

Terrorist attack foiled
F.P. Report

DG KHAN: Punjab Police successfully foiled another terrorist attack on the Punjab-Khyber Pakhtunkhwa border. According to Punjab police spokesperson, the fifth such attack occurred at the Lakhani check post in the Wahwa Police Station area, where 10-12 terrorists launched a coordinated assault from three sides during the early hours of the morning.



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Faithful begin Itikaf
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Faithful Muslims across Pakistan are set to begin Itikaf today, marking the start of the final ten days of Ramadan with a retreat into mosques for focused prayer and worship. Itikaf is observed during the concluding days of Ramadan, with participants dedicating their time exclusively to spiritual reflection and detachment from worldly activities.

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No talks sans Imran's release: KP CM

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has declared that a dialogue on national issues cannot be proceed without the release of PTI leader Imran Khan. Addressing journalists at an Iftar dinner in Islamabad on Friday, he has stated that when his government was formed in the province one year back, the provincial treasury only had enough funds to cover 15 days of salaries. However, through improved financial management, his administration achieved a budget surplus of Rs169 billion within a year.

Gandapur said that without imposing any new taxes, the provincial government's revenue increased by Rs55 billion, while Rs72 billion in outstanding liabilities from the previous government were also cleared, adding that in addition to releasing funds allocated for development projects, his government has approved an additional Rs30 billion for development spending.

He noted that throw forward of the province's development program was projected at 13.5 years, which as now been reduced to 4.5 years. He emphasized that his government has adopted a policy to only initiate projects that can be completed within their scheduled timeframe, to prevent wastage of public funds. Gandapur revealed that the province was burdened with Rs752 billion in debt when his government assumed power. "Over the past year, his government



did not take on any additional loans and repaid Rs50 billion in existing debt. A Debt Management Fund worth Rs30 billion has been established, which will be increased to Rs50 billion by the end of the year", he remarked, adding that endowment funds have been created to make loss-making institutions financially self-sufficient, with plans to stabilize all such entities.

The Chief Minister said corruption is a scourge on society, and his government is combating it through strict oversight, improved governance, and digitalization. He credited the administration's performance over the past year to these reforms, noting that scholarship amounts have been doubled, Zakat payments raised from Rs12,000 to Rs25,000, and marriage assistance funds (Jahez) increased from Rs25,000 to Rs200,000. He said that Sehat Card program was also reinstated and its coverage enhanced by 30%, while reforms and improved monitoring is saving Rs1.00 billion per month under the scheme.

Additionally, Gandapur stated that Rs10 billion were saved during this year's wheat procurement process, and that the IMF has praised Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's financial performance, reflecting

international confidence in the province's governance.

Commenting on the current political situation, Gandapur said Pakistan faces political instability, which cannot be resolved as long as Imran Khan remains imprisoned. He argued that peace and stability in the region are unattainable without engaging Afghanistan in dialogue, and stressed the need for a national dialogue to resolve the country's crises — a dialogue that he insisted cannot succeed without Imran Khan, whom he described as the most popular leader across all federal units.

Addressing the issue of terrorism, Gandapur stated that no military operation can succeed without public support, adding that the people are not in favor of any military operation, and as elected representatives, they must reflect the public's sentiments. He urged the media to play its role in addressing the current political instability and guiding the country toward national unity. The Iftar dinner was attended by Advisor to CM on Information, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, PTI leaders, senior officials from the Information Department, and a large number of senior journalists from Islamabad and Peshawar.

Ministers, advisers salaries rised

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet approved a salary increase of up to 188% for federal ministers, ministers of state, and advisers.

The decision was made through a circulated summary, which the ministers approved for themselves and their colleagues. Amendments were made to the 1975 Act on ministers' salaries and allowances. With the new bill, federal ministers will now receive Rs 519,000 per month, up from Rs 200,000, while ministers of state's salaries will rise from Rs 180,000 to the same amount.

The salary of federal ministers has increased by 159%, while ministers of state and advisers to the Prime Minister have received hikes of up to 188%. Allowances, vehicles, and office facilities remain separate from salaries. Initially, this summary was set for discussion in the February 4 cabinet meeting but was removed at the last moment to avoid public and media criticism.

SBP injects over Rs2.12t in market

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), injected Rs 2,120.95 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) on Friday.

The SBP conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7-day tenor on March 21, 2025 and accepted 20 bids amounting to Rs 1,549.25 billion while another Rs 571.7 billion were injected through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO.

The central bank received 20 bids for 7-day tenor cumulatively offering Rs 1,801.1 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.08 to 12.10 percent. The SBP accepted an amount of Rs 1,549.25 billion offered through 20 quotes for the 7-day tenor at 12.08% rate of return. Total amount offered at 12.08% was Rs 1,126.4 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs 874.5 billion on pro-rata basis.

Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for the 7-day tenor. The central bank received 10 bids for 7-day tenor offering an amount of Rs 571.7 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.08 to 12.10 %. The SBP accepted the entire amount offered through all the 10 quotes at 12.08% rate of return.

CJP convenes JCP meeting on April 8

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi convened the Judicial Commission meeting on April 8. The meeting would be presided over by CJP Afridi. It has been learnt that two judges of Lahore High Court would be promoted to the Supreme Court. The Judicial Commission would pick two names from the list of five senior judges of LHC.

Earlier, the Judicial Commission had approved 10 additional judges for the Peshawar High Court (PHC). The commission reviewed 40 candidates before finalising the appointments. During the meeting, PHC Chief Justice Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim reportedly advocated for the appointment of a tenth judge.

Despite objections raised by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members, including Barrister Gohar, Ali Zafar, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Law Minister, the commission approved the appointments by majority vote.



MADINA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offering jumma prayer at Masjid-e-Nabvi.

PM's economic reforms add Rs 34.5b to exchequer

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The vacation of stay order by the Lahore High Court in the case regarding tax on windfall income of banks resulted in a benefit of Rs 11.5 billion to the national exchequer.

While on this account, overall in a month the national exchequer accrued financial benefit of Rs 34.5 billion. This success was gained due to the vision of economic reforms of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and improvement in the performance of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

The prime minister had taken notice of the stay order on cases related to tax on windfall income of banks under the Finance Act 2023 and asked the Minister for Law, Minister for Finance, Attorney General and Chairman FBR to constitute the best team to argue these cases.

In the last month, due to the efforts of the team, firstly Rs 23 billion were recovered after the verdicts of Sindh High Court and now Rs 11.5 billion were gained from the decision of the Lahore High Court. The prime minister appreciated the efforts of Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb, Attorney General Mansoor Awan, Chairman FBR Arshad Mehmood Langrial, Secretary Finance Imdad Bosal and their team.

The prime minister said the ministers of law and finance and the team of attorney general made the historic achievement possible with their hard work. He said due to these creative and strong steps, tax collection could be increased and there would be hope for a better economy.

A substantial amount of Rs 34.5 billion was deposited in the national exchequer and this money now could

PM pays respects at Roza-e-Rasool (PBUH)

MADINAH AL MUNAWARAH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday paid his respects at Roza-e-Rasool (Peace Be Upon Him), after arriving here on the second leg of his four-day visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The doors of Riaz-ul-Jannah were exclusively opened for the prime minister and his delegation. Accompanied by his high-level delegation, Prime Minister Shehbaz offered Nawafil at Masjid-e-Nabawi and prayed for Muslim world unity and the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. Earlier, as the prime minister arrived at Madinah Munawarah from Jeddah, he was received by Madinah's Governor Prince Salman bin Sultan al-Saud. While being in Jeddah, he held meetings with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Investment Minister Khalid Al-Falih and Head of the Joint Task Force for Economic Engagement Mohammad Al-Tuwaijri and discussed strengthening bilateral trade and investment ties. The Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also offered Jumma prayers here at the Masjid e Nabvi. After offering Jumma prayers, the prime minister left for Makkah by train along with his delegation to perform Umrah.

be spent on projects of health, education and public welfare, he added. He said with the grace of Allah Almighty Pakistan would soon become self-sufficient with these kinds of steps.

Govt pursuing policies on climate action: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said the government was actively pursuing policies that integrate climate action across all sectors, with initiatives designed to build resilience and sustainability.

In a message on Earth Hour Day observed on March 22, 2025, he said, "Programs like Recharge Pakistan are restoring ecosystems, while policies such as the National Adaptation Plan (2023) and National Clean Air Policy (2023) provide a strategic roadmap for a cleaner, more sustainable future." He said, "Every year during Earth Hour, millions around the world switch off their lights—a symbolic gesture to inspire action, raise awareness, and empower individuals, businesses, and communities to adopt

sustainable practices."

"Despite contributing less than 1% to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan is among the most climate-vulnerable countries. We have witnessed devastating floods, scorching heatwaves, and prolonged droughts—events that threaten millions of lives, food security, water resources, and urban infrastructure," he noted.

He said, "Our commitment to renewable energy expansion, plastic waste reduction, and green job creation is laying the foundation for long-term environmental stewardship. However, policies alone are not enough—true change begins at home. Every action, no matter how small, strengthens the collective momentum toward a sustainable tomorrow." "This Earth Hour beginning 8:30 pm tonight, let us unplug to reconnect—with our families, our communities, and the Earth itself—for a brighter and more sustainable tomorrow," he added.



ISLAMABAD: PAF jets taking part in rehearsal for 'Pakistan Day'.

IMF talks on track, no major hurdles: Minister

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has expressed confidence that Pakistan will soon receive positive news from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), saying that negotiations are in their final stages with no major hurdles in the way.

Speaking to journalists on Friday, the minister reassured that Pakistan is on track to meet the IMF's economic discipline targets. He emphasized that discussions with the global lender are progressing smoothly and that the ongoing talks will conclude soon.

Aurangzeb underscored the government's commitment to economic reforms, adding that Pakistan is adhering to the agreed-upon financial framework. He noted that the country remains focused on fiscal responsibility, which will help secure the next tranche of funding.

Separately, while addressing an event, the finance minister spoke about the growing challenges posed by climate change. He highlighted the rapid melting of glaciers, the economic disruptions caused by fog in Lahore, and the country's overall vulnerability to environmental shifts.

Aurangzeb stressed the need for a structured climate financing system to combat these threats. He revealed that Pakistan had held positive discussions with the IMF over the past two weeks regarding

Acting US envoy, Finance Minister discuss cooperation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting with Ms. Natalie Baker, Charge d'Affaires and Acting US Ambassador to Pakistan, who called on him here Friday.

The meeting focused on matters of mutual interest, including avenues for enhancing economic cooperation and increasing US investment in Pakistan's priority sectors, according to press release issued by finance ministry. During the discussion, the Finance Minister briefed Ms. Baker on the government's macroeconomic reform agenda, in line with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision for structural reforms and export-led economic growth. He highlighted key initiatives being undertaken to improve economic efficiency and ensure sustainable and inclusive growth, including privatization, tax reforms, energy sector restructuring, and right-sizing of the federal government.

climate financing and disaster recovery. He further disclosed that international donors have pledged \$10 billion for flood rehabilitation projects, but Pakistan has struggled to develop viable implementation plans to fully utilize the assistance. He urged the need for practical and actionable climate projects to secure future funding.

The minister acknowledged that pollution levels are rising and controlling environmental degradation remains a significant challenge. He affirmed that the finance ministry would extend full cooperation to the climate change ministry to address these concerns. Pakistan's water cycle has been adversely affected, and

insufficient winter rainfall signals a growing environmental crisis, FinMin Aurangzeb warned. The minister stressed that climate change and population growth are two major threats that the country must tackle urgently.

Aurangzeb also noted progress in Pakistan's partnership with the World Bank, particularly in financing and capacity building for climate resilience. He cited the work done by the Everest K2 Research Centre as a positive step in understanding glacial melt patterns and their impact on water resources. Emphasising the urgency of the matter, the finance minister called for reducing project timelines to counter environmental risks effectively.

Starlink to operate in Pakistan on temporary basis

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development, Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Friday confirmed satellite-based internet-provider 'Starlink' was granted temporary registration in Pakistan following the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

In a statement, the minister said with the consensus of all security and regulatory bodies, Starlink has been issued a temporary no-objection certificate (NOC). She said the Telecommunication Authority (PTA) would oversee compliance with fee payments

and other licensing requirements by the company.

Fatima said that, under Prime Minister Shehbaz's leadership, Pakistan is making significant strides towards digital transformation. She added that modern solutions like satellite internet will greatly enhance connectivity, particularly in underserved and remote areas of the country.

The move will pave the way for Elon Musk's company to obtain a formal license from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), said well-placed sources. The clearance from PSARB is a mandatory condition for satellite-based internet-providing companies to operate in the country. The

sources further said that the body had also finalised key technical issues, including frequency, power, and earth gateway stations.

"PTA is expected issue the license to Starlink within four weeks," the sources said, adding that After obtaining the PTA license, the Starlink is expected to take one year to launch its services in the country, the sources added. In order to ensure high-speed internet connectivity, Starlink's Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite will operate at an altitude of 250 to 500 kilometers. The sources further said that the government had hired an international consultant to finalise regulations for the satellite-based company.

Govt to shut down 1,100 loss-making utility stores

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to shut down 1,100 loss-making utility stores under the privatisation plan.

A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Industries and Production, chaired by Senator Aun Abbas, was held to discuss the future of the Utility Stores Corporation. According to the Ministry of Industries and Production,

1,500 out of 2,600 utility stores will continue operating before privatisation.

Meanwhile, the Senate Standing Committee on Industries and Production has taken notice of rising sugar prices and summoned the Competition Commission and sugar mill owners.

During a meeting chaired by Aun Abbas, the committee called for an inquiry into high sugar prices. Aun Abbas Bappi noted that

44% of the country's sugar mills belong to politically influential families. He questioned why sugar prices increased despite the government allowing the export of 700,000 tons this year when there was a surplus. The Managing Director of Utility Stores briefed the committee, stating that the privatisation of utility stores has been delayed due to a pending audit, which is now set to be completed by August 2025.

Constable killed, ASI hurt in raid

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A search operation in the Fizaqat area of Mingora, Swat, turned deadly on Friday when a police party was ambushed while raiding the house of proclaimed offender Ahmed Zeb, a notorious drug dealer. Constable Niaz Muhammad lost his life in the crossfire, while ASI Amjad Iqbal and two other officials were injured.

According to spokesperson for the Swat District Police Officer (DPO), Ahmed Zeb was wanted in connection with the murder of Inspector Rahim Khan. The accused had been evading capture since December 2024, when he allegedly killed SHO Manglawar Rahim Khan in Mingora city.

The raid on Ahmed Zeb's house was conducted on a tip-off, resulting in a fierce exchange of fire. Ahmed Zeb was killed in the crossfire, while the injured police officials ASI Amjad Iqbal, constable Muhammad Hussain and Sarfaraz were rushed to Saidu Sharif Teaching Hospital for treatment.

The martyrdom of Constable Niaz Muhammad sent shockwaves through the community, with senior police officials attending his funeral prayers. DIG Malakand Division Sher Akbar Khan, DPO Swat Nasir Mahmood, and other police officers paid their respects to the fallen constable.



LAHORE: A large number of faithful offering third Friday prayer of Holy Fasting Month of Ramzan ul Mubarak at Masjid Al-Shuhada. —APP Photo

Pakistan's Digital Youth Hub set to transform employment landscape

LAHORE (APP): In a landmark move aimed at empowering the nation's youth and ensuring a prosperous future for Pakistan, the government has announced the launch of a Digital Youth Hub, a groundbreaking platform to connect young Pakistanis with career opportunities, scholarships, internships and employment both within the country and globally.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister (PM) Shahbaz Sharif, the Digital Youth Hub was a part of the government's broader effort to bolster youth engagement through the Prime Minister's Youth Program and the creation of the National Youth Council. These initiatives aim to address key areas like education, employment and skill development, with a focus on youth across all provinces of Pakistan.

It was disclosed by Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme while addressing a press conference here at Aiwan-e-Iqbal Complex on Friday. He said the platform will offer a range of services, including career counseling, employment listings and training programs, making it the first of its kind not only in Pakistan but globally. This portal will help connect young people with employers, including both the public and private sectors,

as well as international opportunities in countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Japan, South Korea, Canada and the United States.

The launch of this digital hub will help young Pakistanis access blue-collar, white-collar and grey-collar job opportunities suited to their skill sets. Speaking about the initiative, he emphasized that Pakistan's youth will benefit from a data-driven platform.

The portal will allow users to register their profiles and receive personalized employment and educational opportunities based on their qualifications and skills. It was being described as an "AI-powered" portal that will provide tailored recommendations for job placements, training programs, and scholarships. "Pakistan's young people will now have access to a world of opportunities at their fingertips. Whether it's finding a job in a foreign country or securing a scholarship, our goal was to equip the youth with the tools they need to build successful careers," said the chairman.

One of the most significant aspects of the platform was its support for job seekers. The government was introducing an Interest-Free Loan Program under the Prime Minister's Youth Loan Program, which will provide young workers with financial assistance to settle into their new jobs

abroad. This initiative was designed to ease the financial burden of relocating, including travel expenses and initial living costs.

The platform was set to officially launch on March 24, 2025 (Monday), by the Prime Minister (PM) in a virtual event that will be accessible to Pakistani youth worldwide. Key figures from Pakistan's government, industry and education sectors will join the event, showcasing how this initiative will shape the future of the nation.

Rana Mashhood expressed his commitment and said "this is not just a digital platform; it's the beginning of a new chapter for Pakistan's future. Our youth are the key to the nation's prosperity and this hub will help unlock their full potential." The Digital Youth Hub was poised to become a game-changer in shaping the careers of young Pakistanis, both at home and abroad. With a target of reaching 10 to 15 million young people in the first year, this platform promises to be a critical tool in the country's efforts to build a robust, modern economy, while offering a ray of hope for millions of aspiring young professionals. At the end, the official song of Digital Youth Hub was also launched.

CM vows to document public suggestions for upcoming budget

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while concluding the pre-budget discussion in the Sindh Assembly emphasized his government's commitment to maintaining law and order, and highlighted the importance of transparent financial planning as well noted that there was currently no construction taking place on Chulistan Canal.

He highlighted that there has been no construction activity from Head Suleimanki to Marot, which is located 200 km from the barrage. At the Marot site, a

5,000 ft length of canal was found to be abandoned, and no further activity was observed. Through digitised maps he showed its maps and budget estimates, according to which no expenditures have been incurred on the construction of Chulistan.

In his speech, the chief minister expressed his concerns over the rising wave of terrorism in the country, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. He assured the assembly that the Sindh government and law enforcement

agencies were closely monitoring the situation to prevent any security threats in the province.

"For decades, lawlessness was a major issue in our country and province, but after 2013-14, conditions started improving," he said and added that while challenges remain, the Sindh government is committed to ensuring peace and security.

He also highlighted that the Sindh Assembly had previously passed a resolution against terrorism, underscoring the collective responsibility of all political parties to prioritise national security above political differences.

CM Murad highlighted that Sindh is unique in having Rule 143, which allows structured pre-budget discussions, unlike any national or provincial assemblies. He emphasized that this rule enables all members to discuss budget matters, share recommendations, and propose solutions.

Despite last year's delay due to a government formation in March, Shah noted that this year's discussions are on track, even during Ramadan. He praised the assembly's productive debates and the increased participation from legislators compared to the previous year, where only 31 members engaged due to political tensions.

In a rare moment of political unity, the chief minister acknowledged the Leader of the Opposition for recognising the government's good intentions despite execution differences. "I'm pleased to hear that there are no doubts about our intentions," Shah said, emphasising the party's commitment to the welfare of Sindh's people since 1970. He assured the house that the government is dedicated to addressing concerns, ensuring financial transparency, and maintaining law and order.

Shah highlighted increased engagement in the assembly, with 100 members speaking this year and a record 132 last year during

budget discussions. He appreciated all recommendations and stressed the importance of constructive criticism. The CM underscored the significance of discussing infrastructure and water supply issues in Karachi, calling the city "the heartbeat of the country." He pledged to document all suggestions for consideration in the 2025-26 budget while outlining both accomplishments and future programs.

Mr Shah informed the assembly that this year, the total budget was Rs. 3,056 billion. As of February 28, 2025, nearly Rs. 2,000 billion has been released, and Rs. 1,454 billion has already been utilised with a significant portion of the employee-related expenses, including salaries and pensions.

He explained that government salaries are disbursed directly from the Accountant General's Office, but this does not include salaries for municipal employees, as their payments do not come from the treasury. "So far, Rs. 600 billion has been allocated for government salaries," he revealed.

The CM said that the local government salaries, a total of Rs. 160 billion was allocated as grants for municipal departments this year, adding that by February, around Rs. 107 billion had already been disbursed, with nearly 70 per cent of this amount going towards salaries.

In addition to salaries, the largest portion of our grants goes to health institutions such as the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) and the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD). "This has proven to be a highly effective way to directly benefit the people," the CM said. "Currently, we are spending Rs. 100 billion per month on salaries, which highlights the significant financial responsibility of the government in ensuring the smooth functioning of public services," he said.

Sharjeel celebrates successful police operations against dacoits

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh's Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has stated that significant successes have been achieved in the large-scale operation ongoing in Sindh's Kacha areas. As a result of actions taken against criminal elements in these areas, several notified dacoits have been killed, while multiple dangerous gangs have been dismantled. The effective operations of the police have led to a notable decrease in the crime rate.

In a statement, Sindh's Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, said that the Kacha areas between Guddu Barrage and Sukkur Barrage had long been safe havens for criminal elements. Sindh Police launched a major operation in April 2024, utilizing multi-purpose drone cameras, night vision binoculars, and thermal imaging scopes. As a result of this operation, high-

ways have been secured, and the law-and-order situation has improved.

He stated that during operations conducted in 2024, 68 dacoits were killed, 122 were injured, and 356 were arrested. The operation also led to the elimination of five highly wanted dacoits, the arrest of 22 others, and the prevention of 620 citizens from falling into honey traps.

Sharjeel Inam Memon further stated that in 2024, major events such as IDEAS 2024, ICC Champions Trophy, a tri-nation cricket series, the West Indies cricket team's tour of Pakistan, the 9th multinational naval exercise AMAN-2025, the arrival of the Imam Bohra community in Karachi, the visit of the Iranian President, and the Tablighi Ijtema were held peacefully.

The Senior Minister stated that from January 1, 2025, to March 15, 2025, additional successes were achieved, including the killing of 10 dacoits, the injury of 31, and the arrest

of 56, while 136 citizens were saved from honey traps. Police carried out large-scale operations against the Toghani, Jatoi, Marfani, Kalhoro, Bhayo, Kokri, Bhangwar, Banglani, Mazari, Jagirani, and Shar gangs. Overall, 78 dacoits were killed, 153 were injured, and 412 were arrested, including 25 highly wanted criminals.

Sharjeel Memon stated that police achieved major successes in the ongoing fight against crime, leading to a significant decline in kidnapping-for-ransom cases. Between January and March 2025, no kidnapping cases were reported in Sukkur, while four cases were reported in Ghotki and three in Kashmore, all of which resulted in the safe recovery of the victims. In Shikarpur, eight people were kidnapped, most of whom were recovered safely.

According to Sharjeel Memon, street crime in Karachi has decreased significantly due to police actions. In 2024, the

police arrested 15,122 drug dealers and took action against 234 scrap dealers involved in buying and selling stolen goods.

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) conducted 2,225 intelligence-based operations, registered 220 cases, arrested 208 terrorists, and killed four terrorists in police encounters.

