punjab's fertile lands to Cholistan, arguing that such actions would have devastating consequences for both provinces.

"Sindh's people have a rightful claim over these rivers," he said and added that water cannot be taken without the permission of those who have lived alongside these rivers for

centuries. "This is a globally accepted principle," he asserted. CM Shah recalled Sindh's previous objections to various canal projects, leading to agreements such as the Sindh-Punjab Water Accord of 1945. "Under this agreement, Punjab's canals were allocated a fixed water share, while any excess water was to be directed to Sindh through the Panjnad system," he said.

However, he expressed concern that the water available in the system has been decreasing rather than increasing, adversely affecting Sindh's share. The chief minister also pointed out that Sindh's population was historically four times larger than Punjab's, with 80% of its citizens dependent on agriculture. He questioned why Sindh should remain silent while new canal projects threaten its already dwindling water supply.

"We are being told that water will be taken from Punjab's most fertile lands and diverted to Cholistan and that we should not object," he said. "Will Punjab allow its most productive regions, like Chaj Doab and Rachna Doab, to dry up just to irrigate a desert?" he asked.

ECC approves amends to net-metering regulations

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet here on Thursday approved a set of amendments to the existing net-metering regulations aimed at reducing the growing financial burden on grid consumers.

According to press release issued by finance division, the ECC meeting was chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and was attended by Minister for Power, Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari; Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh; Minister for Petroleum, Ali Parvez Malik, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from relevant ministries and divisions. The decision comes in light of a significant increase in the number of solar net-metering consumers, with associated financial implications for grid consumers, the statement added.

As part of the approved changes, the ECC has revised the buyback rate from the National Average Power Purchase Price (NAPP) to Rs 10 per unit.

Furthermore, the committee approved the proposal, subject to the ratification of Cabinet, to allow the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) to revise this buy-back rate periodically, ensuring that the framework remains flexible and aligned with evolving market conditions. It was clarified, however, that the revised framework will not apply to existing net-metered consumers who have a valid license, concurrence, or agreement under the NEPRA (Alternative & Renewable Energy) Distributed Generation and Net Metering Regulations, 2015.

Any such agreements will remain effective until the expiration of the license or agreement, whichever occurs first. This ensures that the rights and obligations of these consumers, including agreed-upon rates, will continue as per the existing terms. Additionally, the ECC also approved an update to the settlement mechanism. Under the new structure, imported and exported units will be treated separately for billing purposes. The exported units will be purchased at the revised buyback rate of Rs 10 per unit, while the

imported units will be billed at the applicable peak/off-peak rates, inclusive of taxes and surcharges, during the monthly billing cycle.

The ECC also authorized the Power Division to issue proposed guidelines, subject to Cabinet's ratification, to NEPRA for incorporation into the applicable regulatory framework, ensuring clarity and consistency in the implementation of these amendments. The decision follows extensive discussions on the growing impact of solar net-metering on the national power grid. The Power Division highlighted the pressing need for regulatory adjustments, citing a record decline in solar panel prices that has led to a sharp increase in the number of solar net-metering consumers.

As of December 2024, solar net-metering consumers had transferred a burden of Rs 159 billion to grid consumers, a figure expected to rise to Rs 4,240 billion by 2034 without timely amendments. The ECC was informed that the number of solar net-metering consumers surged significantly, reaching 283,000 by December 2024, up from 226,440 in October 2024.