Sharjeel Inam Memon announced that under the Karachi Safe City Project, modern CCTV cameras worth Rs. 1.4 billion have been installed, equipped with facial recognition and number plate identification capabilities. Additionally, a highway patrolling unit has been established to ensure security on major roads.

The Senior Minister declared, "We will not rest until the riverine areas are completely cleansed of criminal elements." He reaffirmed that the Sindh government remains committed to eradicating crime and ensuring the safety of its citizens through all possible measures.

19 dead , 1,260 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 19 people were killed and 1,260 others injured in 1,100 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 565 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 695 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

The data analysis showed that 706 drivers, 54 underage drivers, 132 pedestrians, and 441 passengers were among the victims of road traffic accidents. The statistics show that 242 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 309 people, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by Faisalabad with 68 accidents and 69 victims, and at third Multan with 67 accidents and 70 victims.

According to the data, 1,019 motorbikes, 69 autorickshaws, 108 motorcars, 30 vans, 10 passenger buses, 38 trucks and 93 other types of vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in the road accidents.

Jinnah Hospital denies rumors of medicine shortage

LAHORE (APP): The Jinnah Hospital administration has strongly rejected reports regarding shortage of medicines in the hospital's emergency department, calling them baseless and untrue. According to the Jinnah Hospital spokesman on Friday, such fabricated news without verification falls under lies, slander, and accusations. He reassured that the hospital has a sufficient stock of emergency medicines, which are being provided to patients free of cost.

Thousands Muslims sit in 'Aetika' across Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Thousands Muslims sat in "Aetika" (Seclusion) before Maghrib prayers on Friday at hundreds of mosques of the mega city of Karachi for which special arrangements had been made for the devotees in these Masajid.

A large number of believers had already registered themselves for Aetika in mosques where they spend blessed moments of worship for last 10 days/nights of Ramadan, observing their fasting and performing special prayers.

The hundreds of mosques including, Memon Masjid Boulton Market, Faizan-e-Madina old Sabzi Mandi, Binoria Town mosque, Darul Amjadia Memon Society, Darul Uloom Korangi, Jamia Rasheedia North Karachi, Madani mosque Garden, Masjid Ibrahim, Maryam mosque Manzoor Colony, Baitul Mukkaram Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Quba Masjid, Makki Masjid, Thanvi Masjid and other mosques made arrangements for

believers to spend their Aetika period where they would be provided all required facilities.

According to scholars, this act of worship has the status of obligatory sufficiency which is performed by one person in any population and fulfills the duty of the entire neighbourhood.

Aetika means to restrain oneself or stop, while according to Sharia, Aetika means staying in a mosque during the last 10 days of Ramadan.

Youm-e-Ali (R.A) procession security plan finalized

KARACHI (APP): The Karachi Police has made foolproof arrangements for the security of the main procession on the occasion of Youm-e-Ali (R.A), as strict security measures have been taken on the route of the procession and the adjacent passages.

A total of 5367 police officers and personnel are assigned on security on the occasion.

The personnel on security duty include 76 senior officers, 725 NGOs, 3469 head constables/constables, 137 women police personnel, 70 personnel of Special Branch while 75 personnel of Rapid Response Force have been deployed.

Moreover, 815 traffic police officers and personnel have been deployed on the main procession routes and alternative traffic routes to maintain traffic flow and ensure that citizens do not face any difficulties.

Walk-through gates have been installed at the entry and exit points, while bomb disposal squad and special branch personnel have also been deployed to conduct a

comprehensive search of the participants. In case of any emergency, rescue agencies and ambulance services have also been put on alert to provide immediate medical assistance.

Karachi Police urges the public to keep a close eye on their surroundings and immediately report any suspicious activity or unusual situation to Madagadgar 15.

Karachi Police will continue to fulfill its responsibilities to protect the lives and property of citizens and restore law and order.

LHC warns of impounding smoke-emitting motorcycles

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday hinted at impounding motorcycles that emit excessive smoke after issuing a warning post-Ramadan.

The court also directed authorities to formulate a policy for canceling the registration of smoke-emitting vehicles. Additionally, the court ordered the Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) and the Transport Department to submit a detailed report on the matter at the next hearing. Justice Shahid Karim passed the orders while hearing a set of petitions

filed by Haroon Farooq and others against ineffective measures to control smog.

During the hearing, the court remarked that nearly every fifth motorcycle in Lahore emits smoke and should be taken off the roads if it continues to violate environmental regulations.




PAF BASE, KOHAT TENDER NOTICE

1. Pakistan Air Force Base, Kohat invites sealed bids from firms / contractors, registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments for **Conservancy Services** (FY 2025-26), regarding removal of garbage etc, from PAF Base, Kohat and its Lodger Units, including Technical and Domestic areas, as per requirements for the period, from 01 July, 2025 to 30 June 2026 (01 Year).

2. Bidding documents, containing detailed Terms and Conditions, procedure for submission of bids, Bid Security, Bid-validity, opening of bid, evaluation criteria, clarification / rejection of Bids, performance guarantee etc are available for the interested bidders, at the office of the O / i/c, Personnel Squadron, PAF Base, Kohat. **Bids submitted under any pattern, other than specified patterns** (available in O / i/c Personnel Squadron office) **will not be acceptable.** 2% bid security of the total bid value should be submitted along with bid, in the shape of CDR / Demand draft in favour of Officer Commanding, Admin Wing, PAF Base, Kohat; otherwise, bid will not be accepted.

3. The bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions, in the bidding documents, must reach at office of the O / i/c, Personnel Squadron, PAF Base, Kohat, on or before **11th April, 2025**, at 1000 hrs. Bids will be opened on the same day, at 1200 hrs. The concerned authority reserves the right to accept / reject any / all tenders, on technical grounds. This advertisement is also available at PPRA's website : www.ppra.org.pk.

Officer Incharge, Personnel Squadron
PAF Base, Kohat
Ph: 0922-9260092 Ext: 5031




PUBLIC NOTICE AUCTION OF GOLD

Branch: Chakdara | Auction Date: 25-03-2025 | Branch code: 0022 | Time: 12:00 PM

Finance facilities were extended by Mobilink Bank against the security of deposit and pledge of gold to the customer mentioned below. The customer who has neglected and failed to repay the finance extended to them by Mobilink Bank along with the markup thereon.

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Ihtesham Khan	15701-3448021-5	Post Office Asherai Samkot, Tehsil Upper Dir	29	1adad Niklas 1 adad tops

Notice is hereby given to the customer in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to Mobilink Bank within 1 day of the publication of this notice, Mobilink Bank shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customer to make the payments.



PUBLIC NOTICE AUCTION OF GOLD

Branch: DI Khan | Auction Date: 25- March-2025 | Branch code: 3033 | Time: 11:00 AM

Finance facilities were extended by Mobilink Bank against the security of deposit and pledge of gold to the customers mentioned below. The customers who have neglected and failed to repay the finance extended to them by Mobilink Bank along with the markup thereon.

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Muhammad Tufail	12101-0169062-1	New Anjum Abad, Multan Road, Wazir House, Mariali, Tehsil/District Dera Ismail Khan.	29	1 Karra, 3 Angoothiyan with 1 Pair Tops, 2 Bracelets.
Zafar Iqbal	12101-2487313-5	Jhok Obhaichar, Post Office Kachi Paid Khan, Dera Ismail Khan.	12	1 Haar, 2 Pairs Kantay.
Yousaf S/O Muhammad Bakhsh	12201-3082661-7	Post Office Taank Girah Baloch, Tehsil Tank.	36	1 Jhoomar, 1 Tika with 2 Kantay, 2 Baliyan.
Abdul Ghaffar	32103-6041548-9	Post Office Khas, Tarman, Tehsil Tunsia, District Dera Ghazi Khan.	54	1 Tulsi, 1 Tika, 1 Jhoomar, Kantay, 1 Tulsi.

Notice is hereby given to the customers in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to Mobilink Bank within 1 day of the publication of this notice, Mobilink Bank shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customers to make the payments.

‘Forest Martyrs’ are our heroes, their sacrifices will be remembered, Pir Musavir



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Forests, stated that the aim of celebrating March 21 as International Forest Day is to raise awareness among the public about the importance, promotion, and protection of forests. Forests are home to wildlife and guarantee environmental balance. He acknowledged the sacrifices made by the martyred officials of the Forest Department for the

protection of forests, calling them our heroes. He expressed his tribute to them during a ceremony held at the office of the Chief Conservator of Forests in Peshawar. During the ceremony, the Special Assistant paid tribute at the memorial of the martyred officials of the Forest Department and laid a floral wreath. While addressing the ceremony, Pir Musavir Khan said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, in line with the vision of founding chairman Imran Khan, has completed projects like the

Billion Tree Tsunami for the promotion, sustainable development, and protection of forests, which has been recognized and appreciated internationally. The province has taken historic steps for the promotion of forests, and as a result, the forest area in the province has reached 26%. Pir Musavir Khan further stated that due to the government's efforts to promote forests, "green jobs" have been created in the province. The establishment of the "Forest Guardians Force" was also implemented to protect forests, and thousands of personnel in this force are performing their duties to protect forests. On the directions of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a target of planting approximately 2.6 million trees was set for the Spring Plantation Campaign this year, which the Forest Department successfully completed with the cooperation of the public. Among these plants, nearly 40% are

fruit-bearing trees. Pir Musavir Khan reiterated the government's commitment to the promotion of forests in the province, stating that all available resources are being utilized to turn the dream of a green Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into reality. The provincial government, with the cooperation of students from schools, colleges, and universities, as well as the general public, aims to make Khyber Pakhtunkhwa green and prosperous. He paid tribute to the officials of the Forest Department who laid down their lives for the protection of forests and mentioned that 24 officials of the Forest Department were martyred while protecting the forests, calling them the true heroes. He instructed the officers of the Forest Department to meet the families of the martyrs and take immediate steps to resolve their issues. Later, an awareness walk was also organized in connection with International Forest Day.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Agriculture, Major (Retd) Sajjad Barkwal chairing a meeting on On-Farm Water Management.

Meeting on On-Farm Water Management held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting on On-Farm Water Management was held under the chairmanship of Provincial Minister for Agriculture, Major (Retd) Sajjad Barkwal, attended by district officers and other relevant authorities. The meeting included the participation of Additional Secretaries, Chief Planning Officer, officials from the Agriculture Department, and district-level officers. During the meeting, the Provincial Minister for

Agriculture directed the timely completion of ongoing watercourse construction projects by June 30. He emphasized the need to ensure the achievement of targets assigned to district officers and transparent, timely utilization of funds allocated for developmental projects. Major (Retd) Sajjad Barkwal instructed officers to regularly conduct field visits to monitor the progress of projects. He stressed accelerating the pace of World Bank-supported initiatives and made

it clear that negligence or inefficiency in departmental affairs would not be tolerated. He further directed to consult with Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) and National Assembly (MNAs) from relevant constituencies regarding developmental projects to better address public needs. Furthermore, directives were issued to implement effective measures to prevent water wastage, including promoting modern irrigation techniques and raising public

awareness. In his address, the Provincial Minister Major retired Sajjad Brakwal stated that Water is our national asset and agricultural progress is impossible without its conservation and efficient management. We must ensure transparency and accountability while utilizing resources for public welfare. At the conclusion of the meeting, all participants were urged to promptly implement the directives within their respective domains.

KP general council meeting held regarding 35th National Games



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A special General Council meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association was held at Arena Hall Peshawar Sports Complex to discuss preparations for the upcoming National Games. Several key decisions were made during the meeting which was attended by the Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jehan and the Director General of Sports as special guests. Also present were Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic

Association President Haroon Zafar, former President Syed Aqil Shah, Senior Vice President Qamar Zaman, Secretary Zulfikar Ali Butt, officials from various sports associations and representatives from the sports department. Addressing the meeting Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jehan emphasized the importance of ensuring transparent trials and merit-based selection of athletes to maximize the province's chances of winning medals. He announced an increase in

cash prizes for National Games medalists, with PKR 500,000 for gold medalists, PKR 300,000 for silver medalists and PKR 250,000 for bronze medalists. He assured that all necessary facilities would be provided to athletes to help them perform their best in this mega event. During the meeting, several sports associations raised concerns about not receiving their annual grants. In response the possibility of allocating funds along with the National Games budget was discussed. Addressing

the council KP Olympic Association President Haroon Zafar former President Syed Aqil Shah and Secretary General Zulfikar Ali Butt instructed all associations to focus on training and refining athletes for the National Games. They announced that final preparations would be completed and a training camp would be organized after Eid. Earlier, the association officials expressed their full confidence in the cabinet and pledged to implement all decisions made during the General Council meeting.

Meeting discuss steps to prevent use of unfair means in examination

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsud has directed to ban sale and purchase of mini pocket guides as part of measures to ensure transparency in examination process. Commissioner issued these directives in a meeting convened to discuss measures needed to ensure

transparency in the examinations. The meeting was also attended by Secretary Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Chairman Peshawar Board, Additional Secretary Education and concerned officials. Commissioner also directed to seal shops and send owners to jail who failed to follow instructions.

He said that Photostat shops situation in vicinity of examination centers would also be closed during examinations. He also directed action against institutions where CCTV cameras were not installed in examination centers. He also directed to establish control rooms in all the districts while staff

deputed in examination centers would convene a meeting to discuss preparations. He said that government would take all the necessary measures to prevent unfair means in matriculation examination and added that center with extraordinary arrangement would be appreciated and given commendation certificates.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami protesting against Israeli occupation in Palestine. — INP photo

Khizer flays CM for opposing anti-terrorism operation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: PML-N Additional Secretary Information, Arbab Khizer Hayat, has expressed his astonishment over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's opposition to operations against terrorists. He accused Gandapur

of facilitating terrorists and stated that those opposing the anti-terrorism operation in KP are neither well-wishers of the country nor its people. He emphasized that achieving peace is impossible until terrorist organizations and terrorism are completely eradicated. He further stated that the repatriation of illegally residing Afghans is a necessity of the time. However, he clarified that Pakistan is not permanently closing its doors to Afghans; rather, they are welcome to return with proper legal documents and visas. Arbab Khizer Hayat also claimed that the roots of terrorism in Pakistan

can be traced back to Afghanistan. He welcomed the decision of the National Security Committee to eliminate terrorism from its roots. He reiterated that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stand shoulder to shoulder with security forces in the fight against terrorism.

7-day training for KPRA officers concluded

PESHAWAR (APP): A seven-day training for KPRA programme for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority - KPRA officers on taxation, compliance, and revenue management, organized by KPRA with the support of the Sub-National Governance (SNG-II) Programme in collaboration with Oxford Policy Management (OPM) Pakistan, concluded on Friday. Director General KPRA Fouzia Iqbal awarded training completion certificates to the officers who participated in the program. These officers have now become Master Trainers and will later train the rest of KPRA's staff. In her closing remarks, the DG KPRA expressed her gratitude to the SNG-

II team for organizing the training and acknowledged their efforts in developing a curriculum tailored to the needs of KPRA officers. "We are hopeful that this training will enhance the capacity of our officers, improve their skills, and contribute to the growth of KPRA. We also look forward to continued collaboration with SNG-II for the progress of KPRA," she

said. Conducted by senior tax expert Mr. Javed Ahmed, the training aimed to enhance the capacity of nine KPRA officers by providing in-depth knowledge of sales tax on services at both the provincial and national levels. It also covered key Value-Added Tax (VAT) principles within global taxation frameworks.

CTP announces traffic plan for last Ashra of Ramazan

F.P. Report



PESHAWAR: The Peshawar City Traffic Police has devised a comprehensive plan to ensure smooth traffic flow during the last Ashra of Ramadan. The plan includes four SPs, 12 DSPs, and over 1,000 traffic wardens. As the traffic personnel will work in three shifts to ensure smooth traffic flow in the

city, a press release issued by spokesman of City Traffic Police said. The release further added that 18 Forklifters will be used to take action against vehicles parked in no-parking areas, action will be taken against vehicles with tinted glasses, unregistered vehicles, motorcyclists without helmets, and those using fancy number plates. While operations against

one-wheeling will continue, with strict action taken against violators, it further informed. The objective of the plan is to ensure a safe and smooth traffic flow in the city during the last Ashra of Ramadan, and to provide facilitation to the citizens and citizens can contact the Peshawar City Traffic Police helpline at 1915 for any complaint or other incident.

HBK Ramazan Sports Gala enters second phase



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The HBK Ramadan Sports Gala has entered its second phase with journalists who excelled in various games qualifying for the next round. The exceptional enthusiasm and keen interest of journalists have further enhanced the beauty of the competitions. The event held under the patronage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Union of Journalists President Syed Kashifuddin, Peshawar

Press Club President M. Riaz, General Secretary Tayyab Usman Awan, former President Shamim Shahid and Chairman of the Sports Committee Irfan Musa Zai, witnessed intense matches. According to the results, in the table tennis event Shehzad Ahmed and Abid Khan emerged victorious. In badminton doubles the pairs of Irshad Ali and Shehzada Fahad, Usman Danish and Shahid Jan, M. Riaz and Kashifuddin, Irfan



Musazai and Ali Sheikh, Bilawal Arbab and Shehryar Anjum, Arif Yousafzai and Alamgir, as well as Bilal Afridi and Shah Faisal, won their respective matches. In snooker Tayyab Usman, Kashan Awan, Ali Rehman, Sajjad Khayal, Ali Abbas, Shahid Afridi and Zeeshan Arbab claimed victory. In carrom board competitions, Sajjad Hussain, Ansar Abbas, Arsalan, Bilal Ahmed, Shehzad Ahmed, Gul Rehman, Iqbal Haider and

Abdullah secured wins. Similarly in the Ludo category Zahid Mirokhel I, Qayyum Afridi, Yasir Ali, Irshad Medani, Shahid, Asad Ali Qamar, Adnan Shahid, Amir Siddiqui, Tayyab Usman, Farhan, Khalil, Muhammad Yar, Amir Shehzad, Khalid, Alam Zeb Awan, Qari Gul Rehman, Ahtisham Bashir, Qadir Khan, Kashif Arif, Nasreen Jabeen, and Anela Shaheen emerged victorious.



In brief

Efforts to revive Parachinar airport F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: Efforts are underway to reactivate Parachinar Airport, with a joint team from the Pakistan Airports Authority and PIA recently completing a visit to the airport. The visit was conducted to assess the possibilities and measures for restoring commercial and relief flights at the airport. The Joint Board of Officers conducted a detailed review of the airport's infrastructure, technical aspects, and facilities. The team inspected the terminal building, runway, fire garages, PAA residences, generator room, and other operational facilities. Following the inspection, team members met with the Deputy Commissioner of Parachinar. During the meeting, there was a detailed discussion regarding the restoration of operations at the airport. Previously, an eight-member committee comprising PAA and PIA members was formed on the instructions of the Ministry of Defense.

Slaughter house inspected F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat made a surprise inspection of the government Slaughter House Kohat before sunrise along-with the authorities concerned and expressed his deep anger due to the poor cleanliness situation and non-implementation of other important hygiene related essentials. Later, the Commissioner Kohat called the emergency meeting of the relevant Heads of the Health Department, Halal Food Authority, District Administration, TMA, Livestock and Public Health and 2 days' time was given to ensure all necessary measures in the slaughterhouse. Commissioner Kohat warned that in the entire Kohat division, no hygiene-related lapses will be tolerated in the butcher shops, broilers shops and hotels and the supply of clean and hygienic meat to the people will be ensured as per the hygiene rules.

Ulema Council distributes ration F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: The Ulema Council distributed ration to 1800 families in connection with the holy month of Ramzan under the supervision of Secretary Allama Barkat Ali Saqi, at Hub Chowki, on Friday. The beneficiaries included Jhal Magshi, Gandawa, Gandakha, Awsta Muhammad, Dera Al-Hiyaar, Sahabpur, Dera Murad Jamali, Balan Shakh, Bari Shakh, Chalgri, Bhag, Haji Shahr, Bhader, Sibi, Quetta and they were also informed about the mission, goals, activities and services of the honorable leader. On this occasion, scholars, regional leaders, organizational figures and believers expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Quaid Millat Jafaria Hazrat Ayatollah Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi, Allama Dr. Shabir Hasan Maithmi, Qaumi Jamaat workers and volunteers and members and assistants of Zahra Academy for their cooperation with the deserving in the great month of Ramadan and also prayed for their success. Meanwhile, due to a domestic problem in the village of Lal Bakhsh Mugheri of Qamber Shahdadkot district, a young woman Faiza Mugheri committed suicide by drinking the poisonous medicine kept at home. While the doctors also confirmed the death of the deceased woman, the police reached the spot and took the body from the Qamber hospital and handed over the body to the relatives after taking necessary steps.

Minister plants fruit sapling to inaugurate orchards

F.P. Report

KARAK: Minister for Agriculture Major (R) Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal has formally started the project of planting various fruit orchards in Karak district. A ceremony was organized in this regard in which District Director Agriculture Karak Dr. Jan Muhammad handed over the saplings for the orchards to the landowners. The District Director Agriculture, while reading out the message of the Provincial Minister for Agriculture, said that this project of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is an important milestone towards the promotion of the agricultural economy and this project of planting orchards for the unemployed youth of the province has been started so that in the next few years they can meet their economic needs through agriculture and it will be easier for them to do business in fruits.

Three injured in mishap: Three people were injured in an accident due to a sheet

getting stuck in the tire of a motorcycle at Khyber Chowk Ghundi Mirankhel. As soon as the control received information, an ambulance reached the spot.

The injured were shifted to District Headquarters Hospital Karak after being provided first aid by the Rescue 1122 medical team. The injured were identified as Hazrat Iqbal son of Jannat Noor, age 33, Mir Muhammad Shah son of Jannat Noor, age 40, Muhammad Asim son of Mir Muhammad Shah, age 24, residents of Turki Khel Karak.

PKMAP commits for Pakhtun rights: Rafi Khattak, President of Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party District Karak, has said that the salvation of the Pashtuns lies in uniting and organizing under the banner of Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party under the inspiring leadership of Mahmood Khan Achakzai. Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party is the only solution to all their problems. This is the only option they have. If the Pashtuns do not learn

from the circumstances and events and do not unite and organize under the banner of their only national political party, then the situation will get out of their hands and they will face a great disaster that will be impossible to overcome. He expressed these views in his address to the weekly corner meeting in Khurram Mohammadzai.

We will not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the sake of our motherland, no matter what the circumstances are, the national Our struggle will continue for unity, national identity, ownership and sovereignty over resources, giving Pashto the status of the national, educational, teaching, official, office, judicial and business language of the Pashtunkhwa homeland, eliminating terrorism, extremism and unrest from the Pashtun Afghan land, achieving all the rights and interests of the Pashtun Afghan homeland and people, solving problems and difficulties, eliminating deprivations and building and developing the country.

Two jirgas vow to maintain peace in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Two prominent jirgas of elders in Lower Dir on Friday announced a joint initiative to maintain peace and safeguard the region from disruptive elements.

In this regard, a joint meeting of the Qaumi Islahai Jirga Talash Doshkhel and the Qaumi Islahai Jirga Khadagazi Abazai was held on Friday in Talash under the supervision of Rustam Khan. The meeting was attended by key representatives and elected elders from both jirgas, who expressed deep concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the region.

Addressing the gathering, speakers included the president of Qaumi Islahai

Jirga Talash Dushkhel Muhammad Ibrahim, former president Israr Khan, general secretary Dr Noor Muhammad, Tehsil Chairman Mufti Irfanuddin, Chairman of DRC Lower Dir Syed Hassan Advocate, and retired principal Aftab Alam Khan. Representing the Qaumi Islahai Jirga Khadagazi Abazai, its president Jehan Bahadar, former district naib nazim Abdul Rashid, former district councilor Ashfaq-ur-Rehman, Dost Dar Khan, Latif Bacha, and others also spoke, expressing serious concerns over the worsening security situation.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a joint declaration was issued, stressing the need for collective efforts to uphold peace and pre-

vent the region from falling into the hands of miscreants. The declaration reaffirmed that Talash and Khadagazi Abazai are peaceful areas, home to law-abiding and patriotic citizens, and that no compromise would be made on security. It further stated that every possible effort would be made to safeguard the region.

To reinforce this commitment, a joint coordination council was formed, consisting of 15 elders from each jirga, with Abdul Rashid Khan and Dr. Noor Muhammad appointed as its coordinators. The jirgas also announced their intention to develop a collective strategy and, if necessary, would mobilize public demonstrations to ensure the region's security.

Almost 191 subject specialists posts vacant in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: As many as 191 Subject Specialists posts are vacant in Government Higher Secondary Schools for Boys in district Buner since long time.

It came to light during investigation carried out for filing a story on male education in Buner. This year huge fund rupees 65 lakh have been released from the office of DEO M Buner to GHSS for temporary appointment of SSTs to fulfill the needs.

DEO Umer Farooq has confirmed that 453 primary, 59 middle and 59 high schools are in dire need of 281 different cadre teacher posts as these posts are vacant and advertisement for appointment has also been published in newspapers. He shared filling up these positions would help further improvement in male education. He hoped by filling up these posts, would ensure quality education possible as per standard

criteria of 40 students per teacher.

District Education Officer Umar Farooq has been revealed that 141680 number of students currently studying in 598 male educational institutions across the district and the number of teachers is 4,236. There is a total shortage of 35,400 disks in these institutions, including 24,000 in 1st to 5th grade and 11,400 in 6th to 12th grade. The issue of shortage of disks has been brought to the notice of the higher authorities, he claimed. In addition, these educational institutions are facing shortage of 893 whiteboards and 3508 chairs and 1837 tables in the classrooms for teachers.

Besides, there is a shortage of 344 rooms in various schools and a detailed report about this also has been sent to the higher authorities and a request has been made to provide these necessary facilities at the start of the new academic year.

This is point to note that a MNA and 3 MPAs from Buner district are PTI elected who enjoy government in Pakhtunkhwa province for third consecutive terms. The inhabitants of Buner are justified to ask from them that they should complete the appointment process as soon as possible. The adequate number of teachers would help improvement educational from the new academic year.

Public demand is to make sure the construction of additional rooms and the provision of disk whiteboards and chairs and tables on emergent basis. So that students and teachers can focus on reading and teaching with full satisfaction. Public version is that administrative officer during monitoring must asked about problems and difficulties being faced by students and teachers to identify core issues and address them well in time.

Journalists hold protest against canals on Indus River F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: Local journalists associated with various press clubs in Jati town, district Sujawal, gathered in the city center, carrying banners and placards to protest the federal government's plan to construct six canals at the Indus River. As they marched through the town's main thoroughfares, they were joined by students, political workers from nationalist parties, local growers, and trade union members.

The protesters called the project a conspiracy against Sindh and demanded that the federal government shelve it, warning that it would strain relations between the federal government and the people of Sindh. Senior journalist Haji Zahid Ishaque Sommo noted that Sindh's coastline was drying up due to lack of water for irrigation, and people were struggling to access potable water.

Nawaz Sheikh, a journalist with 30 years of experience, warned that the federal government's actions, in collusion with the Punjab government and IRSa, would exacerbate Sindh's water crisis, potentially costing human lives. He urged the ruling party in Sindh to avoid hypocrisy on this core issue.

Umer Khaskeli argued that the federal government should have assessed the severity of water scarcity in the coastal region before launching the project. He pointed out that the six-canal scheme was not permitted by law. Young journalists Khalid Hussain Jat and G.M. Shah, along with workers from the Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party, termed the project an attack on Sindh's riparian rights.

Separately, local cricket players protested against the project by stopping a match of the Syed Aijaz Shah Ramzan Night Cricket Tournament halfway. They chanted slogans against the federal government, saying that irrigating a desert by drying up the Indus River would be resisted by all means.

Pest control a key for high cultivation F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: The Ayub Agricultural Research Institute (AARI), Faisalabad, approved its 2025-26 Entomology Research Program in a meeting co-chaired by Dr. Amir Rasool, Director General, Pest Warning & Quality Control Punjab and Dr. Dilbar Hussain, Principal Scientist, Entomology Department.

The meeting, attended by senior agricultural experts and farmers, focused on addressing food security challenges amid changing climate conditions. Dr. Amir Rasool emphasized that timely pest control is vital for ensuring crop health and higher yields. He urged the private sector to accelerate the introduction of advanced chemistry-based pesticides in Punjab to enhance pest management strategies. Dr. Dilbar Hussain highlighted that AARI scientists have studied over 55 harmful pests, analyzing their impact on crops, vegetables, fruits, and fodder.

Books provided to govt schools in Bara



F.P. Report

BARA: Provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provided free books to students of government-run schools in Bara, district Khyber.

In this connection education department, Khyber has set up teshil central distribution point in government high school Kohi Sher Haidar. Bara where from free books are handed over to the heads of 128 primary schools.

Sharing details the district education official, Bara said that they had demanded two lac different subjects' books but they

were supplied one lac and forty five thousands books. He added that the shortfall will be completed of the old books to ensure hundred percent provision of free books to the students of primary level.

Under the supervision of sub-division education officer Bara Dr Sher Zaman Afridi, assistant education officer Bara circle one and two Khair Muhammad Afridi and Khan Faraz respectively, the distribution of books was in process on a daily basis, he added.

The focal persons of Member National Assembly Iqbal Afridi

and member provincial assembly Abdul Ghani visited the main supply point and appreciated the smooth process of distribution of free books. They added that the provincial government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf adopted all necessary initiatives to raise literacy rate in the merged district including Khyber.

Efforts will be made to fill deficiencies of teaching staff, buildings and other needs in education institutions of Bara, they remarked. They also pledged to supply shortfall books to the primary students of Bara.

CM's Special Assistant inspects Sahulat Bazaar

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Punjab Chief Minister's Special Assistant for Price Control and Commodities Management, Salma Butt, visited Toba Tek Singh to inspect Ramadan Sahulat Bazaar and other local markets, on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naeem Sindhu briefed her on the arrangements made for the facilitation of the public during Ramadan. During the visit, Salma Butt reviewed the prices and quality of essential commodities at the Ramadan Sahulat Bazaar and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements.

Speaking to the media, she emphasized that CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz is committed to providing maximum relief to low-income groups with strict measures being taken to control inflation. She highlighted that more than 80 Ramadan Sahulat Bazaars have been established across Punjab, benefiting around 300,000 to 400,000 people daily. She further stated that the Punjab government has launched a Rs 30 billion Ramadan Nigebhan Package, under which Rs 10,000 Pay Orders are being delivered to households, benefiting nearly 3 million families.

"For the first time in Pakistan's history, Rs 10,000 Pay Orders are

being delivered directly to people's doorsteps to ensure real relief for the public," she remarked. She also clarified that this year, Ramadan Sahulat Bazaars have been set up without any government subsidies with wholesalers and traders voluntarily setting up their stalls, leading to a noticeable reduction in commodity prices.

Later, Salma Butt inspected the distribution process of the Ramadan Nigebhan Package and visited multiple retailer shops to monitor the disbursement of funds. She noted that 18,000 branches across Punjab are facilitating the cash withdrawal process for beneficiaries.

To ensure transparency, she revealed that the Punjab government has taken strict action against violations, with 237 FIRs registered against retailers found deducting amounts from the Pay Orders. On this Occasion, DC Muhammad Naeem Sindhu reiterated that the Toba Tek Singh district administration is taking all necessary steps to facilitate the public and ensure a smooth supply of essential commodities during Ramadan.

Plantation drive to be accelerated: On the occasion of International Day of Forests, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the acceleration of the tree plantation drive across the province. In line with this

vision, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labbha Masih chaired a meeting on the directives of Deputy Commissioner.

Officials from the Forest, Education, Agriculture and Information departments attended the session to discuss strategies for enhancing afforestation efforts. During the briefing, SDO Forest stated that under the Punjab government's policy, free saplings will be provided to the Education, Health, and Defense departments. He further informed that the Education Department has already placed a request for 20,000 saplings, which will be delivered soon.

It was decided that massive plantation drives will be conducted in educational institutions, government offices, and public parks. The Additional Deputy Commissioner General instructed officials to ensure the effective implementation of afforestation targets to improve the environment.

Moreover, on the special directives of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a public awareness campaign has been launched. The campaign will include seminars, awareness walks, and media outreach programs in schools, colleges, and public places to highlight the importance of trees and environmental conservation.

Murderer convicted for twice life imprisonment

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Additional Session Judge (ASJ) Nowshera Shujaat U Din convicted murderer named Bahar Ali for committing fritricide for twice life imprisonment, on Friday.

The court sentenced him to double life imprisonment and ordered him to pay a fine of Rs. 10 million each to the heirs of the two deceased.

According to prosecution, on March 25, 2022, a report was filed at the Misri

Banda police station by Khurshida, widow of Abdul Star, resident of Ali Muhammad Mishk. She stated that her sons, Bahar Ali, Saraj, and Zardad Ali, got into an argument at home, which escalated into a physical altercation.

Sugar crisis in Pakistan

Allah Nawaz Khan

THERE has been a sugar crisis in Pakistan and this is not the first time, but crises have arisen repeatedly in the past. Not only does a sugar crisis arise in Pakistan, but crises of other commodities also arise. Sometimes there are crises of flour, sometimes of fodder and sometimes of something else. The recent sugar crisis began a few days before Ramadan.

When the government took notice, the hoarders had earned profits of billions of rupees. Sugar prices increased dramatically during Ramadan. Sugar was being sold from Rs 170 to Rs 180. There is also an institution to monitor this, which is called the CCP (Competition Commission of Pakistan). The CCP has said that they are keeping a close eye on the ongoing sugar crisis. The CCP has also issued a warning that if any anti-competitive activity is found in this sector, strict action will be taken against sugar mills.

According to the CCP's statement, the increase in sugar prices is being monitored on a daily basis. Nothing. It can be said that how much benefit is the consumer getting from this supervision? Sugar mills were assured of an ex-mill price of Rs 140, but now the government itself has accepted the ex-mill price of sugar at Rs 159 per kg. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has said that now the common consumer will get sugar at Rs 164 per kg.

Earlier, sugar was being sold at around Rs 170 to 180, now due to the government taking notice, they will get Rs 164 per kg of sugar. Now the question is how much relief will the public get? Sugar priced at Rs 164 will be sold at Rs 170 only. If sugar is sold at Rs 164 per kg, the public will not get any special benefit. When an ex-mill price of Rs 140 was assured earlier, why was the sugar mills not made to abide by

it? The government should take care of the public's concerns and provide relief to the public as much as possible. Rising inflation has troubled the public and increasing the prices of sugar will only alleviate their concerns.

There has been an increase in sugar prices. Just as it has been announced that strict action will be taken against those sugar mills that do not take care of the public interest, it should be ensured that those involved in negative activities are actually punished. Sugar has now become a commodity used in almost every household. There is no household where sugar is not used. Sugar is used in various food items and its purchase has become necessary. The government should reduce sugar prices so that the public can be reduced.

In 2020, the Commission had

Sugar Mills and PSMA (Pakistan Sugar Mills Association) were jointly involved in fixing sugar prices and controlling supply. The CCP also raided sugar mills. In August 2021, the Competition Commission imposed a record fine of Rs 44 billion on Sugar Mills and PSMA. This decision was challenged in the courts. An injunction was issued by the Sindh High Court and the Lahore High Court as well as the CTA (Competition Appellate Tribunal), due to which the collection of fines was delayed. There was a delay, but the fine amount could not be collected either. According to one report, the fine amount was very high, but only Rs 80 million was collected.

All efforts to control sugar prices are stopped because big people are making profits and they do not want any action to be taken against them. Actions are

also being taken. A few days ago, the Federal Minister Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that six sugar mills have been sealed due to the monitoring system and that due to the monitoring system, 24 billion sales tax has been collected from sugar mills this year. Such actions should be taken more so that sugar mill owners refrain from earning illegal profits.

It is necessary to determine the rates of sugar. Once the rate is determined, it should be ensured that the consumer also gets sugar at the specified rate. Sugar is stored to earn illegal profits. Strict action will have to be taken against hoarders.

A few days ago, Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Shahbaz Sharif also directed strict action against sugar hoarders and those who create artificial shortage of sugar to increase prices. The Prime Minister had said that there is ample supply of

sugar in Pakistan. If there is ample supply of sugar in Pakistan, why is it being sold at a high price? Sugar prices can be controlled only by taking strict action against hoarders.

Before Ramadan, sugar was being sold between Rs. 145 and Rs. 160 per kg, and in the month of January, the price of sugar was between Rs. 130 and Rs. 150 per kg. Now the prices have increased immediately, so the reason is that an artificial shortage has been created. "Sugarcane" is also sugar Mills get it cheaply. Sugar prices are much higher than cheap sugarcane. There is a need to control sugar prices. Not only sugar but also the rates of other commodities should be controlled. Fines imposed on sugar mills should be collected and that money should be used to control the prices of sugar and other commodities. The sugar crisis is not real but artificial. The Prime Minister of Pakistan has taken notice, this notice should be seen as a real notice.

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Russians dream of 1945-style Ukraine victory

MOSCOW (AFP): For Russian civil servant Larisa, talks between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump have put Moscow one step closer to victory, even if they are far from ending three years of fighting in Ukraine. Since taking office, Trump has quickly reversed his predecessor Joe Biden's policy of isolating Russia, making direct contact with the Kremlin in a move that has stunned his allies and delighted Russians.

Putin agreed to pause strikes on Ukrainian energy facilities for 30 days following a call with Trump, having turned down the US president's earlier proposal of halting all hostilities. In Moscow, 46-year-old Larisa said that while peace was still quite far away, the talks gave "hope" and it was a "good start." She was certain about one thing: Russia had the advantaged on the battlefield.

"Definitely this is in our favour," she said. "There is no other way. What happened in 1945 will happen now," she added, referring to the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Whipping up patriotism with a propaganda campaign reminiscent of the Soviet era, the Kremlin has

often compared its offensive in Ukraine to fighting with the Nazis. Tired after more than three years of conflict that has brought huge military losses, most Russians expect to keep the territory their troops have seized and are hungry for the army -- and Putin -- to bring home a victory.

"I hope this war will be no more. I'm fed up with the damn thing," 81-year-old Yevgeny Vorobyov said. He was a boy during the Second World War. "I want to die with a victory, our victory," he said. Some Russians saw the Trump-Putin talks as a first step to ending fierce fighting, while others were sceptical that any ceasefire can last and were divided over the US leader's role. "The talks are a very positive thing. I have a positive attitude towards the Ukrainian people," IT worker Vladimir said. "I hope that this fratricidal confrontation is moving towards an end... or at least the end of the most active phase," the 42-year-old said. Under Putin, the Kremlin has for years insisted that Russians and Ukrainians were one people, denying the existence of a Ukrainian nation.

But many were confused about what a short-term ceasefire can change, and

how that moves both countries closer to peace. "I straight away thought, when (the US) came up with the 30-day ceasefire: and what will happen after those 30 days?" pensioner Tatiana said. She backed Putin, who said that any ceasefire is only in Ukraine's favour. But she had faith in Trump, who she believes "wants peace" and said: "The main thing is for people to stop dying." Others were more wary of Trump. Ildar, a 54-year-old working in tourism, said he was suspicious of "political games"

"The US is asking for a ceasefire, but is continuing to send arms to Ukraine," he said. Washington wants a ceasefire before peace negotiations begin, saying it is difficult to negotiate while fighting is ongoing. Kyiv has agreed to an unconditional ceasefire. But Ildar backed Putin's opposition to a wider ceasefire, saying he wanted a "final agreement, not with pauses or ceasefires for a certain period of time." For 91-year-old Russian war veteran Nikolai, the phone call between the two leaders was "very good for Russia", but he was waiting for face-to-face talks between Trump and Putin.

Alaska plane overweight in crash that killed 10

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP): A commuter plane that crashed on sea ice off Alaska, killing all 10 people on board, was half a ton overweight for a trip into icy conditions, the National Transportation Safety Board said in a preliminary report released. The weight is just a "data point" in the ongoing investigation, cautioned Clint Johnson, who leads the NTSB's Alaska region. A final report including probable causes can take a year or more after a crash.

The Feb. 6, Bering Air crash was one of Alaska's deadliest plane crashes this century and the third major US aviation mishap in an eight-day stretch. A commercial jetliner and an Army helicopter collided over the Potomac River on Jan. 29, killing 67 people. A medical transportation plane crashed in Philadelphia on Jan. 31, killing all six on board and another person on the ground. Small airplanes like the Cessna Caravan in this crash are the workhorses of Alaska, where most of the state's 200-plus villages are beyond the road system and only accessible by air or boat. Residents rely on the commuter planes like people living in the Lower 48 depend on cars, using them to get to medical appointments and meetings, to go shopping, to visit relatives or to attend away high school sports games.

The single-engine turbo-prop plane was flying that

afternoon from the community of Unalakleet to Nome, a trip of about 150 miles (240 kilometers), when authorities lost contact less than an hour after takeoff, David Olson, director of operations for Bering Air, said at the time. The Cessna Caravan went missing about 30 miles (50 kilometers) from its destination. A review of the plane's contents following the crash indicated its estimated gross weight at departure was about 9,865 pounds (4475 kilograms) - about 1,058 pounds (480 kilograms) over the maximum takeoff gross weight for a flight into areas where icing is in the forecast, the report says. The pilot operating handbook notes the maximum allowable takeoff gross weight for a flight into such conditions was the same as the basic airplane, 8,807 pounds (3995 kilograms).

Johnson said it remains to be determined whether the overweight conditions were a factor in the accident. Icing conditions were forecast along the route, and it was snowing, with some freezing rain in Nome, he said. Officials are trying to determine what information was relayed to the pilot, what information he had when he left and whether ice conditions existed at the crash location, he said. An email seeking comment sent to Bering Air was not immediately returned. Weather is often a factor in remote Alaska, and while flying is

commonplace to most Alaskans, it can be a dangerous endeavor, said Whitney Power Wilson, an aviation accident litigation lawyer and pilot in Anchorage.

"Icing should be concern for all pilots, but especially for pilots of smaller aircraft and pilots who frequently operate in conditions conducive to icing," she said. "The weight of an aircraft, the fact that icing is something that we're dealing with, those considerations have to be taken seriously because the consequences can be so tragic." Investigators also looked at the plane's altitude. It was flying in an area where moderate icing was possible between 2,000 feet (610 meters) and 8,000 feet (2,438 meters) and where the weather could be hazardous to light aircraft, NTSB chairperson Jennifer Homendy said at a news conference in Nome last month. Contact was lost shortly after air traffic control told the pilot the runway in Nome would be closed for about 15 minutes for deicing, the report says.

"The controller added that if the pilot wanted to 'slow down a little bit' to prevent the flight from arriving before the runway reopened, that would be fine, and the pilot acknowledged," the report states. The pilot handbook also specifies on how that ceasefire would be implemented or monitored. The summit came as a previous attempt to bring Congo's government and M23 leaders together for ceasefire negotiations failed. The rebels pulled out after the European Union announced sanctions on rebel leaders.

Trump admn threatens to pull New York transit funds

WASHINGTON (AP): The Trump administration is threatening to pull federal funding from New York City's transit system if it doesn't provide a plan to address crime.

While New York transit officials point to publicly available statistics showing major crime on the subway system is trending down this year, US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy noted "a number of high-profile safety related incidents" in a letter sent to the head of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

"If you can't keep your subway safe, if people can't go to the subway and not be afraid of being stabbed or thrown in front of tracks or burnt ... we're going to pull your money," Duffy said in a "Fox & Friends" interview. Transit systems in Chicago and Washington, D.C., also could lose critical federal dollars if they don't clean up, Duffy said.

New York officials said they'd be happy to discuss how the MTA and NYPD

are working to reduce crime and fare evasion. "The good news is numbers are moving in the right direction: crime is down 40% compared to the same period in 2020 right before the pandemic, and so far in 2025 there are fewer daily major crimes in transit than any non-pandemic year ever," John McCarthy, the MTA's chief of policy and external relations, said in a statement. Violent crime is rare overall in New York's subway system, which carries millions of riders every day. Train cars and stations are generally as safe as any other public place. However, recent high-profile attacks, such as a woman being set on fire and people being shoved onto the tracks, have left some riders on edge.

Major felonies in the system have ticked down overall the past few years, although the number of assaults have risen, from 373 in 2019 to 579 in 2024, according to NYPD data. Officials have also moved

to publicize existing efforts to crack down on fare evasion and other offenses by deploying more police officers in the transit system. Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, sent state National Guard members to the entrances of some of the city's busier stations last year in what she described as a visible deterrent against crime. Duffy's letter seeks a list of the actions and plans New York officials have taken to address transit worker assaults, fare evasion and other criminal activity, including customer assaults and injuries. The letter specifically mentions "passengers being pushed in front of trains," "subway surfing" and suicides.

The letter threatened to redirect or withhold funds if the agency doesn't comply with its request for information and gave a deadline of March 31. The MTA, which also runs New York City's buses and regional rail networks, relies on a mix of local, state and federal funding.

Guterres plays attack on UN personnel

GENEVA (Reuters): The United Nations' Secretary-General condemned attacks on UN personnel and added in a statement from his spokesperson that all parties in Israel's attack on Gaza knew where the UN's premises were based.

"The Secretary-General was deeply saddened and shocked to learn of the death of a United Nations Office for Project Services staff member, when two UN guesthouses in Deir al Balah were hit in strikes," a spokesperson for secretary-general Antonio Guterres wrote. "The locations of all UN premises are known to the parties to the conflict, who are bound by international law to protect them and maintain their absolute inviolability," the statement continued. "The Secretary-General sends his deepest condolences to the family of the staff member killed," he said, adding that at least 280 UN staff had been killed in Gaza since Oct 7, 2023.

US warns of more curbs on Venezuela

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Secretary of State Marco Rubio threatened to impose additional sanctions on Venezuela if the country doesn't accept its citizens who are repatriated from the United States. "Unless the Maduro regime accepts a consistent flow of deportation flights, without further excuses or delays, the US will impose new, severe, and escalating sanctions," Rubio said in a post on X.

The Venezuelan communications ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. President Nicolas Maduro and his government have always rejected sanctions by the United States and others, saying they are illegitimate measures that amount to an "economic war" designed to cripple Venezuela. Maduro and his allies have cheered what they say is the country's resilience despite the measures, though they have historically blamed some economic hardships and shortages on sanctions.

Presidents of Congo and Rwanda meet

DAKAR (AP): The presidents of Congo and neighboring Rwanda met in Qatar for their first direct talks since Rwanda-backed M23 rebels seized two major cities in mineral-rich eastern Congo earlier this year.

The meeting between Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwanda's President Paul Kagame to discuss the insurgency was mediated by Qatar, the three governments said in a statement. The state-run Qatar News Agency published an image of the two African leaders meeting with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the energy-rich nation's ruling emir. Congo and Rwanda reaffirmed their commitment to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, but the joint statement offered no specifics on how that ceasefire would be implemented or monitored. The summit came as a previous attempt to bring Congo's government and M23 leaders together for ceasefire negotiations failed. The rebels pulled out after the European Union announced sanctions on rebel leaders.

Qatar has hosted peace talks between Afghanistan's Taliban and the United States, Chad and rebel forces and over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. A diplomat briefed on the meeting said both Tshisekedi and Kagame had formally requested Qatar's mediation for the talks, which the diplomat said were informal and aimed at building trust rather than resolving all outstanding issues. The diplomat spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

Peace talks between Congo and Rwanda were unexpectedly canceled in December after Rwanda made the signing of a peace agreement conditional on a direct dialogue between Congo and the M23 rebels, which Congo refused at the time. The conflict in eastern Congo escalated in January when the Rwanda-backed rebels advanced and seized the strategic city of Goma, followed by Bukavu in February.



KYIV: A Ukrainian soldier from a sniper unit with a Savage 110 elite prestige 338 rifle prepares to fire at a shooting range in Kharkiv region, Ukraine.

India snubs BD on medical visas, opening way for China

NEW DELHI/DHAKA (Reuters): India is resisting pleas by Bangladesh to resume issuing normal volumes of medical visas, citing staffing shortages amid worsening ties, six sources said, giving China rare space to expand similar offerings and build people-to-people ties.

The bulk of India's visas for Bangladeshis in 2023 went to those seeking its affordable private healthcare and Bengali-speaking hospital staff, helping to cement ties between the neighbours and limit China's regional influence. "When there is a vacuum, others will come and fill the space," one of four Bangladesh sources, most of them diplomats, told Reuters. "Some people are going to Thailand and China."

Since August, India has handed out fewer than 1,000 medical visas each working day, down from a figure of 5,000 to 7,000, said the sources, who all sought anonymity, citing their terms of employment. The numbers have fallen as relations have cooled after Bangladesh's interim government, led by Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus, replaced India's long-term ally Sheikh Hasina. Fleeing deadly protests that unseated her in August, Hasina sought refuge in New Delhi, and India has not responded since to Bangladesh's request to send her home for trial.

In 2023, India issued more than 2 million visas to Bangladeshis, most of them on medical grounds, government data from both countries shows. But its withdrawal since has opened an enticing gap for China. Just this month, a group of Bangladeshis visited the southwestern province of Yunnan for treatment, in a bid to

"explore the potential of the medical tourism market", said the Chinese ambassador, Yao Wen. And at least 14 of its companies have invested more than \$230 million in Bangladesh since the interim government took office, the most of any country in that period, Wen said last week.

Bangladesh's de facto prime minister, Yunus, is set to visit China this month to meet President Xi Jinping. China, with which India is only slowly restoring ties after Himalayan border clashes in 2020, is also considering opening a friendship hospital in Dhaka, the government of Bangladesh has said, and eased access for Bangladeshis seeking treatment there. China is willing to work together with Bangladesh to continuously deepen and explore mutually beneficial cooperation, a spokesperson of its foreign ministry said.

"The cooperation between China and Bangladesh is not targeted at any third party, nor is it influenced by third-party factors," the spokesperson told Reuters. The foreign ministries of India and Bangladesh did not respond to requests for comment. India's tardy visa processing was alienating not just the government of Bangladesh, but also the wider population, the four sources said, which could keep India out of Dhaka's favour for a long time, as a swift comeback by Hasina's party is unlikely.

India has repeatedly cited staff shortages in its Dhaka embassy for the visa problems, said the diplomats and Indian government sources added that they were concerned about staff security. New Delhi evacuated many diplomats and their families from its missions in Bangladesh in August

after public opinion turned against it for sheltering Hasina, with protesters in the Bangladesh capital attacking an Indian cultural centre. The Indian government sources said they wanted Bangladeshis with medical conditions to secure access to treatment in India, adding that staff would be added to missions in the neighbouring country when there is "stability in Bangladesh".

One of them also attributed the fewer medical visas to the finding that some were being misused by people looking to "try and escape difficult conditions in Bangladesh". The visa bottlenecks come against the backdrop of Indian credit lines of more than \$7 billion extended to Bangladesh for projects from rail links and Indian economic zones at two ports to nuclear power plant infrastructure and defence purchases. This month, India's foreign ministry said some of its projects in Bangladesh had been affected and the two sides had discussed "rationalising the project portfolio". Ties between Bangladesh and China are gathering pace, however.

While a source said India had not formally engaged with any politicians in Bangladesh, a delegation led by a former minister of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party recently went to China at Beijing's invitation. This week, Yunus told Wen that Bangladesh was ready to further open its market to China, after top solar energy player Longi Green Energy agreed to set up an office in Bangladesh and invest in manufacturing. Wen has also met a top BNP leader over what he called "issues of mutual concern", but gave no further details.

Zelenskiy says energy strike ceasefire could be established quickly

KYIV (Reuters): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that a halt on energy strikes in the war with Russia could be established quickly, but warned Ukraine would respond in kind if Moscow violated the terms of the limited ceasefire.

After speaking to US President Donald Trump for the first time since their disastrous Oval Office talks, Zelenskiy said Kyiv would draw up a list of facilities that could be subject to a partial ceasefire brokered by Washington. That list could include not only energy, but also rail and port infrastructure, he said, a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke to Trump and agreed to pause attacks on energy infrastructure. "I understand that until we agree (with Russia), until there is a corresponding document on even a partial ceasefire, I think that everything will fly," Zelenskiy said, referring to drones and

missiles.

As Zelenskiy's online briefing with reporters drew to a close, regional authorities reported a mass drone attack on the central Ukrainian city of Kropyvnytskyi, with footage on social media showing large fires and damage to apartment buildings. Officials said the attack also damaged rail infrastructure. The regional governor said some injuries were reported. The Ukrainian leader, who looked tired as he spoke to reporters, described his phone call with Trump as "probably his most substantive and positive" talks yet and added that he had not felt under pressure.

The readout contrasted with the acrimonious optics of Zelenskiy's last meeting with Trump on February 28, which was meant to lead to them signing a minerals deal but instead spiralled into a shouting match. Asked at the briefing if he still wanted Trump

to visit Ukraine, Zelenskiy said that he did and that he believed it would be helpful for the US president in his efforts to halt the war. Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff has said another round of talks between Russian and US officials, aimed at a permanent ceasefire and end to the war, will take place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, but it was unclear whether Ukraine would be involved in those talks.

Zelenskiy said Ukrainian and US officials could meet next in Saudi Arabia, to discuss technical details. The Ukrainian leader said he wanted to understand how the partial ceasefire would be monitored, though he added that he thought it would be successful if the United States set out to do it. A statement by the US presidential administration said earlier that Trump suggested to Zelenskiy that the US could help run, and possibly own, Ukraine's nuclear power plants and

energy infrastructure.

Zelenskiy said he and Trump discussed only the vast Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southeastern Ukraine during their phone call. He added that he told Trump that Kyiv would be ready to discuss US involvement in modernising and investing in the nuclear plant if it is returned to Ukraine. Zelenskiy said he believed Putin would not agree to a full ceasefire while Ukrainian troops remained in Russia's western Kursk region.

Kyiv's forces launched a surprise incursion into the region in August last year, but have since been pushed back to a tiny sliver of land during a multi-stage operation by Russia. Zelenskiy also said that Ukraine had received new supplies of several F-16 fighter jets, but he declined to say exactly how many or when exactly the delivery had happened.

Wildfires and tornadoes threaten Central US

OMAHA, Neb. (AP): Another storm system affected millions of people in the middle of the US, leaving parts of the Midwest and Great Plains under blizzard conditions and a broad swath of neighboring states at risk of high winds and wildfires.

Roughly 72 million people were under a wind advisory or warning, with winds gusting over 45 mph (72 kph), according to Bryan Jackson, a National Weather Service meteorologist. At this time of year, cold air lingering in the north collides with warm air from the south to produce strong, low pressure systems, Jackson said. But

he added that the latest weather was the third storm system to rapidly develop in recent weeks and bring high winds to a large swath of the US, a "very active pattern" since February.

At least 42 people died over the weekend when dynamic storms unleashed tornadoes, blinding dust and wildfires, uprooting trees and flattening hundreds of homes and businesses across eight states in the South and Midwest. A band from southwestern Kansas to central Wisconsin was expected to bring as little as 2 inches (5 centimeters) of snow or as much as a foot (30 centimeters). Combined with high

winds, forecasters warned of whitout conditions.

The Kansas Department of Transportation temporarily closed more than 250 miles (400 kilometers) of Interstate 70 from the Colorado border east to Salina, Kansas. Nearly all of it had been reopened due to improved road conditions. The first stretch to close in western Kansas was also impacted by last week's high winds when eight people died after a dust storm resulted in a pileup of 71 cars and trucks. Blizzard conditions led to near-zero visibility in south-central Nebraska, the state patrol said via Facebook, urging people to

stay off the roads. There were road closures of more than 160 miles (255 kilometers) of I-80 from Lincoln to Lexington and nearly 70 miles (115 kilometers) of I-29 along the Nebraska-Iowa border. Stalled cars, jackknifed semitrailers, crashes and downed power lines contributed to the chaos.

Around the Iowa-Illinois border, more than an inch of snow was falling per hour, while gusts were as high as 30 mph (48 kph), according to the National Weather Service. Heavy snow and high winds knocked down tree branches and snapped utility poles.

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Need for educational reforms

THE younger generation of Pakistan is entangled in various challenges. As per HEC Pakistan, between 2020 and 2024, nearly 445,000 graduates were produced by Pakistani universities annually, which makes around 2.225 million graduates over the five-year period. According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, among these, the number of computer science graduates each year was about 25,000 to 30,000. However, the number of graduates in IT was 35,000, which is inadequate to meet the market needs.

As per HEC, in the 2020-2021 academic year, approximately 3 million students were enrolled in Pakistani universities and degree colleges. Among them, 1.4 million were women and the number of men enrolled was 1.6 million. Of these, in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, over 1 million students were enrolled. Specifically, the number of students studying natural sciences and mathematics was 415,008, in information and communication technologies (ICT) 276,659 students were enrolled, 178,260 students in health sciences, and 166,457 students in engineering. 157,102 STEM students graduated from Pakistan, about 43,000 students graduated in information technology (IT). Despite a considerable number of graduates, challenges still exist.

Enrollment (Age18-25), in higher education institutions, only 12% of individuals of the age bracket 18-25 are enrolled. As per the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), the rate of unemployment among educated youth is noteworthy, with more than 31% unemployed, and women accounting for 51% of the jobless population. Furthermore, the quality of education is also a major concern, as industry-relevant skills that are required by employers are not imparted to the students, leading to employability issues. It feels like Pakistani youth is stuck in a stark and challenging situation.

While interacting with students, I realized that most of them lack proper guidance and a clear sense of purpose in their lives. This issue is particularly evident among those from less affluent backgrounds who pursued education in hopes of uplifting their families. However, due to an increase in unemployment, their dreams have been shattered, leaving them disheartened. Moreover, they are not equipped with essential life skills that are required to sustain themselves in such circumstances. This situation has led to cognitive dissonance, especially among the Pakistani youth, who now bear the responsibility of supporting their families but find themselves penniless.

Recruiters, instead of offering fair opportunities to the graduates, view bribery as an expected part of their job and consider it as their right, further intensifying the crisis. Additionally, a notable portion of Pakistani students struggle to compete with international students, yet this issue is largely overlooked. As a result, social unrest is increasing. The younger generation had high expectations from the education system, but the bitter reality has been deeply disheartening. This is the reason why so many young people are struggling to find a path forward.

Here are examples of students who attempted suicide as they were highly heartbroken as they were not able to make ends meet and were also not able to feed their families due to unemployment. According to The Express Tribune, in June 2023, a 23-year-old man named Rahul Masih from Tandlianwala, unemployed for four months without financial support, died by attempting suicide. According to Dawn, from January 2005 to June 2022, in Gilgit-Baltistan, 573 suicide cases were reported, with a noteworthy number attributed to joblessness and academic pressure. Significantly, 79% of these cases included individuals aged 15 to 39.

Sadly, we didn't teach basic life skills in our schools that are essential to survive in this era of AI, like taxing, coding, cooking, insurance, basic home repair, self-defense, survival skills, social etiquette, personal finance, public speaking, car maintenance, stress management, etc. This is why graduates of this education system are lagging behind in almost every sphere of life. They are highly dependent on jobs, and now, with saturation in the job market, they are down in the dumps. Those who are still part of it know that they are on the road to nowhere. But unfortunately, there are hardly any alternatives, even though it is the need of the hour.

Here are some potential actions to counter the issue. As this is an era of AI, there is a dire need to modernize Pakistan's education system, and integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) can play a transformative role. With increasing global competition, AI-driven education can bridge the gap between outdated teaching methods that are still being adopted in Pakistan and the demands of the modern global job market. One of the biggest challenges in Pakistan's education sector is a lack of tailored learning, every individual is educated in a similar way ignoring the uniqueness of each individual.

AI can play a crucial role in modifying lessons to individual student needs, making sure there is better understanding and retention. Furthermore, AI-powered tools can help instructors in managing administrative tasks so that they would be more able to focus effectively on teaching. Moreover, AI can improve access to education in distant locations by providing smart learning platforms that do not rely on physical infrastructure. In a country where joblessness among graduates is high and where there is a lack of proper career counseling, AI-driven career guidance can assist students in choosing fields aligned with future job market trends. Moreover, incorporating AI in education can equip students with essential digital skills, preparing them for careers in technology, data science, and automation.

If Pakistan does not adopt AI in education, it risks falling further behind in the global knowledge economy as already Pakistan is lagging behind in this domain as there is a significant number of out-of-school children and those who are going to schools are also not getting quality education. Now is the time to embrace AI for a smarter, future-ready education system. Moreover, the education system must be redesigned to focus on the physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social selves of individuals so that they will be better able to live a happy and prosperous life.

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Unity on critical national issues need of the hour

M. Fazal Elahi

THERE cannot be any ambiguity about this fundamental truth-the nation must always take precedence over political and personal interests. Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir was unequivocal in asserting that "nothing, including politics," stands above Pakistan. Indeed, every segment of society, irrespective of status or affiliations, must place the country above personal interests. The reality is undeniable: our existence is contingent upon the nation's survival.

It must be honestly acknowledged that what has unfolded in this country, particularly over the past decade, has been entirely contrary to the fundamental truth-that the nation must always take precedence over political and personal interests. Everything appears to be in disarray, with neither individuals nor political forces showing the slightest concern for the undeniable reality that our very existence hinges on the nation's survival. God forbid, if the country's integrity is ever threatened due to our negligence, the resulting loss would be so immense that none of us would be able to endure it.

The relentless political uproar, particularly among rival political forces both inside and outside Parliament, coupled with the escalating security challenges facing the country today, calls for immediate and decisive action from those in power. It is high time all stakeholders, especially political leaders, recognize their apathy toward the nation's security, integrity, and the well-being of its people. While the country's struggling economy is now on the path to recovery thanks to the unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of the incumbent government-the ongoing political turmoil, deliberately fueled by the opposition, not only threatens this hard-earned economic stability but also exposes the nation to the grave dangers of terrorism.

It is imperative for Pakistan's detractors to recognize that the blatant and brazen smear campaign they have launched against the country, its strategic institutions, and its leaders could inflict immense harm-not only to the nation's interests but also to their own. The

relentless stream of highly derogatory statements and remarks they continue to make against the state and its institutions not only tarnishes Pakistan's image on the global stage and brings shame upon the nation but also unmistakably reveals their selfish motives and malice.

It is understood that political rivalries and opportunism are inherent to the often murky game of politics. Those involved are primarily focused on advancing their personal and party interests rather than prioritizing the nation's welfare. What is deeply concerning, however, is that in their pursuit of self-interest, they become completely indifferent to the very nation that plays a crucial role in elevating them to the positions they so proudly hold and lavishly enjoy. In doing so, they ultimately contribute to pushing their own country into obscurity.

Pakistan is facing a crucial moment in its history, as the threat of terrorism has resurfaced with alarming intensity. A wave of attacks in the northern and southern regions has led to unprecedented devastation, claiming the lives of innocent civilians and brave personnel of the Pakistan Army.

The terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express train in Balochistan, carried out by the self-proclaimed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) on March 11, 2025, was the most devastating incident in recent months. The Jaffar Express, which operates daily between Quetta and Peshawar, was reportedly carrying around 400 passengers when it was hijacked by the BLA militants. According to news reports, the ruthless terrorists mercilessly martyred 26 innocent passengers. In response, the Pakistan Army launched an operation, eliminating 33 terrorists.

The devastating terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express was so severe that it jolted the entire world from its deep slumber. In response to this horrific incident, nations across the globe did not hesitate to voice their strong condemnation, unequivocally denouncing the brutal, tragic, and brazen act.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) also swiftly joined in condemning this reprehensible

assault on the Jaffar Express by militants. In a press statement issued on March 14 by Council President Christina Markus Lassen, and published on its official website, the Security Council members expressed their strongest condemnation of the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack on a Jaffar Express passenger train traveling from Quetta to Peshawar near Sibi, Balochistan, on March 11, 2025, along with the hostage-taking of passengers.

The statement further emphasized that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, remains one of the gravest threats to international peace and security. The Council members stressed the urgent need to hold the perpetrators, organizers, financiers, and sponsors of such despicable acts accountable and ensure they face justice. They also called on all States to actively cooperate with the Government of Pakistan in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

The escalating insurgency in Pakistan necessitates national unity, especially on matters of critical national importance. All stakeholders must come together on a unified platform with a firm commitment to tackling challenges such as terrorism. Political forces-despite their differences-the guardians of the nation's security, the Pakistan military, and the entire nation must stand united to decisively eliminate this persistent menace that continues to plague the country.

Dr. Shahid Masood, a distinguished columnist and analyst, aptly states that "in chaos and war, a divided nation crumbles like a house of cards. Unity is not just strength-it is survival." One cannot help but wholeheartedly agree with this sentiment. It is deeply unfortunate that political forces, in particular, remain divided on the critical issue of terrorism, which poses a grave threat to the nation's security and integrity. Even more regrettable is the stance of one of the country's major political parties, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which has chosen not to stand united against this menace. While the entire

world-including the United Nations-strongly condemned the brazen terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express in Balochistan, PTI not only refrained from denouncing the incident but instead sought to exploit it for political gain.

A meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security was held at the Parliament House on March 18. This in-camera session took place against the backdrop of a surge in attacks targeting security personnel and law enforcement agencies, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The country's top civilian and military leadership convened to conduct an in-depth discussion on measures to combat terrorism.

Notably, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its coalition partners were absent from this crucial high-level meeting of immense national significance. It is difficult to overlook the unfortunate reality that PTI's decision to abstain from the meeting sent a clear message-that the party prioritized its own interests over the greater national good. PTI may dispute this assertion, but the broader public perception, rooted in reality, remains unchanged. The nation expects political forces to set aside their differences and unite on issues of national significance, just as Pakistan's opposition did in 1965.

In the January 1965 presidential election, Ayub Khan faced Fatima Jinnah in a contest marred by allegations of rigging, as the electoral process relied on Basic Democrats. Despite these disputes, when war with India broke out in September 1965, opposition leaders put aside their grievances. Accepting Ayub Khan's invitation, they met with him to express solidarity and discuss national defense, demonstrating that in times of crisis, national interest must take precedence over political divisions.

This was truly an unprecedented decision by the combined opposition. They prioritized the nation's interests over their personal and party agendas. Sadly, such magnanimity has become a rarity in our political landscape. One can't help but wonder if we will ever witness such a high level of altruism in our society again.

It's no longer safe to buy weapons from US

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

DONALD Trump has inflicted enormous long-term damage on America's defence export industry, a lucrative earner worth \$320bn (£250bn) a year in all its forms. Foreign defence sales are 10 times greater than US exports of liquefied natural gas.

First in line for collective repudiation is Lockheed Martin's F-35 fighter jet. Mark Carney ordered a review of Canada's order for 72 of these advanced aircraft within hours of becoming prime minister. It will determine whether "other options could better meet Canada's needs". Nuno Melo, Portugal's conservative defence minister, says the F-35 is no longer considered a safe choice to replace his country's ageing F-16s. "We have to know that an ally will be on our side whatever the circumstances," he told Público.

"The world has changed. This ally of ours, so predictable over the decades, could limit the use, maintenance, components, and everything needed to ensure that the aircraft are operational in all scenarios," he said. Portugal is looking at a European alternative.

Germany may be next. "Nobody needs to buy an F-35," said Tom Enders, ex-Airbus chief and now head of the German Council on Foreign Relations. He said Germany's contract for these fighters was a misguided attempt by Angela Merkel to "appease" Trump during his first term. It should be cancelled forthwith.

Europe does not strictly need the US Patriot missile defence system either. The upgraded Franco-Italian SAMP/T rival is more or less "equivalent". "It is absolutely imperative that we free ourselves of dependence on US systems as far and as quickly as possible. We can't simply close our eyes to the fact that this American government has become an adversary," Mr Enders said in an explosive interview with the Frankfurter Allgemeine.

He said Trump was likely to blackmail and coerce Europe in much the same way as he has coerced Ukraine. "No one believes any more that he will stand by Article 5 if Putin invades the Suwa&Istrok;ki Gap," he said. One should be cautious reading too much into share price movements. But it is striking that Lockheed Martin's stock has dropped 23pc since late October, while Dassault Aviation has almost doubled in dollar terms on talk of more orders for the Rafale. French missile-maker Thales is up 90pc.

The European defence sector has seen an explosive rise over the last month, pushed even higher by Germany's coalition deal for 1 trillion (£840bn) of rearmament and infrastructure - to be ratified this week by a constitutional amendment to the debt brake. Mr Enders, a no-nonsense parachute officer and ex-head of European defence group EADS, said the US has access to the operating system of F-35s. "We know the Americans can shut the thing down, whenever they want. We are totally dependent," he said. Experts disagree over what the Pentagon can or cannot do remotely to paralyse an F-35.

"There is no explicit kill switch. It's not something that can be turned off on any given day," said Justin Bronk, an aviation specialist at the Royal United Services Institute. But the fact that this discussion is even going on in the highest circles of European defence and for-

eign policy exposes the complete collapse of confidence in the US military alliance. In my view it is irreversible.

Mr Enders has just launched Germany's "Sparta" project, drafted by leading figures calling for immediate and massive German rearmament. It clearly has the backing of incoming chancellor Friedrich Merz. Rather than trying to catch up with Russia in tanks and aircraft, Germany and Europe should together seek "asymmetric superiority" by building a drone wall on Nato's eastern flank, according to Mr Enders. This could be done very quickly and at a fraction of the cost. "We need tens of thousands of smart robots on the battlefield," he said.

A few dozen people can make a thousand combat drones for less than it costs to make a Leopard 2 tank shell. "These drones can knock out enemy systems that cost several million with great precision," he said. Europe should move fast to escape the clutches of Elon Musk's Starlink. Mr Enders said Eutelsat's OneWeb could do much of the job if buttressed by the medium-orbit satellites of SES.

The focus should be on the "sharp end" of defence. Some of the weapons should be in the field in six to 12 months, but none beyond five years. "We're not interested in a new arms system that takes 20 years," he said. Sparta includes a dash for "cloud-combat" hypersonic weapons, a European missile shield, as well as a joint nuclear deterrent in coordination with France and the UK that span the escalation ladder from tactical nukes to strategic missiles. There have always been restrictions on how US weapon exports can be deployed, but the rules were clear. Trump has turned every form of vulnerability into a means of extortion.

Europe faces serious dangers trying to extricate itself from US dependency. "If European politicians provoke Trump we could get into an even more precarious position, setting off a vicious cycle," said one expert from a Nato state helping the Ukrainian military. But it cannot go on as before either.

"The US has complete lockdown and ownership of our security architecture. Long-range fires and potentially the Patriot missiles and some intelligence systems could stop working if somebody in Florida or Washington presses 'no' on a computer. You couldn't keep the show on the road," he said. The Stockholm Institute says the US cornered 43pc of global weapons exports over the last five years. This cannot last. Japan, India, Latin America, and the Middle East, will all be wary of locking into complex defence systems that could be used as leverage by the White House at any time, and for any purpose. It is no protection if suppliers are private companies. Trump compels corporate leaders to kiss the ring and execute his agenda. He is imposing his ideology on capitalist America proactively. Even the Washington Post has bowed to pressure, refusing to publish views that flout Maga nostrums.

Two of the irresistible selling points of US arms exporters have long been that a) the dependency would not be abused, and b) that countries were implicitly coming under the US security umbrella by aligning their fortunes with America. Neither has currency in Trump's Hobbesian world.

Trump sees world as it is rather than what we would like it to be

Owen Matthews

WHY exactly is Sir Keir Starmer spending so much time assembling an international peacekeeping force for Ukraine? Doubtless he is sincere in his support, and genuinely believes that he is helping Kyiv. But in reality there is no path whatsoever towards forcing Vladimir Putin to accept European peacekeepers - nor for that matter in persuading Donald Trump to back them. Starmer is feeding Volodymyr Zelensky with more myths and empty words: this will waste time, stall talks and cost lives.

From the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022 Britain - and Boris Johnson in particular - took a strong lead in calling for Ukraine to resist the Russian invaders. We, and many Europeans, promised in various ways to provide whatever Ukraine needed until they achieved victory. It is now clear that those

promises were totally inadequate. It was the US, not Europe, which provided the lion's share of military equipment sent to Ukraine - including strategically vital rocket artillery, battlefield cruise missiles and air defence systems. Yet even as the Biden administration was sending arms, Washington was always far more clear-eyed than Europe about the war's inevitable end. Even as early as March 2022, in a barnstorming speech of support for Kyiv in Warsaw, Joe Biden defined the US objective as putting "Ukraine in the strongest possible position at the negotiating table."

Three years and hundreds of thousands of lost lives later, Russia and the US are now at that negotiating table. Trump has refused to countenance security guarantees for Ukraine after a peace settlement. This has left the Europeans to play catch-up. Zelensky has latched onto

Starmer's idea of a European peacekeeping force on the ground as an alternative to a distant America. But keeping Nato out of Ukraine was the single most fundamental reason why Putin invaded in 2022. Why on earth does Starmer, or his fellow coalition cheerleaders in Canada and France, imagine that the Kremlin would accept Nato troops on the ground in any guise?

Our Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, has demanded that Putin accept a Ukraine ceasefire. But in truth, unless and until he is defeated in the field, Putin has a veto over any peacekeeping force - and he's already used it. The answer is an emphatic, hard "nyet". Starmer's other problem is that any European force in Ukraine will have to be "backstopped" - a nicely euphemistic term - by the Americans. What that means in practice is that the

US will have to commit to getting British, French and Canadian troops out of trouble with overwhelming firepower should they find themselves in the path of a future advancing Russian steamroller.

Or put another way: Washington will have to step in and fight a war that Europeans have failed to prevent and possibly played a part in provoking. That kind of open-ended commitment to European security - alternatively known as World War Three - is precisely what the Trump administration is adamant about avoiding. Many Europeans - including at least two of Nato's front-line states that used to be a part of Russia - agree that putting European boots on the ground in Ukraine would be a terrible idea. The leaders of Finland - which shares a thousand kilometre border with Russia - and Poland have

both refused. Germany, whose troops have spent a fair amount of time in Ukraine over the last century, is also reluctant. And soon after a conference call with many other Western leaders on Sunday, Italy's fiery Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni reiterated her position that an Italian contingent in Ukraine was "not foreseen."

Europeans, then, seem unwilling to join Starmer's "coalition of the willing." But that's not even the plan's major problem. In order to assemble a peacekeeping force, there first has to be a peace to keep. That is currently being brokered directly between Trump and Putin. Though the Russian army and economy have taken a beating over three years of war, Putin remains militarily undefeated and economically uncrushed. Therefore whatever armistice terms are finally agreed - and that process is set to take far longer than the 30-day

ceasefire currently being negotiated - will have to be with Putin's agreement.

Lammy in Parliament recently denounced Putin as "a KGB agent who operates by deception" and who "draws on a Tsarist tradition of imperialism and authoritarianism." And who could argue? But when it comes to the hard and ugly business of dealing with Putin's obfuscations and lies, Britain is merely shouting slogans from the sidelines. Trump has chosen a different line. He has refused the virtue signalling of Europeans and is going eyeball-to-eyeball with Putin over real nuts-and-bolts demands. Unlike Starmer, Trump sees the world as it is, rather than what he might like it to be. The plan for European peacekeepers, whatever its possible merits and however much the Ukrainians may like it, is likely to be one of the first items flying out of the window when serious talks begin.

The Hill

Trump finds out that ending wars is tougher than it looks

Stephen Collinson

PRESIDENT Donald Trump is finding out that campaign trail bravura over peace deals can't yield quick wins as wars rage. As Trump made the tiniest of steps forward Tuesday on his peace plan for Ukraine, another ceasefire, for which he claimed personal credit, shattered. Israel launched a new onslaught on Hamas in Gaza, killing hundreds of civilians.

The US president's call with a largely intransigent Russian President Vladimir Putin as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to full-scale war highlighted two leaders whose own political priorities will likely supersede his own. Such is the unpromising geopolitical atmosphere standing in the way of Trump's dream of a legacy as a global peacemaker, which he'd predicted would be fulfilled as soon as he returned to the Oval Office.

There are growing signs that Trump's goals go beyond ending the fighting with equitable peace that can be sustained. Readouts of his chat with Putin only reinforced the fears of Ukraine's government and its European allies that Trump sees the war as a sideshow to his wider quest of a rapprochement with Moscow. This leads him to see the conflict through a Russian lens. And it explains why he berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky until he signed up for Trump's 30-day ceasefire plan, but had only praise for Putin when he refused to buy in on Tuesday.

Washington's acquiescence in Netanyahu's return to bombarding Gaza, meanwhile, ends efforts by Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff to secure the release of hostages and a second-phase deal toward ending a war that is an impediment to the

administration's top goal - a historic peace deal between Israel and Arab states. But a new US air offensive against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen also suggests Trump is now focused on another goal - cranking up pressure on the Islamic Republic to force it into talks on its nuclear program, or to further weaken its regional proxies ahead of a possible Israeli or US strike on its nuclear facilities. Back in power, Trump has rebuked US allies in Europe and made expansionist claims against Canada, Greenland and Panama. But the biggest foreign policy question so far in his second term is when or if he'll be willing to apply pressure on either Putin or Netanyahu. His transparent ambition to win the Nobel Peace Prize may depend on it.

A Russia readout of the talks differed subtly from the US version, for instance referring to "energy infrastructure" - suggesting a narrower view of the deal than the US understanding. Still, the administration insists that this is just the first step and that talks will now take place in the Middle East on reaching a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea and a full ceasefire and a permanent peace.

"It was a very good call," Trump said renewing his bluster that only he could have pulled off such a feat and predicting fast progress soon, despite Putin's fresh roadblocks. "If I wasn't here, he would never do it," he said of the Russian leader in an interview with the Washington Examiner. "The next thing would be a full ceasefire and a deal," Trump said. "I think it will go pretty quickly." There's a case for talking up incremental steps at the start of a peace process to create a sense

of momentum and to increase the price for the warring parties if they walk away. So Trump's optimism may not be misplaced. But his self-congratulation may be a political attempt to disguise the failure of his full ceasefire push, given the reality that Putin is in no rush to make peace considering his recent success on the battlefield. The US president also seems to be trying to preserve the increasingly fragile conceit that he's an unparalleled deal-maker who is already racking up huge foreign policy wins.

Still, the president did secure one of the first undertakings to slow the intensity of fighting since the Russian invasion three years ago. If he does manage to forge peace, it will be a huge achievement that will save thousands of lives. But his personal credibility is on the line - and relies on a Russian leader who has consistently broken agreements and ceasefires and has out-maneuvred every US president of the last quarter-century. No amount of positive spin could disguise Putin's refusal to sign up for the US plan for a 30-day full ceasefire. And the Russian president instead delivered a new set of conditions that would be impossible for Ukraine to agree to and will fuel European fears that a peace on the Kremlin's terms would sow the seeds for a future war.

Many US observers have long believed that Netanyahu never wanted to move beyond the recently elapsed first stage of a ceasefire deal to end a war that erupted after the Hamas massacre of Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023. Tuesday was the deadliest day over 15 months in Gaza, according to a CNN tally, after Israeli forces struck multiple targets. More than 400 people were killed, Palestinian

authorities said. Netanyahu said he launched new attacks because Hamas refused to release remaining hostages or accept a US proposal to extend the Gaza ceasefire, despite a pause in Israel's military activity. Hamas, however, insisted that it had not rejected the US proposal and that it wanted to see the ceasefire prolonged. But the hard-line Islamic group also had little incentive to release the remaining living hostages, who represent a final, callous bargaining chip in a conflict that Netanyahu promises will only end when the group has been eradicated.

"This is only the beginning," the Israeli prime minister said Tuesday. Netanyahu, who has been on trial for corruption, reaped immediate political gains for his decision to reignite the war. Far-right Israeli politician Itamar Ben-Gvir said he'd rejoin the government along with his Otzma Yehudit, or Jewish Power, party. This shored up the Likud prime minister's political position ahead of a difficult set of budget negotiations that could threaten the longevity of his government. The return to warfare also meant that Netanyahu's corruption trial was postponed temporarily. Many of the prime minister's critics believe that he's deliberately prolonged the war in Gaza to forestall a case that could see him sentenced to jail time if he is convicted.

Like Putin, for whom the Ukraine war has become an existential cause, Netanyahu may need to keep war raging to solidify his hold on power. But Trump, their fellow strongman, has his own massive political incentives for silencing the guns. Sooner or later, the US president may face tough political choices that he's so far put off.

CNN

Why did Putin's Russia invade Ukraine?

Paul Kirby

Russia's 2022 invasion he demanded that Nato remove multinational deployments from the Central and Eastern European states that joined the Western alliance after 1997.

But it was Russia who launched military action in Eastern Europe, when it invaded Georgia in 2008 and then Crimea in 2014. After the Crimea invasion, Nato established a continuous presence on its eastern flank - closest to Russia. Nato has always stressed

Yanukovych had abandoned an EU deal under Putin's pressure, prompting protests that ended when snipers shot dead dozens of demonstrators. Yanukovych soon fled to Russia. Putin quickly seized Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and Russian proxies took up arms against the government, occupying parts of the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

the whole purpose of the alliance is to defend territories "with no aggressive intentions". Sweden and Finland have joined Nato in the past two years precisely because of the perceived Russian threat. It is part of Ukraine's constitution to join the European Union and Nato, but there was no real prospect of this when the full-scale war began. Zelensky said as much two weeks into the invasion: "Nato is not prepared to accept Ukraine."

He has since said he would consider resigning in exchange for Nato membership, but Trump says Kyiv should "forget about" joining the Western alliance. Putin has accused Nato of participating in the war, because its member states have increasingly sent Ukraine military hardware, including tanks and fighter jets, air defence systems, missile systems, artillery and drones. Nato has provided security assistance and training to Ukraine, but it insists that does not make it a party to the war. Putin's grievance against Nato dates back to 1990, when he claims the West promised not to expand "an inch to the East". However that was before the Soviet Union collapsed and it was based on a limited commitment made to then Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev said "the topic of Nato expansion was never discussed" at the time.

At the start of the 2022 invasion, Putin vowed to protect people in occupied areas of eastern Ukraine from eight years of Ukrainian "bullying and genocide, during the war in the east. More than 14,000 people died on both sides of the front line between 2014-2022, but Russian claims of Ukrainian Nazis committing genocide in the occupied regions never added up, and no international body has spoken of genocide. Germany's chancellor called the allegation "ridiculous". The Russian taunts of Nazis in charge in Kyiv are also not correct.

Modern Ukraine has no far-right parties in parliament - they failed to get enough votes in the 2019 elections. On top of that, Zelensky is Jewish and many of his relatives were murdered by the Nazis in World War Two. Putin condemns him as a "disgrace to the Jewish people", but the US Holocaust Memorial Museum rejects his claims outright, saying he "misrepresented and misappropriated Holocaust history". Putin himself was accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Court in 2024, although that has been rejected by the Kremlin. Russia's attempt to stop Ukraine leaving its sphere of influence goes back years, and its initial invasion began in 2014 when pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovych was ousted after months of mass demonstrations.

Yanukovych had abandoned an EU deal under Putin's pressure, prompting protests that ended when snipers shot dead dozens of demonstrators. Yanukovych soon fled to Russia. Putin quickly seized Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and Russian proxies took up arms against the government, occupying parts of the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions. Two attempts to stop the war came to nothing. They were known as

the Minsk agreements and were brokered by France, Germany and Russia itself. They reduced the scale of violence, but Zelensky has called them a trap that created a frozen conflict on Russia's terms. Both sides accused each other of violations, and the Kremlin said ultimately the failed accords were a precursor to Moscow's full-scale invasion.

The Ukrainian leader has warned the Trump administration not to trust Putin: "He broke the ceasefire, he killed our people." After three years of offensives

Why Putin started war

Zhanna Nemtsova

PRESIDENT Donald Trump is right to want an end to the fighting in Ukraine. And he's right that the conflict has become a war of attrition that favors Russia. However, Trump misunderstands a crucial element of the war, and that is that Russian President Vladimir Putin launched it primarily for domestic political reasons, not to respond to any kind of external threat. So if Trump wants to preside over a peace agreement that lasts beyond a few weeks or months, it's critical to understand how Putin's domestic political imperatives are driving his actions.

That's why the key elements of a successful deal to end the fighting aren't how much territory Russia gets to keep, or how many rare earth minerals Ukraine gives up, or whether Ukraine might one day join NATO - although both sides will debate those vociferously. The crucial provisions that will determine the success or failure of an agreement will be whether they change Russia's political equation domestically to either increase the likelihood of new Russian aggression, or lower it. Throughout Putin's quarter-century as Russia's leader, his main goal has been to stay in power until his death. This addiction to supreme power has always played an outsized role in his decisions. He has worked to eliminate any potential challenge to his position and has stifled dissent at home. Prominent political opponents, including my father, Boris Nemtsov, and Alexei Navalny, were killed. Free media no longer exists.

Right now, this domestic repression makes it easier for Putin to wage war - and to stay in power. Putin has always seen Ukraine, which has long struggled to separate itself from

Russia, as undermining his regime at home. The existence of a democratic and prosperous Ukraine that is allied with Europe could show Russians that there is a better alternative to Putinism. That is why Putin would prefer to eliminate Ukraine as a country. Being at war also allows Putin to keep Russia in a state of emergency, which gives him multiple advantages: It is a perfect pretext for increased repression, tightened censorship laws and an all-purpose explanation for economic hardships. The elimination of independent media and laws against criticizing the military have made it easier to brainwash the Russian people into believing that an endless war is necessary despite its huge costs in terms of lives and economic hardship.

In fact, it might not be Ukraine that Putin attacks next time. An easier target would be neighboring Belarus, a nation led by an aging dictator, which has borders with Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. Russia's army has substantial combat experience which makes it a danger to any of its neighbors in the medium term. If Russia takes full control of Belarus, those countries - three of them members of the EU and NATO - will find themselves on Russia's border and under direct threat. So how can Trump prevent this? By insisting that a peace deal include provisions that will foster longer-term changes to Russia's economy and society. First, a deal should include provisions that prevent Russia from rearmament, something Putin is of course likely to resist. Already, Russia's military spending outstrips all of Europe's defense budgets combined. Russia's national

economy will undoubtedly continue on a war footing, and Russia will need parts, electronics and machinery to build modern weaponry. Russia will likely push hard for Western sanctions to be lifted, including the current ban on technology exports. But that's why some sanctions, specifically those that ban Western high-technology exports to Russia, should stay in place. The West should not make it easy for Russia to rearm by lifting the sanctions on high technology.

Second, Russia should pay for Ukraine's reconstruction. It is Russia that has caused multibillion-dollar damage to Ukraine. The Kyiv School of Economics estimates that the direct damage to Ukraine's infrastructure has reached \$170 billion. Russia should pay for this rebuilding, an idea completely in line with both common sense and Trump's transactional and reciprocal approach to international relations. Europe and the US have a strong negotiating position on this matter, as Russian assets worth \$300 billion are frozen in the West. The idea that Russia owes compensation to Ukraine is unpopular even within the Russian resistance. But giving Putin a pass on this is not only unfair but would encourage him to act in the same fashion moving forward. Funds that Russia is forced to send to Ukraine are funds that it can't use to rearm itself. So to put pressure on Russia to assume financial responsibility for Ukraine's rebuilding, a settlement should tie the removal of certain non-military sanctions to Russian payments to the reconstruction fund. Third, there are provisions that could lower Putin's repressions at home and make it harder for him to

rally Russian society to war again. One possible way could be reincarnating something like the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which required the Soviet Union to agree to respect certain human rights and permit Jewish emigration in exchange for expanded trade with the United States. In this case, in return for lifting some sanctions, the West could insist that Russia release political prisoners, abandon censorship laws including those outlawing "foreign agents" and other organizations perceived as hostile to the regime, and unblocking platforms like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

Promoting human rights may have lost its appeal to some in recent years, but provisions like this would reduce the likelihood of future Russian aggression. I know from my own observation that intensified human rights violations, including unlawful imprisonment, murders and a crackdown on independent media, preceded Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Conversely, empowered people inside the country who don't fear opposing the government are a natural deterrent against senseless wars. So is a free media. Many of my non-Russian friends have wondered why Putin hasn't cared about Russia's high death toll in Ukraine. The answer is as simple as this: He doesn't need to, as there is only state-controlled media, and he is not accountable to his citizens. Ignoring the domestic part of Putin's power equation will only perpetuate his aggression outside Russia. Under current circumstances, the need for a ceasefire in Ukraine is urgent. But execution matters. If the Trump administration wants a good deal to end the war, it needs to pay attention to the details.

Politico

Britain showing two faces to world

Allister Heath

A moral cancer is gnawing away at our body politic, warping its sense of right and wrong and exposing its deepest, darkest prejudices. There is no better case study in hypocrisy and double-standards than the radically inconsistent way in which Ukraine and Israel are treated by the British government and the Left-wing media.

Ukraine, rightly, is portrayed as a heroic victim fighting back against a brutal invader. Israel, wrongly, is depicted as the real aggressor and subjected to relentless delegitimisation. Volodymyr Zelenskyy is lionised; Benjamin Netanyahu is demonised; Ukraine can do no wrong; Israel can do no right. Reader, I'm pro-Israel and I'm pro-Ukraine, an unusual combination in today's Britain or America. Jerusalem and Kyiv are both victims of fascist military assaults and a global disinformation campaign; both are displaying extraordinary heroism to contain, respectively, Putin's expansionism and the forces of Islamism. Israel and Ukraine are on the front lines of Samuel Huntingdon's clash of civilisations.

Yet the same people who cheer Keir Starmer's announcement that he will continue to supply weapons to Ukraine (a move I support) are exuberant when he announces a partial, yet despicable, arms embargo on Israel. Those who fact-check the fake history and anti-Ukrainian slanders pumped out by Russian influencers gullibly swallow the Soviet-era Israelophobic propaganda that defames the Jewish state as "colonialist". Commentators who have read up on Ukraine typically still know nothing about the ethnic cleansing of Jews from the Middle East, or about dhimmitude during the Ottoman

days, or about the times Israel offered land for peace only to be turned down by Palestinian irredentists who will settle for nothing other than a Judenfrei single state.

Those who question Donald Trump's Ukraine-Russia ceasefire proposal are usually the first to support every armistice proposal, on any terms, between Israel and Hamas, even if hostages aren't released. The Foreign Office seems as determined to undermine Israel as it is to support Ukraine: our ambassador in Tel Aviv posted a patronising message this week claiming he had grown up in Northern Ireland and thus knew about these sorts of conflicts. Among other platitudes, he claimed IDF operations would neither defeat Hamas nor liberate the hostages, and that "at some point the fighting must stop and the diplomacy begin". Yet the Middle East is drastically different to Northern Ireland, diplomacy has failed for decades and Britain would never speak in such terms to Ukraine. We are a true ally of Kyiv; but we have betrayed Israel in its hour of need.

Many middle class people turned their sympathy for Ukraine into a proxy identity, a vehicle for their repressed patriotism; as George Orwell might have put it, they would never sing God Save the King or display a union jack on their avatars, but embraced the Ukrainian flag and Slava Ukraini. This was moving, but there was no similar phenomenon after the pogrom of October 7. Almost nobody apart from British Jews display Israeli flags on their social profiles or put up yellow ribbons in support of hostages. Am Yisrael Chai never went mainstream. There is little interest in Britain about

how the Ukrainian army behaves or whether it is ever in breach of "international law" (rules that even the British or American army will unfortunately fall foul of occasionally) but a ghoulish obsession with seeking to "prove" that the IDF, the world's most moral and legally supervised army, has violated "human rights". David Lammy clumsily expressed such a view this week. Britain correctly backs Zelensky's military, but supports a witch hunt against Israel's in the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court. How is that not two-faced?

Many of those fixated by the more extreme elements in Israeli society have no interest in similarly fringe figures in Ukraine. No nation is perfect: Ukraine's pathologies or the limitations of its leadership are downplayed but Israel's are magnified and exaggerated in ludicrous fashion. The Russians are deemed to have agency; they could stop the war. Hamas are treated as if they lacked self-determination: they are not held accountable for their crimes or expected to release hostages. Excuses are found for them, in a classic case of the racism of low expectations.

Every attack on Israel triggers demands that Jerusalem surrenders territory, that it helps those seeking to exterminate it, something that is (correctly) never demanded of Ukraine. The hostages haven't been released? It must be Israel's fault for not conceding even more. Ukraine's right to exist is accepted by all but pro-Putin trolls, but Israel's legitimacy is, at best, questionable in the twisted worldview of much of the British ruling class.

The bigotry is so extreme that it could pass as parody. Hamas apolo-

gists imply the terror group was so unprofessional that it mixed up the body of Shiri Bibas, massacred along with her two red-haired children, with that of an unknown Palestinian, but that they are capable of providing accurate civilian casualty figures within seconds of an attack. While nobody believes Putin's claims about how many men he has lost or Ukrainians he killed, almost every-body takes fabricated statistics from Hamas at face value. Israel finally struck back in Gaza this week, and sure enough every one of the terrorist group's instant lies about casualties was splashed, uncaveated, on numerous websites. Does nobody ever learn? Hamas deliberately puts its people at risk with its urban warfare. It pretends all casualties are civilian; its fighters don't wear uniforms apart from when they are role-playing in grotesque ceremonies.

Ukrainian military victories are met with jubilation, with few questions asked about methods or Russian casualties; Israeli victories greeted with disgusting blood libels and global condemnation. Britain cheered when Ukraine counter-attacked, seizing territory in Russia's Kursk Oblast; Israel is traduced whenever it enters Gaza. It is of course true that many on the US Right and in the Trump administration have succumbed to a symmetrically opposite fallacy, hating Ukraine while supporting Israel. But that is no excuse. The partiality in Britain is so enormous, the bias so obvious that it raises extremely grave questions. Is it stupidity, cowardice, or electoral self-interest? Or are we facing an explosion of middle class anti-Semitism masquerading as humanism? The fact that this question must now be asked at all is a terrible indictment of modern Britain.

The Telegraph

BBC



SCCI urges govt to extend date for registration of all medical devices

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fazal Moqeem Khan urged the government to take steps to accelerate all medical devices registration process and give extension in date of the registration to prevent a major crisis in the health sector in the country.

Fazal Moqeem Khan in a statement issued here on Friday said that deadline for registration of medical devices was given 31st December 2024 by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), now it is March 2025, but a large number of cases for regis-

tration have been delayed that has created a major crisis of medical devices KP and rest areas of the country.

The SCCI chief said the number of shipments stuck at the airport has not only been inflicting huge financial loss to the business community attached with the medical device industry but it was also affecting treatment of the patients at various health facilities.

Moqeem urged the government to expedite medical equipment registration along with giving extension in date of the registration so as to ease difficulties of traders attached with this important sector and also prevent them from

huge monetary loss.

The SCCI president said health is an important sector, which is passing through a crisis situation.

He expressed fear that the shortage of medical devices would miserably affect operations, patient treatments and other healthcare facilities in hospitals across the country.

The delay in registration is not an issue of importers or the medical devices industry but it is a national

issue which needs to be addressed at earliest, because it would have negative impacts on national economy, trade and businesses, Moqeem remarked.

The SCCI president said 90 percent of medical

devices imported in Pakistan, include surgical instruments, diagnostic machines, MRI, CT scan, cardiac stents, dialysis machines and other important medical equipments.

Moqeem urged the government to take pragmatic steps for resolution of issues associated with the medical devices industry.

Similarly, he stressed the need of simplifying the process of medical devices registration.

SCCI chief requested Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Federal Minister for Health Mustafa Kamal and authorities concerned to extend the date of medical devices registration across the country.

PAA-PIACL joint committee visits Parachinar Airport

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A Joint Board of Officers (BOO) comprising officials from the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) and Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL) has conducted a visit to Parachinar Airport to assess its operational feasibility for commercial and humanitarian flights.

The visit was carried out as per the directives of the Ministry of Defence earlier. The eight-member committee includes six officers from PAA and two from PIACL. The team was led by Mr. Younas Lugman Qazi, Additional Director Operations (IIAP), with members including Mr. Mohsin Ahmad Ghouri, Deputy APM (BKIA), and Engr. Shah Jahan, Senior JTO CNS (BKIA).

During the visit, the committee conducted a comprehensive inspection of the air-



port's infrastructure, including the terminal building, runway, fire garages, PAA accommodation, generator room, and other operational facilities.

Following the inspection, the BOO members met with the Deputy Commissioner

(DC) Parachinar at his office to discuss matters related to the resumption of operations at Parachinar Airport.

The findings of the inspection will be compiled into a feasibility report, which will serve as the basis for future decisions regard-

ing the reactivation of Parachinar Airport for both commercial and humanitarian purposes.

Airports Authority (PAA) remains committed to enhancing air connectivity across the country.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting with Ms. Natalie Baker, Charge d'Affaires and Acting US Ambassador to Pakistan.

PSO celebrates Ramazan with the SOS village family

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Symbolizing the spirit of compassion and generosity, Pakistan State Oil (PSO), the nation's leading energy company, hosted a heart-warming Iftar gathering with SOS Village residents at their vicinity in Karachi. This event marked the commencement of PSO's 'Tohfa e Ramadan' campaign, a reflection of the company's commitment to giving back to the community.

Last year, PSO's 'Tohfa e Ramadan' campaign distributed Iftar boxes at its retail outlets, bringing convenience and comfort to Pakistanis across the nation. This year, the company has taken its initiative a step further by engaging with the community and creating unforgettable experiences.

PSX turns bearish, loses 327 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bearish trend on Friday, losing 327.60 points, a negative change of 0.28 percent, closing at 118,442.18 points as compared to 118,769.77 points on the last trading day.

A total of 369,119,112 shares were traded during the day as compared to 667,875,803 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs23.273 billion against Rs38.525 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 435 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 193 of them recorded gains and 190 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 52 companies remained unchanged.

‘Every Drop Counts’ Students take action on World Water Day



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Water is life, yet every drop is under threat. This World Water Day, the Aga Khan University (AKU) is spotlighting the urgent need for water conservation through its annual climate competition, the President's Challenge for Climate Solutions. With the theme 'Every Drop Counts', 16 student groups across four of AKU's campuses will present their innovative ideas and adaptations to expert judges, demonstrating how creative solutions can drive meaningful change.

The initiative aligns with World Water Day and Sustainable Development Goal 6: Water and Sanitation for All, emphasizing that sustainable water management is key to a stable and equitable future. As the world faces mounting challenges—from droughts and pollution to extreme flooding—the demand for fresh, bold solutions has never been greater.

Bringing together the brightest young minds, the competition challenges students to develop innovative solutions for reducing water

waste, protecting freshwater resources, and promoting sustainable water practices. Over the past seven months, more than 465 student participants have worked on solutions ranging from smart conservation technologies to community engagement initiatives, showcasing the power of both individual and collective action in tackling the global water crisis.

"We need to treat our rivers, our lakes, our glaciers, and our aquifers like the invaluable natural resources that they are—essential to life, health and prosperity. We can't let our future dry up," said Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin, President, AKU. "Climate change and water scarcity are interconnected challenges, and our students are not only stepping up with creative solutions, but also demonstrating the power of education and research in addressing one of the world's most pressing crises. At AKU, we believe that knowledge drives change, and today's ideas could shape a more sustainable tomorrow."

AKU's commitment to climate, environment and sustainability is multi-

faceted. Besides climate literacy, our campuses and practices showcase that ambitious action for climate and water are possible. Since the 1980s, AKU's Stadium Road campus has used water bodies for passive cooling of the campus through natural techniques. Water-saving nozzles have been installed on already efficient sensor taps to further minimise water use, while renewable energy such as AKU's 3.8 MW solar PV installation minimizes the reliance on water-intensive power generation methods. Additionally, AKU's move from single-use to reusable materials conserves water across the materials supply chain.



Court Notice

In the court of Wadigha Mushtaq Malik Additional District Judge-I, Swabi. Suit No. 79/13, Institution 11-11-2024 Bilal Muhammad Vs Ayub Khan. Notice to: Ayub Khan, Muhammad Rahman sons of Fazal Ahmad, Noor Zada S/o Shreeen Qadar R/o Pabney Tehsil and District Swabi presently in House No.307 Band Muzafar Colony Adamjee Road Karachi. In the above titled case the service of you above named defendants is not possible with ordinary means. The legal heirs informed through this proclamation to attend this court on 24-03-2025 at 8am in person or through appointed agent/attorney or through counsel, otherwise you shall be placed and proceed against ex-parte.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II, Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No 188/1, Institution 30/9/ 2024. Date of hearing 28/3/2025. Akmal Khan VS Waki Khan etc. Notice to No.2.Bacha Khan. 3.Amirzeb Khan.5. Shahzeb sons Amir Abdullah Khan 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 28/3/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

ICCI President sounds alarm over business conditions in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, has voiced concerns over the current business environment in Islamabad, stressing that urgent measures are essential to safeguard economic stability and investment growth.

In a statement issued on Friday, President Qureshi pointed out that the business community is grappling with a range of pressing issues that are significantly hindering the growth of trade and industry.

These challenges include cumbersome regulatory processes, inadequate infrastructure, and persistent delays in business-related approvals.

He further highlighted specific concerns such as the imposition of taxes by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), excessive and penalties, market conditions, unchecked encroachments, sanitation, and a lack of parking facilities.

He said that these factors are not only hurting individual enterprises but are also deterring local and for-

eign investment in the region.

The ease of doing business environment is posing a serious concern to the economic well-being of our community, he stated. "Immediate reforms are essential to restore investor confidence and provide businesses with the support they need to thrive."

The ICCI President called on the government and relevant authorities to introduce swift reforms that simplify business regulations, enhance digital infrastructure, and foster a more investment-friendly envi-

ronment.

He assured the business community that ICCI is actively engaging with policymakers to push for these improvements.

"We are committed to working hand in hand with all stakeholders to create a conducive environment where businesses of all sizes can prosper," the ICCI President added.

President Qureshi also urged entrepreneurs and business owners to actively collaborate with ICCI by sharing their concerns and recommendations to help shape effective solutions.

J&J boosts investments in US to more than \$55 billion

NEW YORK (Reuters): Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N), opens new tab plans to spend more than \$55 billion to build four plants in the U.S. over the next four years, it said on Friday, as the threat of drug import duties by the Trump administration compels companies to expand their manufacturing operations domestically.

J&J said one of the new plants will be built in Wilson, North Carolina, where the pharmaceutical giant officially broke ground on Friday, but did not reveal where the others would be set up. The drug

and medical device maker said the investment represents a 25% increase compared to the last four years.

Last month, drugmaker Eli Lilly (LLY.N), opens new tab said it would spend at least \$27 billion in new U.S. plants over the next five years, as companies brace for the impact of a potential 25% tariff on pharmaceutical imports.

J&J, Pfizer (PFE.N), opens new tab and other firms that operate large non-U.S. plants such as in Ireland could be at risk. Trump, who campaigned on a promise to boost domestic manufacturing,

has been piling pressure on drugmakers since taking office to move medicine production to the United States.

J&J, the world's largest drugmaker by revenue, said it already has more manufacturing facilities in the U.S. than in any other country. It also plans to expand its existing U.S. sites and build new research and development infrastructure.

Companies in other sectors, such as Apple (AAPL.O), opens new tab, have also made manufacturing announcements in recent weeks. Last month,

the iPhone maker announced plans to spend \$500 billion in the U.S. over the next four years, but analysts said some of that included current commitments.

J&J's site in Wilson, where it plans to invest more than \$2 billion, is expected to create 5,000 jobs during construction, and more than 500 positions across the state.

The site will focus on producing medicines used for treating cancer, immune-mediated and neurological diseases, the New-Jersey based firm said.

CAT resumes hearings, dismisses appeal of dairy farmer association Karachi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT) has resumed hearings after an eight-month hiatus and, in its first session, dismissed the appeal filed by the Dairy Farmer Association Karachi (DFAK) as withdrawn.

During the proceedings, the Tribunal was informed that the appeal was not maintainable, since no adverse order had been passed against the appellant. Counsel for the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) clarified that DFAK was registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and the penalty in question had been imposed on the association's representative, not the association itself, said a press release issued here on Friday.

CAT accepted the CCP's legal position and directed the appellant's counsel to withdraw the appeal.

With the appellant's consent, the Tribunal subsequently dismissed the appeal as withdrawn.

It is pertinent to recall that in December 2024, the CCP had imposed penalties on the representatives of three dairy associations in Karachi for collusive practices aimed at influencing the price of fresh milk violating Section 4(1) and 4(2)(a) of the Competition Act, 2010.

The penalties included PKR 1 million on Mr Shaker Umer Gujjar of M/s Dairy and Cattle Farmers Association (DCAFA); PKR 500,000 each on Mr. Haji Akhtar Gujjar of M/s Dairy Farmer Association Karachi (DFAK) and Mr. Haji Sikandar Nagori of M/s Karachi Dairy Farmers Association (KDFA).

The CCP initiated its inquiry following widespread media reports of a sharp rise in milk prices across Karachi.

Investigations confirmed that the three associations, operating at various stages of the fresh milk supply chain, were actively involved in anti-competitive practices that led to a significant price hike affecting consumers in Karachi and surrounding areas.

F.P. Report

KARACHI: IBA held an inaugural ceremony for the newly curated net practice cricket pitches at the IBA Cricket Ground, Main Campus. The event was graced by Test Cricketer and Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) Selection Committee member, Mr. Asad Shafiq, who officially inaugurated the facility. Mr. Shafiq engaged with IBA's official student cricket team, playing a few deliveries and sharing valuable insights. As a symbol of growth and sustainability, he also planted a tree, reinforcing the importance of nurturing both talent and the environment. The ceremony provided an opportunity for students to interact with the cricketing icon and gain inspiration from his journey.

The event was attended by Dr. Mohammad Asad

Ilyas, IBA Registrar, accompanied by Mr. Fuad A. Mehdi, Head, Marketing & Communications; Mr. Fahad Jawed, Associate Registrar, Resource Optimization, and Mr. Jamsheed Issa, Manager Sports.

As a token of appreciation, souvenirs were presented to Mr. Shafiq. The gathering also facilitated discussions on the future of sports at IBA, emphasizing the importance of strengthening sports infrastructure and fostering student participation in competitive cricket. Conversations centered on potential collaborations with PCB to provide aspiring student cricketers with professional training and exposure, furthering IBA's commitment to holistic student development.

About IBA Karachi: 70 Glorious Years of IBA - A Legacy Worth Celebrating: IBA Karachi,

Pakistan's leading and most prestigious institution of higher education, has nurtured generations of trailblazers, with 20,000+ alumni driving innovation and leading organizations across the globe. Equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure, modern learning spaces, and cutting-edge facilities, IBA offers a world-class education that empowers students to shape the future. Committed to sustainability, IBA fosters an eco-conscious campus community, continuously reducing its carbon footprint through impactful green initiatives. With a rich legacy and an unwavering pursuit of progress, IBA continues to redefine education, leadership, and responsible innovation. Here's to the next 70 years of Visionary Leadership, Academic Excellence, and Sustainable Impact.





In brief

Shakib has bowling action cleared by ECB

LONDON (Agencies): Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has been cleared to resume bowling in English county cricket after a re-assessment of his bowling action. The England and Wales Cricket Board said the 37-year-old has passed tests of his action at Loughborough University earlier this month. "The re-assessment found that Shakib had remedied his action to within the prescribed 15-degree threshold as defined in the ECB Bowling Review Regulations," a statement said. Shakib's action had been reported by the standing umpire while he was playing for Surrey against Somerset in September. He then failed an independent assessment at Loughborough University which prompted his bowling suspension from Dec. 10. The suspension meant he was ruled out of the Champions Trophy earlier this year as Bangladesh were reluctant to include him as a specialist batsman.

Djokovic disagrees with union's lawsuit

LONDON (Agencies): Novak Djokovic says he disagrees with parts of the lawsuit brought against tennis' governing bodies by the players' union he co-founded. On Tuesday the Professional Tennis Players' Association (PTPA) filed papers criticising the schedule, ranking systems and control over image rights. The association is unhappy with the prize money formula designed by the ATP and WTA tours, the "unsustainable" 11-month schedule and "invasive searches of personal devices". PTPA claims there is collusion between the tours and the tournaments, which suppresses competition in tournaments and may artificially restrict prize money. Record 24-time Grand Slam winner Djokovic co-founded the PTPA in 2020 with Canadian Vasek Pospisil, but he is not among the 12 players as plaintiffs alongside the PTPA. "In general, I felt like I don't need to sign the letter because I want other players to step up. I've been very active in tennis politics," Djokovic said at the Miami Open on Thursday. "This is a classic lawsuit, so lawyers to lawyers, type of situation. So to be quite frank with you, there are things that I agree with in the lawsuit, and then there are also things that I don't agree with. "And I found that maybe some wording was quite strong in there, but I guess the legal team knows what they are doing and what kind of terminology they're supposed to use in order to get the right effect," Djokovic insisted he does not want to cause a rift in tennis despite his union taking action. "I've never been a fan and supporter of division in our sport, but I've always fought for better representation and influence of and positioning of the players globally in our sport, which I think is still not where I think it should be and where most of the players think it should be," he added. "Not just in terms of prize money, but in terms of many other points that have been also stated in that document." Both the ATP and the WTA Tour have defended their record, pointing to the prize money and security they offer players. On Wednesday world number three Carlos Alcaraz said he did not support the legal action, partly because he was not informed that he would be quoted in the lawsuit.

Nawaz smacks record-breaking maiden ton as Pakistan win 3rd NZ T20

AUCKLAND (AFP): Opener Hasan Nawaz struck a record-breaking maiden century Friday as Pakistan crushed New Zealand by nine wickets in the third Twenty20 to keep the series alive.

After scoring a duck in each of the two opening games — the first innings of his international career — Nawaz rebounded with a stunning 105 not out in Auckland as the tourists raced to 207-1 in response to New Zealand's 204.

The 23-year-old's ton came off 44 balls, the fastest by any Pakistan player in a T20 international.

It ensured his team reached the target with four full overs to spare, in a stark reversal of form after heavy losses in Christchurch and Dunedin.

Nawaz put his early failures behind him with a sparkling knock featuring shots all around the wicket, including a series of audacious ramp shots.

He admitted he was worried about his selection

prospects after two failures and thanked captain Salman Agha and vice-captain Shadab Khan for showing faith in his ability.

"The way I got out in the first two matches, I was very disheartened, but the captain and Shadab supported me, told me I am a match-winning player and that helped me," he said.

"I wanted to score my first run in international cricket, that's what I was thinking. After I scored one run, the pressure was released and I wanted to win the game."

The right-hander peppered the short Eden Park boundaries with 10 fours and seven sixes, bringing up victory with successive fours off Kyle Jamieson in the 16th over.

The first of those shots took Nawaz to 100, five balls faster than the previous Pakistan record-holder — Babar Azam against South Africa in 2021.

Fellow opener Mohammad Haris scored 41 off 20 while captain

Salman Agha was unbeaten on 51 off 31.

New Zealand captain Michael Bracewell conceded they had few answers to halt Nawaz.

"You've got to tip your hat to Nawaz there, the way that he played was unbelievable," Bracewell said.

"It's pretty tough to defend out here but when a guy plays like that, it's really tough."

Earlier, New Zealand looked well placed after Mark Chapman hit a rapid 94 before they were dismissed in their final over.

Chapman dominated after New Zealand were asked to bat, tallying 11 fours and four sixes from just 44 balls faced.

The rest of the home side's batsmen struggled to get going, aside from Bracewell's 31.

Experienced seamer Haris Rauf bowled Bracewell and finished with Pakistan's best figures of 3-29. Game four of the five-match series is in Mount Maunganui on Sunday.



AUCKLAND: Hasan Nawaz is congratulated by Salman Agha after his century.

NBA's Boston Celtics sold for record \$6.1 bn

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The NBA's Boston Celtics are being sold to the head of a California private equity firm for \$6.1 billion, a record price for a US sports franchise, the club's owners confirmed Thursday.

Boston Basketball Partners LLC said in a statement it had agreed to sell the iconic team to William Chisholm, managing director and co-founder of Symphony Technology Group.

"If approved, the new ownership group will buy a majority of the team this summer at an initial valuation of \$6.1 billion," the statement said, confirming the purchase price reported by US media.

That's the highest ever offered for a North American sports team, surpassing the \$6.05 billion paid for the NFL's Washington Commanders in 2023.

The sale of the Celtics, the current NBA champions, still requires the approval of the NBA Board of Governors.

The team is one of the most storied in the league's history, with a record 18 championships.

Chisholm, a Massachusetts native, said in a statement he has been "die-hard fan Celtics fan my entire life."

"I understand how important the Celtics are to the city of Boston — the role the team plays in the community is different than any other city in the country," Chisholm said.

"I also understand that there is a responsibility as a leader of the organization to the people of Boston, and I am up for this challenge."

The new ownership group also includes current Celtics co-owner Robert Hale; Bruce Beal Jr, president of Related Companies; and the global investment firm, Sixth Street.

The Grousbeck family and Steve Pagliuca purchased the Celtics for \$360 million in 2002.

Wyc Grousbeck will continue in his roles of chief executive officer and Governor, overseeing team operations, through the 2027-28 season.

Khawaja lashes out at 'untrue' comments in availability debate

BRISBANE (AFP): Australian Test opener Usman Khawaja lashed out Friday at "inflammatory" and "categorically untrue" comments from Queensland's head of cricket after he missed a crucial Sheffield Shield game.

The 38-year-old did not feature in Queensland's clash last week with South Australia in Adelaide which saw them reach the final of the domestic red-ball competition. He instead flew to Melbourne to watch the Australian Grand Prix.

Queensland's head of cricket Joe Dawes subsequently took aim at the veteran batsman. "Our medical staff said all the way through he has been available for selection," Dawes was widely cited as saying earlier this week.

"That is my understanding from Cricket Australia staff as well. No hamstring issues as far as we are concerned. "It's just disappointing he didn't play a game for Queensland when he had an opportunity to," Dawes added. "I have got a bunch of blokes here that all want to play."

Khawaja called a press conference on Friday to fire back, saying he was managing an ongoing hamstring issue under a plan formulated with Cricket Australia medical staff and chief selector George Bailey.

Khawaja is contracted to Cricket Australia. "Joe Dawes came out the other day and said a few inflammatory things, which was really disappointing to me as a player," he said.

"Joe said the medical

staff had no idea (about hamstring injury). That is 100 percent wrong.

"I've talked to both our physios... I was talking to the Australian physio the whole time. Everyone knew about it. "That was probably one of the most shocking things I've heard said, which was really disappointing, because it's categorically untrue."

He added that he had Cricket Australia's blessing to attend the grand prix.

"I go home and curl up in a ball or I go and watch F1," Khawaja said. "I still look after my body. It's not by any coincidence I'm 38 and still playing."

Queensland meet South Australia again in the Shield final next week, with Khawaja hoping to be fit for selection.

GB's Azu sprints to 60m gold for first global title



LONDON (Agencies): Great Britain's Jeremiah Azu sprinted to 60m gold in a dramatic photo finish at the World Athletics Indoor Championships to secure the first global title of his career.

Within two weeks of his triumph at the European indoors, the 23-year-old announced himself as a world champion by equalling that personal best performance of 6.49 seconds. It saw him cross the line one hundredth of a second ahead of Australian

Lachlan Kennedy, who was initially shown as the winner on the big screen in Nanjing, China.

World Indoor gold has added a stunning conclusion to a whirlwind month for Azu, who celebrated the birth of his son just one week before claiming his first individual international title on the European stage.

Azu had his hands on his head as his name flashed up in second place, but the Briton was soon sprinting away in ecstatic

celebration when his victory was confirmed. "I knew I could win it. I said at the Europeans I want to take over the world. This is just the start of our journey," Azu told BBC Sport. "The plan is to keep on winning. The sky isn't the limit - there is way, way more than that. Let's see what the summer brings - I'm excited for it."

Elsewhere on the opening day of action inside the Nanjing Cube, British 1500m runners Georgia Hunter Bell and Neil Gourley progressed to their respective finals, while Amber Anning underlined her gold medal credentials with a statement 400m qualification.

The three-day championships continue on Saturday morning, with Britain's Molly Caudery aiming to defend her women's pole vault final (02:10 GMT) before Anning bids for gold.

Wood hits hat-trick as rampant NZ move to brink of WC

WELLINGTON (AFP): Chris Wood scored a hat-trick of headers as New Zealand moved to within one win of the World Cup with a 7-0 demolition of Fiji on Friday.

New Zealand will face 152nd-ranked New Caledonia in Auckland on Monday for a place at the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Wood was subbed off after sealing his treble with just under 30 minutes left and, with the game going on, the Nottingham Forest striker climbed into the stands in Wellington to sign autographs.

A smiling Wood was promptly booked by the referee.

"If that's the rules, that's the rules. Just doing something nice and trying to sign for the fans," said Wood, who has hit 18

goals in the Premier League to fire Forest into the Champions League places.

New Zealand are 89th in the FIFA rankings and red-hot favourites to reach the World Cup for the third time, to go with appearances in 1982 and 2010.

They have never won a match at football's showpiece in six attempts.

There was only ever one team in it against Fiji's amateur side of police officers and construction workers.

Wood is enjoying the best season of his career at age 33 and he nodded in unmarked after six minutes to put New Zealand on their way.

The skipper repeated the trick, all headers, in the 56th and 60th minutes. Wood now has 44 goals in 81 games for his country. Sarpreet Singh, Tyler

Bindon, Tim Payne and Kosta Barbarouses all got in on the act for New Zealand.

"It's all about the team," said Wood. "It was a dominant first half and we kept it going into the second half. The team did really well in that sense."

In the first semi-final of Oceania qualifying, New Caledonia scored three times in the second half for a 3-0 win over fellow minnows Tahiti.

Next year's World Cup has been expanded to 48 teams, meaning direct entry for the team that wins the qualifying competition in Oceania.

The region's top side previously had to go through an intercontinental playoff, with New Zealand falling at the final hurdle to Mexico, Costa Rica and Peru in recent editions.





In brief

‘Killer’ of APP staffer’s nephew arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Kalar Syedan Police on Friday arrested accused Arsalan on the charge of killing his friend a few days ago. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the accused had stabbed his friend Abdul Rahim, nephew of APP staffer Raja Nadeem Iqbal, to death over some personal grudge and dumped his body in the fields in the limits of Kallar Syedan Police Station. The police registered a case of the incident on the complaint of the victim’s father, and used all means including human intelligence to trace and arrest the accused.

IRSA releases 51,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 51,300 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 54,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1402.0 feet and was at its dead level of 1402 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 17,300 cusecs and 16,900 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1061 feet, which was 11 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 17,856 cusecs and 14,972 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 13,200, 26,400, 17,100 and 6,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5773 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

6 drug peddlers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Friday continued operations against drug peddlers and held six accused recovering more than 5 kilograms charas from them. According to the police spokesman, the R A Bazar Police arrested three accused, including Shahid with 1.5 kg, and Usman and Kamran with 700 grams charas each. Similarly, the Taxila Police arrested two accused Habibullah 1.1 kg and Amin with 550 grams charas, while the Race Course Police netted accused Sharaf Gul with 540 grams of the contraband item. Meanwhile, four accused were arrested for having illegal arms and ammunition. The Airport Police nabbed accused Irfan Rehman with a 30-bore pistol, while the Taxila Police also recovered two 30-bore pistols from accused Hamza and Habib. The Gujjar Khan Police took accused Atif into custody recovering a 30-bore MP-05 rifle with ammunition.

Begging racket busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Cantt Police in a major crackdown against professional beggars on Friday busted a begging mafia racket arresting two ‘contractors’ and 47 beggars. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the beggars, including men and women of all ages, were taken into custody in raids on various hotels, inns and plazas. The arrested beggars included 14 women, 31 men and two transgenders, the spokesman said. He said the two contractors were running the begging network in an organized manner. They used to bring people from Lahore, Ferozwala, Borewala and D G Khan to beg in Rawalpindi. The spokesman further said the contractors would drop the beggars at a specific point in their transport.



Security personal searching the languages of those who sit in ‘Itikaf’ at Faisal Mosque during holy month of Ramadan. —INP Photo

Governor KP meets Health Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Faisal Karim Kundi, paid a visit to the Ministry of Health and met with Federal Minister of Health, Mustafa Kamal.

During the meeting, Governor Kundi extended his congratulations to Minister Kamal on assuming office and expressed confidence in his leadership and expertise.

“Your services and performance as the Mayor of Karachi have been commendable and widely recognized,” said Governor Kundi, adding that Mustafa Kamal’s experience and leadership skills would significantly contribute to improving the health sector.

The discussion centered on strengthening collaboration between the federal and provincial governments to enhance public

health services in KP.

Both leaders agreed to work closely on joint initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access and addressing key challenges in the province.

Governor Kundi highlighted ongoing health projects and the challenges faced in the sector, while Minister Kamal reaffirmed the federal government’s commitment to supporting KP’s health initiatives.

“Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a crucial province of Pakistan, and the federal Ministry of Health will extend all possible support to its provincial health department,” stated Mustafa Kamal.

Both leaders emphasized the need for a collaborative approach between federal and provincial authorities to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, particularly

in underserved areas.

Mustafa Kamal reiterated his commitment to ensuring healthcare facilities reach every doorstep through modern technology and innovative solutions.

“The burden of diseases is increasing across the country, and it is imperative that we take urgent measures to improve healthcare delivery,” remarked Minister Kamal.

He shared that he has already held telephonic discussions with all four provincial health ministers since assuming office.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi extended an invitation to Minister Mustafa Kamal to visit the Governor’s House in Peshawar, reinforcing the commitment to continued cooperation for the betterment of Pakistan’s health sector.

Aitkaf begins at Faisal Masjid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Around 1,000 worshippers commenced Aitkaf at Faisal Masjid on Friday before Maghrib prayers under the supervision of the Dawah Academy of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI).

According to Dr Qari Zia ur Rehman, Incharge of Faisal Masjid Islamic Centre, the selection of participants was finalized after a thorough screening process. The faithful will observe Aitkaf during the last ten days of Ramadan.

The Faisal Masjid Islamic Centre of Dawah Academy will conduct special lectures during this period, while participants will also take part in Qiyam-ul-Lail, organized by Dawah Academy in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Renowned Qura from across the country will recite the Quran during these night prayers.

Dawah Academy has ensured that all necessary arrangements are in place, including medical and essential facilities, without any charge for the worshippers. Food stalls have been set up to offer a variety of meal options, allowing participants to choose according to their preference.

WASA starts tree plantation campaign

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi on Friday started a tree plantation campaign marking the World Forest Day as per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz of “Plant for Pakistan”. WASA Managing Director Muhammad Saleem Ashraf in this regard planted a sapling here at the WASA Headquarters building.

Director Admin WASA Muhammad Umar Farooq and other staff and officers attended the ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, Saleem Ashraf said that the WASA Rawalpindi would fully participate in the “Plant for Pakistan” campaign to make it a success.

A complete and comprehensive programme, he said, had been prepared in that regard, according to which saplings would be planted at all field offices, tube-wells, filtration plants, Sewage Treatment Plant Gorakhpur, Chahan Dam and Filtration Plant colony.

He further said that planting trees was very important to keep the environment clean and deal with the challenges of environmental change and pollution, besides providing a safe and better environment to the coming generations.

Railways boost security measures for trains operating from Balochistan: Kayani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Railways, Bilal Azhar Kayani, told the National Assembly on Friday that Pakistan Railways has increased security for trains in Balochistan after recent tragic incidents.

During the question hour, he explained that Pakistan Railways has the Railway Police, which includes 2,802 personnel. According to their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), two to four Railway Police officers are usually assigned to regular trains in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan.

Kayani said that earlier, 13 security personnel were deployed on each train in Balochistan—five from the Railway Police and eight from the Frontier Corps (FC).

However, after the recent incidents, security has been further tightened. “Now, each train traveling to Balochistan will have

22 security personnel onboard—11 from the FC and 11 from the Railway Police,” he added.

He also spoke about improved security at Quetta Railway Station. “The fencing project there has been finalized, and security is being strengthened,” he said. New walk-through gates and scanners are being installed to replace old equipment and improve passenger screening.

Kayani mentioned that a bomb disposal squad is already in place, but its capabilities are being enhanced. He also said that faulty communication systems are being upgraded to ensure smooth operations. Additionally, sniffer dogs are checking Balochistan-bound trains.

Talking about train accidents, the minister said the long-term solution is the completion of the ML-1 project. “This project is being actively pursued. Once completed, it will provide a safer,

faster railway system with modern crossings, underpasses, and level crossings,” he said.

Kayani also shared that several railway projects are underway through the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), including major track repairs and maintenance.

He said the ML-1 project, part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), should have started earlier. “Now, it’s our top priority at both the ministry and government levels,” he said.

The minister added that ML-1 will bring major improvements to Pakistan Railways. “It will reduce accidents, increase the number of trains, and make them faster. Once the project is complete, travel times are expected to drop by 40%, making train journeys safer, quicker, and more efficient for passengers,” Kayani concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi visits Ministry of health meets federal Minister of health Mustafa Kamal. —APP Photo

Climate change real challenge across globe: Chairman WAPDA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (R) has emphasized the urgent need for global efforts to combat climate change and protect the environment.

In his message in connection with International Water Day and Earth Hour to be observed on Saturday, he said World Water Day will focus on the theme ‘Save Our Glaciers’, highlighting the importance of preserving these natural water reservoirs. Glaciers, the lifelines of our rivers and a critical source of freshwater, are rapidly retreating due to global warming.

This not only threatens water security, but also affects agriculture, energy, and the livelihoods of millions. At WAPDA, we recognize the importance of safeguarding these vital natural reserves and pro-

moting sustainable water management for the stability and prosperity of our country.

The Chairman said as the world switches off lights to observe Earth Hour, we join the global movement with the theme ‘Give Earth an Hour’. This symbolic gesture reminds us of our collective responsibility to reduce our carbon footprint and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

He said that with a current installed capacity of 9,500 MW of clean, renewable hydel energy, WAPDA is at the forefront of Pakistan’s transition towards low-carbon growth.

Through our ongoing mega projects - including Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, and Dasu Hydropower Project - we are not only enhancing water storage and energy generation, but also contributing to climate

resilience by reducing dependence on fossil fuels. By 2029-30, WAPDA aims to add 9.7 MAF to the water storage and double its hydel capacity, adding another 10,000 MW of green electricity to the National Grid. These efforts are aligned with Pakistan’s broader climate commitments and our vision for a secure, sustainable, and greener future.

As we celebrate World Water Day and Earth Hour, let us reaffirm our dedication to protecting the planet and its precious resources.

At WAPDA, we will continue to work tirelessly towards a sustainable future, where energy and water needs are met without compromising the ecosystems of our planet. “We urge everyone to join us in this endeavor, as we strive to create a better tomorrow for generations to come,” he concluded.

1,100-bed hospital to be built in Islamabad: NA told

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, Mukhtar Ahmad Malik, informed the National Assembly on Friday that a new 1,100-bed hospital will be built in Islamabad’s I-11 sector.

During the question hour, he said, “The project is in its final planning stage, and we expect the groundbreaking ceremony to be held in the first week of April.” He added that if everything goes according to plan, healthcare services at the new hospital will begin by August 2027.

The minister also talked about steps being taken to improve primary healthcare services. He said that eight Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Community Health Centers (CHCs) are planned to start operations

this year. “This will help establish an effective referral system, ensuring that primary and secondary healthcare centers manage cases at their level, while major hospitals like PIMS focus on critical patients,” he explained.

He said these efforts will reduce the burden on the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), the largest government hospital in Islamabad. “We aim to improve healthcare services and provide timely, quality treatment for everyone,” he added.

Mukhtar Ahmad also informed about the opening of Islamabad’s first-ever Stroke Intervention Center in the public sector. “Until now, there was no such facility available in the public sector in the capital,” he said.

The minister further informed that construction of a new 200-bed emergency hospital will be completed by June this year.

“The building is finished, and we are in the process of procuring medical equipment. The Letter of Credit (LC) has already been opened,” he stated.

He also mentioned that a 200-bed cancer hospital is expected to be completed by June 2026, and the government plans for it to be fully operational by then.

Speaking about PIMS, he said it is a 1,200-bed hospital that serves over 8,000 patients daily, including outpatient and emergency cases. Despite the high patient load, PIMS continues to provide free treatment and does not turn anyone away. “This is a big responsibility,” he added.

Islamabad sees 15pc drop in crimes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police has recorded a 15 percent decrease in overall crime during the ongoing year 2025. Meanwhile, in March alone, crime dropped by 33 percent, while heinous crimes saw a reduction of 25 percent.

A police spokesperson told APP on Friday that Islamabad Police arrested 2,719 accused involved in various criminal activities and recovered cash and valuables worth over Rs. 51 million and Rs. 75 billion. As part of a crackdown on criminal gangs, 433 dacoits and members of 185 organized groups involved in snatching and vehicle lifting were arrested, leading to the recovery of 27 looted vehicles and 194 stolen motorcycles.

Furthermore, 1,455 robbers and dacoits were arrested, with police

recovering looted valuables from their possession. A crackdown on illegal weapons led to the arrest of 654 accused, with authorities seizing 26 Kalashnikovs, 43 guns, 800 pistols, 63 daggers, and 26,285 rounds of ammunition. Additionally, 787 proclaimed offenders and absconders were taken into custody.

To tackle drug-related crimes, Islamabad Police launched a special awareness campaign, “Nasha Ab Nahi,” aimed at keeping the city drug-free. Seminars, awareness walks, and lectures were held in educational institutions, alongside strict legal action against drug traffickers. A total of 443 accused were arrested, and 428 cases were registered, resulting in the seizure of 78,251 kg of hashish, 155,466 kg of heroin,

23,861 kg of ice, and 2,704 liters of liquor. Additionally, nine drug peddlers supplying narcotics to educational institutions were caught.

As part of security measures, 80 search operations were conducted across various areas of the city. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq praised the Islamabad Police’s efforts in reducing crime and ensuring public safety. “The 15 percent overall crime reduction, the 33 percent decline in March, and the 25 percent decrease in heinous crimes are a testament to the Islamabad Police’s tireless efforts. Our officers have made great sacrifices, especially during violent protests and confrontations with criminals,” he said. He further urged citizens to support law enforcement agencies.

Convicted smugglers flogged publicly

KABUL (Pajhwok): Two individuals convicted of smuggling alcoholic drinks have been publicly punished in northern Balkh province, the Supreme Court announced on Friday. The apex court said in a statement the primary court punished the convicts in the Nahr-i-Shahi district on Thursday. The court sentenced the convicts to 16 months in prison and 39 lashes each. The decision was carried out after being confirmed by the Supreme Court authorities.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 21, 1446 — Saturday, March 22, 2025

Arian Cycle wins Ghor's futsal title

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): The Ramadan Futsal Cup in western Ghor province has concluded, with the Arian Cycle team emerging victorious. The tournament, featuring 12 teams, was held in Ferozkoh, the capital of Ghor, coinciding with the start of the holy month of Ramadan. Jan Mohammad Haidari, the head of the Football Federation of Ghor, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the final match was contested between the Arian Cycle and Baran teams.

Mujahid: US delegation's visit will address concerns of new US gov't

KABUL (ToloneWS): Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, said the visit of the American delegation to Kabul is a positive step toward improving relations between the two countries.

In an interview with TOLONews, Mujahid added that these meetings can convey the wishes of the Afghan people to the United States and reduce the concerns of the previous US government.

He further stated that the reason some countries have not recognized the Islamic Emirate is due to intentional and incorrect treatment of Afghanistan.

Zabiullah Mujahid said: "A new development has occurred in the United States, and a new government has come to power. Afghanistan's intentions should be conveyed to them, and they should be made to understand what path Afghanistan is taking and what kind of interactions it seeks. Perhaps these meetings will prove useful and the new US



government's concerns will be resolved."

In response to a question regarding the caretaker cabinet, the spokesperson stated that although the government is operating in a caretaker capacity, the current officials have full authority and the governance process continues normally.

Regarding the absence of a constitution in the country, he added that decisions are currently being made based on Islamic laws. Mujahid told

TOLONews: "Law is important and necessary in every country, but what is more important is that we reach that stage. At present, we are not facing a legal vacuum, as the Islamic Emirate declared from the first day that it implements Islamic Sharia in the country."

More than three years into the rule of the Islamic Emirate, the fate of the constitution and the caretaker cabinet remains unclear, and no country has yet recognized the Islamic Emirate.

Bayat Foundation delivers Ramadan aid

BAMYAN (Ariana News): Bayat Foundation has announced it has distributed Ramadan aid packages to dozens of needy families in Bamyan province.

These aid packages include flour, oil, and rice, intending to assist those in need during the holy month of Ramadan. Officials from the foundation stated that these donations will be extended to needy families in other provinces of the country by the end of Ramadan.

"As part of the Bayat Foundation's ongoing assistance, today we are distributing Ramadan aid packages in Bamyan province. These packages contain flour, rice, and oil," said Sayed Hakim, a representative of the Bayat Foundation in Bamyan.

Meanwhile, recipients of the aid have called on other charitable organizations to also rush to assist those in need during this month. One recipient expressed gratitude: "Thanks to the Bayat Foundation for considering help for people like us."

Another recipient added: "Thank you to the Bayat Foundation for helping us, and we hope that in the future, more aid will be provided to the poor people of Bamyan." In addition to supporting public welfare projects, healthcare, and those affected by natural disasters, the Bayat Foundation has been providing food and non-food aid to thousands of needy families in the center and provinces of Afghanistan during each Ramadan for nearly two decades.

Ghazni, Paktia tribes bury hatchet after 13 years

HAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Two tribes have reconciled, bringing an end to a 13-year-old enmity between two tribes in two provinces, thanks to the mediation of local officials, scholars and tribal elders.

The feud between the Alizai and Baddinkhel tribes, based in Ghazni and Paktia provinces, has come to an end. Abu Khalid Sarhadi, spokesman for Ghazni police, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "The conflict originated over land disputes, resulting in casualties on both sides, with six individuals suffered casualties."

He explained that both sides agreed to reconcile through the efforts of local officials, scholars, and tribal elders on Thursday.

Sarhadi added that scholars played a key role in mediating the conflict and proposing a peaceful resolution. Following the announcement of the decision, both sides accepted the terms and agreed to live in peace and harmony.

Academic year 1404 begins without girls above sixth grade

KABUL (ToloneWS): The Ministry of Education has announced the official start of the new academic year for 1404 across Afghanistan.

However, girls' schools for students above the sixth grade remain closed, and the fate of their reopening is still uncertain.

At a ceremony held for this occasion in Kabul, Habibullah Agha, the acting minister of education, stated that school curricula will be reviewed, and any content that contradicts "religion and Afghan traditions" will be removed from the educational syllabus.

He emphasized that the new curriculum will be based on religious teachings and modern sciences.

"We will remove subjects that go against Afghan culture and religion from the curriculum, regardless of who agrees or disagrees. We will create a curriculum that is religious, modern, and aligned with Afghan society," said Habibullah Agha.

During the program, several high-ranking officials of the Islamic Emirate



also stressed the importance of developing the education system and addressing the current challenges in this sector.

Cabinet members, the Prime Minister, and officials of the Islamic Emirate are committed to building a superior education system and expanding education and training

throughout Afghanistan, especially in remote areas," stated Abdul Salam Hanafi, administrative deputy of Prime Minister.

"We have fallen far behind in education and higher education, and the current level of knowledge and talent is not sufficient for the development and self-sufficiency of the

country," stated Abdul Baqi Haqqani, acting head of the National Examination Authority.

The new academic year begins while the issue of girls being deprived of education beyond the sixth grade enters its fourth year, and it is still unclear when the doors of education will reopen for girls.

Challenges faced by Afghan migrants in 1403

KABUL (ToloneWS): Afghan migrants in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey faced serious challenges in the solar year 1403.

These migrants experienced mistreatment, forced deportation, attacks, and severe restrictions on access to certain services.

These challenges sparked growing concerns among migrants, prompting international organizations and the Islamic Emirate to work on solutions for their safe and legal return.

In 1403, Pakistan intensified its second round of Afghan migrant expulsions. On the first of Hoot (solar year), the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad announced that Pakistan had decided to deport all Afghan migrants, including those holding Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) and POR (Proof of Registration) cards, from across the country, especially from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Subsequently, on the 18th of Hoot, Pakistan's Ministry of Interior stated that Afghan migrants must leave Pakistan by March 31 of the current year.

Sardar Ahmad Shakeeb, Chargé d'affaires of the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad, said about this move: "Pakistani authorities have stated that Afghans can only reside in the country with a visa, and ACC and POR cards are no longer valid." This decision led to further concerns, prompting many Afghan migrants in Pakistan to protest.

Afghan migrants in Iran

were not free from challenges either. Conditions for them worsened in 1403.

Starting from the 1st of Hamal 1404 (March 21, 2025), undocumented Afghan asylum seekers in Iran were denied access to health, education, and other services. This policy increased concerns among Afghan migrants in Iran.

On the 7th of Dalwa 1403, Iran's foreign minister visited Afghanistan with a delegation and discussed the situation of Afghan migrants with the officials of the Islamic Emirate.

A delegation from the Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate also visited Iran that year to discuss alternative punishments to the death penalty for Afghans with Iranian judicial authorities.

Abdul Rahim Rashid, head of media and foreign relations of the Supreme Court, said about the trip: "Gharibabadi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, pledged to treat Afghan migrants well and uphold their rights. Additionally, 1,500 Afghan prisoners will be repatriated soon."

Zahir Bahand, an Afghan migrant in Pakistan, told TOLONews in Jodi about the mistreatment of Afghan migrants in Pakistan: "In the past three days, hundreds of Afghan asylum seekers have been arrested by Pakistani police and transferred to deportation centers."

"No help is provided to

Afghans, and no one is aware of our problems," said Akbar Soltani, an Afghan migrant in Iran.

Such statements reflect the harsh and unbearable conditions faced by Afghan migrants in these countries. Moreover, Afghans with US immigration cases also faced increased concerns after President Trump's order suspending the refugee program. In Pakistan, these individuals held protests demanding the resumption of the refugee acceptance process.

Raissa, an Afghan migrant in Pakistan with a US immigration case, said at a gathering: "We call on President Trump and the US Secretary of State to restart our relocation process."

An attack on Afghan migrants in Iran also occurred this year. On the 25th of Mizan, Afghan migrants at the Iranian border in Kalgan, Saravan center, were attacked by Iranian border guards, resulting in several deaths and injuries. Initially, Iranian authorities denied the incident, but the Islamic Emirate, after necessary investigations, confirmed that two people were killed and 34 others injured.

"Following this tragic incident, two martyrs and 34 eyewitnesses, some of whom are injured, were transferred by the delegation," said Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate.

Despite numerous challenges, many Afghan

migrants decided to return to their homeland due to the harsh conditions in host countries. According to the Refugee Committee, more than 2.1 million Afghans returned from Iran and Pakistan over the past year.

On the 16th of Jodi 1403, the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing announced that 28,116 acres of land have been designated in nine provinces for returnees, and once the survey is complete, the process of building townships for them will begin.

With increasing mistreatment and intensified deportations of Afghan migrants from host countries, international organizations, including the UNHCR, have called for humane and respectful treatment of Afghan migrants.

Arafat Jamal, head of UNHCR, told TOLONews on the 11th of Jodi: "Our first message is to Pakistan and Iran, which is that you have been such generous hosts for 45 years. Please don't stop right away; you must treat the Afghans with dignity and allow them to return safely and voluntarily."

According to the latest statistics from the UNHCR, more than 2.1 million

Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan over the past year. Although 1403 was a challenging and unprecedented year for Afghan migrants in various countries, it remains to be seen whether these challenges will be resolved in the coming year.

Preserving Afghan heritage: Progress and challenges in 1403

KABUL (ToloneWS): In the year 1403 (solar calendar), Afghanistan witnessed several initiatives around historical and cultural heritage protection.

The Ministry of Information and Culture stated that during this year, it prevented the smuggling of more than 700 historical artifacts and discovered and registered over 200 historical sites in various provinces. With its rich history and culture, Afghanistan has always been an attractive destination for enthusiasts of ancient and historical artifacts.

"During the year 1403, the Ministry of Information and Culture succeeded in preventing the smuggling of 710 historical artifacts that smugglers intended to take out of the country through land ports and airports," stated Khubib Ghafan, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture.

Worldwide, historical artifacts and sites play a significant role in preserving the cultural identity of nations. In Afghanistan, archaeological excavations are still ongoing, and in the year 1403 alone, at least 200 historical and archaeological sites were discovered and registered in the provinces of Baghlan, Sar-e-Pol, Badakhshan, and



several other provinces. These discoveries highlight the cultural and civilizational richness of this land, which for centuries has been a crossroads of great civilizations.

"Historical and ancient artifacts are among the valuable treasures of a country's culture, identity, and history—especially our own—and discovering these artifacts requires careful and fundamental preservation," stated Ikrami Fandugistani, another cultural affairs expert.

On the other hand, citizens and cultural activists in various provinces have repeatedly expressed concern that some historical monuments are at risk of damage and destruction.

"The destruction of this minaret is a major cultural

tragedy not only for Afghanistan but for the entire Islamic world," stated Mir Rahim, a visitor to a site. However, during this year, thirteen historical monuments were restored in the provinces of Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, and Ghor.

"It is the government's duty to ensure the protection and restoration of these historical buildings by securing adequate budgets for this purpose," stated Wali Shah Bahra, a cultural affairs expert.

In the past year, several committees were established by the Ministry of Information and Culture for the restoration and renovation of historical sites and for the preservation of the country's cultural values and national languages.

Afghanistan's health system in 1403 reviewed

KABUL (ToloneWS): From the closure of health centers to maternal and infant mortality and the negative effects of sanctions on foreign aid, the system endured significant strain.

Despite these challenges, achievements such as self-sufficiency in medicine production and progress in polio vaccination were considered important advancements in the country's healthcare sector.

While the UN Population Fund reported on August 24 that Afghanistan needed 18,000 midwives, on December 4, medical education institutions were closed to girls, a decision that sparked widespread domestic and international reactions.

"One day when we came to the institute, the director told us not to come anymore, the institutes were closed. Later, we were given ten days to come back and take exams," said Haida, a midwifery student.

Maternal and newborn health has always been a significant focus for the country's healthcare system and global aid organizations.

In 1403, the World Health Organization reported that 24 mothers and 167 newborns die daily in Afghanistan.

The European Union and the UN Population Fund also stated that a mother dies every two hours in the country from pre-

ventable pregnancy and childbirth-related diseases. These figures indicate that major issues persist in this area.

"Health centers and the number of hospital beds need to be increased. The number of female doctors should be raised nationwide, and necessary medicines should be available in every hospital department," said Najmulsama Shafajo a doctor.

The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) warned that maternal mortality could increase by 50% by 2026 in Afghanistan. One of the main causes identified was the shortage of female healthcare workers.

However, on December 26, Mohammad Hassan Ghiasi, Deputy Minister of Policy and Development at the Ministry of Public Health, denied the shortage of female health workers and spoke of enhanced cooperation in this regard. He emphasized that programs are underway to improve women's healthcare services.

"We have more than 30,000 midwives who are not yet employed in the system and are waiting for opportunities. We assure our sisters that in new centers, respecting all religious and Islamic values, their expertise and knowledge will be utilized," said Ghiasi.

Foreign aid also faced serious challenges in 1403. Following the suspension of US foreign aid, the health sector was adversely affected.

On February 12, local officials in Ghazni and Bamyan provinces reported the closure of dozens of health centers.

"The operations of 39 health centers have stopped, including 15 small clinics, 3 sub-centers, 17 mobile teams, one safety center, and two medical clinics. In total, 39 health facilities have shut down in Ghazni province," Hamidullah Nisar, Head of Information and Culture in Ghazni.

The situation of health centers nationwide was also concerning. On March 12, Save the Children reported the closure of 18 health centers and stated that another 14 centers it supports would also shut down in the coming month.

The World Health Organization (WHO) also warned that 80% of its health centers in Afghanistan may close by June 2025.

Following WHO's report, Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy, told TOLONews: "Our request to the international community and aid organizations is to support this organization so that it can continue delivering services to the people of Afghanistan."

The polio vaccination

campaign changed from a house-to-house approach to being administered at designated sites and mosques on October 28, which drew criticism from families.

Although countries and foundations such as Indonesia, Japan, and the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) helped fight polio in Afghanistan, on February 1, the WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean warned that the US withdrawal from WHO would pose serious challenges, especially in eradicating polio in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Hanan Balkhy, the Regional Director of the World Health Organization for the Eastern Mediterranean, said: "The announcement of the United States' withdrawal from WHO is undoubtedly regrettable, especially because the United States has provided significant support over the past seventy years since the establishment of the WHO. This includes substantial contributions to the Eastern Mediterranean region, particularly in combating polio. We are now in the final stages of eradicating polio in the last two countries in the world—Afghanistan and Pakistan."

The Ministry of Health announced that 72% of district residents lack access to secondary health services.



The acting minister also mentioned that the leader of the Islamic Emirate approved a special budget to build 318 hospitals across the districts.

"A special budget has been approved by the Amir al-Mu'minin of Afghanistan for constructing public hospitals in 318 districts. Legal and preliminary steps have been completed, and construction has practically begun. It will create employment for 27,000

professional and administrative staff through a systematic and transparent recruitment process, stated acting Minister Noor Jalal Jalali.

One of the significant achievements in 1403 was attaining self-sufficiency in medicine production. For the first time, Afghanistan became self-reliant in producing IV serum, exporting nearly two million serum bags worth \$580,000 to Iraq.

This accomplishment not

only supported the economy but also strengthened the domestic pharmaceutical industry and reduced dependency on imports. Despite efforts made, challenges in the healthcare sector persist. Reports and statistics show that various areas, especially in remote regions and districts, still face serious problems. Political and economic instability and sanctions continue to negatively affect this sector.

PHC rejects writ against Military Court sentences

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued a verdict stating that the sentences of individuals convicted by military courts will be counted from the date when the Field General Court Martial signs the sentence, and not from the time they were taken into custody, on Friday.

The court made this observation while dismissing 29 different writ petitions filed by convicts who were sentenced by military courts for their involvement in terrorism-related activities.

During the hearing, the lawyers representing the petitioners argued that the petitioners had been imprisoned for a longer period than their sentences. They cited Section 382-B of the law, which states that the period spent in detention before the sentence is also counted as part of the sentence.

The lawyers argued that the petitioners were sentenced under the Army Act, and that they had spent more time in detention than their sentences. They requested the court to grant the benefit of Section 382-B and order their release.

However, the court ruled

that Section 382-B does not apply to sentences handed down by military courts under special laws. The court cited several judgments of the Supreme Court and the Peshawar High Court, which have held that convicts sentenced under special laws are not entitled to the benefit of Section 382-B.

The court also noted that the military courts have their own laws and procedures, and the high court only examines whether the sentence was handed down under the relevant section of the law.

The Deputy Attorney General Sana Ullah Butt representing the federal government, argued that the sentences handed down by the Field General Court Martial are under special laws and do not come under Section 382-B. He cited several judgments of the Supreme Court and the Peshawar High Court in support of his argument.

The court Assistant Shumail Ahmad Butt Advocate also presented Supreme Court of Pakistan and Peshawar High Court judgments denying benefit of 382-B under special laws. PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Naeem Anwar and Justice Dr.

Khurshid Iqbal, dismissed all 29 petitions after hearing the arguments from both sides.

Court sought reply against disappearance of Ministry of Interior employee: The Acting Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice SM Atique Shah has issued notices to the federal and provincial governments, seeking their response regarding the disappearance of a Ministry of Interior employee from Peshawar, on Friday.

The Counsel Amin ur Rehman Yousafzai Advocate stated that petitioner brother was taken from Peshawar and that the incident occurred within the jurisdiction of the Paharipura police station. The missing employee is a data entry operator at the Ministry of Interior.

Chief Justice S. M. Atique Shah asked where the missing employee's brother was from, to which the petitioner's lawyer replied that he was from Charsadda and had gone missing from Peshawar.

The court adjourned the hearing and directed the federal and provincial governments, as well as other relevant parties, to respond within 14 days.

President okays 180-day remission for prisoners

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has approved a 180-day special remission in the sentences of prisoners across the country in connection with Pakistan Day and Eid-ul-Fitr, exercising powers under Article 45 of the Constitution.

The remission will not apply to inmates convicted of murder, espionage, or anti-state activities. Individuals found guilty of financial crimes or causing damage to the national exchequer are also excluded from this relief. Under the announced measure, female prisoners aged over 60 who have served at least one-third of their sentence will be eligible for the sentence reduction. The move is aimed at providing relief to select categories of prisoners while maintaining exclusions based on the nature and severity of crimes.

Bilawal to visit Lahore on Monday

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will arrive in Lahore on March 24 (Monday).

During his visit to Lahore, Bilawal Bhutto will have Iftar with party workers at Governor House. In this regard, invitations have been sent to 2,000 party workers from across Punjab for the Governor House Iftar.

Bilawal Bhutto will also address the party workers on the occasion of Iftar. Bilawal will also meet members of the PPP parliamentary party in the Punjab Assembly. Sources said Bilawal Bhutto will be briefed by the PPP Coordination Committee on the progress made on power-sharing with the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N).

Bilawal Bhutto will also give an important message to the leaders regarding the party reorganization of Lahore and other parts of Punjab. After Bilawal Bhutto's visit, Punjab Governor will go to Saudi Arabia on March 25 to perform Umrah.

Erdogan warns against protests

ISTABNUL (Reuters): President Tayyip Erdogan warned on Friday that Turkiye would not tolerate street violence or public disruptions after the detention of Istanbul's mayor Ekrem Imamoglu prompted some of the biggest shows of civil disobedience in more than a decade.

"We will not accept the disruption of public order. Just as we have never yielded to street terrorism, we will not surrender to vandalism," Erdogan, 71, told an audience in the capital Ankara. The warning came after thousands of people protested for two days in Istanbul, Ankara and other cities, including at university campuses, leading to some clashes. Police used water cannon to disperse some crowds and have closed down streets.

More demonstrations are planned later on Friday and tensions could rise at the weekend when a court is expected to rule to formally arrest Imamoglu, Erdogan's main political rival who leads him in some opinion polls. An arrest could also accelerate a three-day sell-off in Turkish assets that prompted the central bank to intervene to protect the currency.

Imamoglu, 54, was detained on Wednesday facing charges including graft and aiding a terrorist group. His Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition, condemned the move as politically motivated and urged supporters to demonstrate lawfully. European leaders have called the detention a sign of democratic backsliding in Turkiye.

Erdogan said it was "a dead end" to take to the streets. "Pointing to the streets instead of the courts to defend theft, looting, illegality, and fraud is gravely irresponsible," he said. Authorities imposed a four-day ban after the detention and said that 53 people were detained during protests on Thursday.



KARACHI: Workers of Jamat-e-Islami holding a protest rally to show solidarity with Palestinian people.

ECC approves Rs2.7b TSGs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet here on Friday approved Technical Supplementary Grants (TSGs) of around Rs.2.7 billion, including Rs2 billion for Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The ECC meeting was chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and was attended by Minister for Power, Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari; Minister for Petroleum, Ali Parvez Malik; Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh Chairman of SECP, federal secretaries, and senior officials from relevant ministries and divisions.

According to press release issued by finance ministry, the cabinet committee approved a summary from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, seeking a Technical Supplementary

Grant (TSG) of Rs. 2 billion from its allocated budget of Rs. 5.6 billion. The approved grant will be used to meet the liabilities of payments for outstanding advertisement dues owed to media houses, the press release said.

The ECC further approved a proposal from the Ministry of Defence for a TSG amounting to Rs. 430 million for the execution of SAP schemes in the province of Punjab during the current financial year. The committee also approved the allocation of Rs. 250 million as Government Paid-Up Capital for the operations of the Jinnah Medical Complex & Research Centre (JMC&RC) Company.

This allocation will support the establishment of a state-of-the-art, 1,000-bed academic medical centre in Islamabad. However, the ECC directed the JMC&RC Company to provide a detailed breakdown of the expenditures and activities to be covered by

the approved Rs. 250 million before seeking further allocations.

In addition, the ECC discussed a summary presented by the Finance Division regarding the phasing out of the State Bank of Pakistan's long-term financing facility (LTFF) to Exim Bank. The ECC decided that the SBP's LTFF portfolio of PKR 330 billion would be phased out to the Exim Bank, with an allocation of PKR 1,001 billion through a Technical Supplementary Grant to meet the LTFF subsidy requirement for the new portfolio for FY 2025.

The cabinet committee also approved a summary from the Finance Division for a Technical Supplementary Grant of Rs. 24,556 million (equivalent to USD 87,671.21 at an exchange rate of Rs. 280.1/USD) to Mrs. Lia Bomba of JAED Textile Pvt Ltd, Sydney, Australia, in compliance with the specific instructions of the Supreme Court of Pakistan dated 19th March 2025.

Israel intensifying Gaza strikes to press Hamas

GAZA (Reuters): Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Friday the army was intensifying strikes from the air, land and sea in Gaza to pressure Hamas into freeing remaining hostages, and would also evacuate civilians to the south of the enclave.

After two months of relative calm, Gazans were again fleeing for their lives after Israel effectively abandoned a ceasefire, launching a new all-out air and ground campaign against Gaza's dominant Palestinian militant group Hamas. Hamas said on Friday it is still discussing UN envoy Steve Witkoff's proposal and various other ideas, with the aim of reaching a deal to release prisoners, end the war in Gaza, and achieve a withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian enclave.

Witkoff presented last week a "bridge" plan to extend the ceasefire in Gaza into April beyond Ramadan and Passover and allow time to negotiate a

permanent cessation of hostilities. Katz said the more Hamas continued to refuse to release the remaining Israeli hostages, the more territory it would lose to Israel.

He said the military would step up strikes from the air, sea and land and expand ground operations until the hostages are released and Hamas was finally defeated. With talks having failed to bridge differences over terms to extend the ceasefire, the Israeli military resumed assaults on Gaza with a massive bombing campaign on Tuesday before sending in troops the day after.

Tuesday's first day of resumed airstrikes killed more than 400 Palestinians, one of the deadliest days of the 17-month-old war, with scant let-up since then. Meanwhile, one of the largest providers of food aid in Gaza warned on Friday it only has enough flour to distribute for the next six days.

"We can stretch that by

giving people less, but we are talking days not weeks," Sam Rose from the United Nations' Palestinian relief agency UNRWA told reporters in Geneva, speaking from Central Gaza. The situation in Gaza is gravely concerning with massive reductions in distribution of aid supplies, UNRWA said. "Six of 25 bakeries that the World Food Programme were supporting had to close down. There are larger crowds on streets outside bakeries," Rose added. "This is the longest period since the start of conflict in October 2023 that no supplies whatsoever have entered Gaza. The progress we made as an aid system over the last six weeks of the ceasefire is being reversed," Rose added.

Israel in early March blocked the entry of goods into the territory in a stand-off over a truce that has halted fighting for the past seven weeks. The move has led to a hike in prices of essential foods as well as of fuel, forcing many to ration their meals.

Sudan's army retakes presidential palace

DUBAI/CAIRO (Reuters): The Sudanese army seized full control of the presidential palace in downtown Khartoum on Friday, it said in a statement, in what would be a major gain in a two-year-old conflict with a rival armed group that has threatened to partition the country. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) said hours later that it remained in the vicinity of the palace, and that it had launched an attack that had killed dozens of army soldiers inside. Army sources said the fighters were about 400 meters away. They said the army's forces had suffered a drone attack that killed several soldiers as well as three journalists from state television.

The army had long been on the back foot but has recently been making gains and has retaken territory from the RSF in the center of the country. Meanwhile the RSF has consolidated control in the west, hardening battle lines and moving the country toward de facto partition. The RSF is working to set up a parallel government in areas it controls, although that is not expected to receive wide-

spread international recognition.

The RSF rapidly seized the presidential palace in Khartoum, along with the rest of the city, after war broke out in April 2023 over the paramilitary's integration into the armed forces. The army shared videos of soldiers cheering on the palace grounds, its glass windows shattered and walls pockmarked with bullet holes. Images showed the cladding of the recently constructed palace torn off by explosions.

Many Sudanese welcomed the army's statement that it had control of the palace. "The liberation of the palace is the best news I've heard since the start of the war, because it means the start of the army controlling the rest of Khartoum," said 55-year-old Khartoum resident Mohamed Ibrahim. "We want to be safe again and live without fear or hunger," he said.

Late on Thursday the RSF said it had seized a key base from the army in North Darfur, a region in the west of the country. The conflict has led to what the UN calls the world's largest humanitarian

crisis, spreading famine in several locations and disease across the country of 50 million people. Both sides have been accused of war crimes, while the RSF has also been charged with genocide. Both sides deny the charges.

Intermittent gunfire was heard in Khartoum on Friday and bloody fighting was expected as the army seeks to corner the RSF, which still occupies swathes of the territory to the south of the palace. "We are moving forward along all fighting axes until victory is complete by cleansing every inch of our country from the filth of this militia and its collaborators," the army statement said.

RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, had instructed troops earlier this week to maintain control at the palace. Although the RSF still has positions in Khartoum, its foothold there is more tenuous than at any point since the conflict began and the trajectory suggests the RSF will be pushed out completely, said Ahmed Soliman, senior research fellow at Chatham House.

N Korea tests anti-aircraft weapons

SEOUL (AFP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has overseen the test-firing of the country's latest anti-aircraft missile system, according to state media, as Russia's security chief arrived in Pyongyang for talks.

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported on Friday that the latest test proved that the new weapons are "highly reliable", adding that the country's combat response was "advantageous". The announcement came just a day after South Korea wrapped up an annual joint military exercise with the US, which Pyongyang separately denounced on Friday as "a rehearsal of war of aggression".

KCNA said Thursday's test conducted by North Korea's Missile Administration was to examine the performance of a system whose production has already begun. The report did not specify where the test was held but said Kim was joined by members of the Central Military Commission of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea.

The agency quoted Kim as saying that the test proved that its army "would be "equipped with another major defence weapon system with laudable combat performance". Photographs supplied by KCNA showed a plume from a missile soaring into the sky and a midair explosion. Other images showed Kim apparently observing the test and then smiling.

South Korea's military was aware in advance of a possible missile launch which ended up taking place at about 9am (00:00 GMT) on Thursday in North Korea, Yonhap News Agency reported, citing an official from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Experts said Pyongyang might be receiving help from Russia for the anti-aircraft missile system, particularly given how security ties have become increasingly entwined.

Migrant deaths hit record number in 2024

GENEVA: Nearly 9,000 people died last year trying to cross borders, the United Nations agency for migration says. The death toll set a new grim record for the fifth year in a row. The number of deaths on migratory routes has more than doubled since 2020.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded 8,938 migrant deaths in 2024. The real death toll is likely much higher given that many deaths go unreported or undocumented, the IOM said in a statement on Friday. "The rise of deaths is terrible in and of itself, but the fact that thousands remained unidentified each year is even more tragic," Julia Black, coordinator of the IOM's Missing Migrants Project, said in the statement.

The IOM's deputy director general for operations, Ugochi Daniels, said: "The increase in deaths across so many regions in the world shows why we need an international, holistic response that can prevent further tragic loss of life." "Behind every number is a human being, someone for whom the loss is devastating," he added.

Asia was the region with the most reported fatalities with 2,788, followed by the Mediterranean Sea with 2,452 and Africa with 2,242. Final data are not yet in for the Americas, but at least 1,233 deaths (including 341 in the Caribbean) occurred in 2024. — Aljazeera

Saif flays Centre's cold approach towards Kabul

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information & Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has strongly criticized the federal government, stating that the claim of a "governance gap" is a resounding slap on the face of the illegitimate federal administration. He remarked that while the uncle governs at the center, the niece rules Punjab, both setting records of bad governance.

He further criticized the federal government's cold

approach toward Afghanistan, warning that strained relations with the neighboring country have jeopardized regional peace. The deteriorating ties with Afghanistan are directly affecting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the entire nation. Dr. Saif asserted that the incompetent federal government's poor governance is fostering terrorism across the country.

Highlighting the financial crisis, he accused the federal government of deliberately withholding funds meant for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in an attempt

to create governance issues in the province. He pointed out that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the most affected province by terrorism, yet it is being treated unfairly. He called for an end to this discriminatory treatment, emphasizing that the federal government's lack of support against terrorism reflects its extreme insensitivity.

Dr. Saif further stated that the federal government is merely a spectator to the rising terrorism in KP and Balochistan, showing no real intent to address the crisis.



ISLAMABAD: A man reciting the holy Quran during 'Itikaf' at Faisal mosque.

Asad flays Centre for law, order situation

F.P. Report

MINGORA: Senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and former National Assembly Speaker, Asad Qaiser, has strongly criticized the government, holding it responsible for the rising terrorism and deteriorating law and order situation in the country.

He said that the people are bearing the consequences of the government's wrong policies and that Pakistan cannot afford a war with Afghanistan. He demanded that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif resign immediately and called for fresh elections in the country.

Talking to the media, Asad Qaiser highlighted the worsening situation in Balochistan due to the government's flawed policies, stating that relations with Afghanistan were being deliberately spoiled, creating an unnecessary war-like atmosphere. He blamed the government's Afghan policy for the current surge in terrorism, emphasizing that Pakistan is becoming increasingly isolated on the global stage due to these diplomatic failures.

"The current government has failed miserably. The country is suffering due to Shehbaz Sharif's mismanagement. He should

Raja Basharat granted bail

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former provincial minister Raja Basharat has surrendered before the Islamabad Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) after his arrest warrants were issued in two terrorism cases on Friday. The former minister Raja Basharat also filed a plea for cancellation of his arrest warrants, which the court accepted, providing him with relief. Raja Basharat is nominated in two cases related to the Judicial Complex attack, with the next hearing set for April 7. The court had earlier directed the relevant ministry to conduct his trial in jail.

Meanwhile, ATC Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra also heard four other cases registered against Raja Basharat over PTI's November 26 protest. The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) granted interim bail till May 5 in these cases on surety bonds worth Rs 5,000 each.

step down, and the nation should be given a chance to elect a new leadership," Qaiser asserted.

The PTI leader also took to social media platform X to highlight the importance of direct negotiations. He referenced the recent talks between US Special Representative Adam Buhler and the Afghan Taliban, calling it a lesson for the Pakistani government. He argued that if two long-time adversaries could sit for direct dialogue, then Pakistan, which has suffered immensely due to the prolonged conflict, should also prioritize negotiations over confrontation. "No matter how many wars are fought, eventually one has

to sit at the negotiating table, so why not make negotiations the first priority?" he remarked.

Furthermore, Asad Qaiser held a meeting with Liaquat Baloch, Central General Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, where they discussed the overall political landscape of the country. Both leaders strongly condemned Israel's brutal violence against Gaza and expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people.

PTI is also working on forming an alliance with opposition parties on pressing national issues, particularly the deteriorating security situation in Balochistan.