

Sammi challenges detention  
F.P. Report

KARACHI: Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leader Sammi Deen Baloch challenged her 30-day detention in the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday, a day after she was apprehended during a protest against the arrest of the movement's leadership in Balochistan. A two-member bench will hear the petition today, according to the petitioner's counsel.



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Train's resumption  
F.P. Report

QUETTA: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi has announced the resumption of train operations in Quetta from today (Thursday). Addressing a press conference, he revealed that the Jaffar Express will depart from Peshawar tomorrow and begin operations from Quetta the following day. The Bolan Mail will now run seven days a week.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing the federal cabinet meeting.

## IMF, Pakistan reach staff level agreement

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Staff and the Pakistani authorities have reached a staff-level agreement on the first review under Pakistan's 37-month \$7bn Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and on a new 28-month \$1.3bn arrangement under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), Advisor to Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad said here on Wednesday.

Upon Board approval, Pakistan will have access to about \$1bn under the EFF, bringing total disbursements under the EFF to about \$2bn, Advisor to Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad on X. He said, Pakistan was making sig-

nificant strides in economic reforms, focusing on tax equity, monetary stability, energy sector transformation, and climate resilience. Supported by the IMF, these efforts are laying the foundation for a sustainable and prosperous future.

He also highlighted certain key developments under the staff level agreement as follows: Pakistan's Reform Agenda: Tax & Fiscal Strengthening – Provinces amend Agriculture Income Tax to broaden the base & enhance fairness, strengthening fiscal transparency and setting the stage for long-term economic stability.

Monetary Stability & Energy Sector Transformation: Tight monetary

policy keeps inflation within target (5–7%) and ensures FX market stability. Energy sector reforms reduce circular debt, lower tariffs, and accelerate renewable energy.

Governance, Private Sector & Climate Resilience: Advancing SOE governance, fighting corruption & driving climate resilience with smart water use and green mobility initiatives to ensure a sustainable and thriving future for Pakistan. Positive Outlook Ahead: With continued reforms and dedication to sustainability, Pakistan is poised for inclusive growth, a stronger economy, and a resilient environment. The journey towards a prosperous future continues.

## PPP leaders, Bilawal discuss issues

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has said that deep-rooted divisions in the country remain the biggest obstacle to achieving consensus.

During a meeting with party officials, senior PPP leaders Sania Kamran, Sajjad-ul-Hassan, Jameel Manj, and Raheel Kamran Cheema were present. The discussion encompassed key issues, including women's development, upcoming elections, and the party's organisational restructuring.

Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari lauded Sania Kamran's contributions to both the party and the country. He further discussed the significance of her newly assigned role at the provincial level, highlighting that capable and educated individuals like her are invaluable assets to the party.

The PPP chairman expressed concern over the growing polarization in national politics, stating that divisive politics had reached its peak, while the common citizen continued to grapple with poverty and unemployment.

He stressed the importance of prioritizing national interests over biased concerns, reiterating that the PPP remains in a position to maintain constructive engagement with both the government and the opposition. On the occasion, PPP-affiliated lawyers expressed their gratitude to Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari for the appointment of law officers.

## Pakistan faces drought

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Meteorologist, Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Muhammad Afzal Wednesday warned that Pakistan is facing an unusual weather pattern, leading to severe drought conditions across the country.

Speaking at a press conference, he revealed that winter rainfall was recorded 42% below normal, with Sindh receiving 63% less rain, Balochistan 53%, and Punjab 41%. The alarming decline in rainfall has pushed dams and water reservoirs to dead levels, raising concerns over water availability for agriculture and domestic use.

# PM hails successful IMF staff level pact

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday hailed the successful conclusion of a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new US\$ 1.3 billion arrangement, commending the government economic team for their tireless efforts in securing the deal.

Chairing the Cabinet Committee meeting here, the prime minister commended the collective efforts of the Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Planning Minister, Commerce Minister, Economic Affairs Minister, FBR Chairman and other key members of the economic team for their diligent work in securing the IMF agreement.

He reflected on the skepticism from opponents, who had predicted that a mini-budget would be necessary to secure the deal. However, the prime minister asserted that the agreement was achieved without the need for additional taxation measures, proving the government's resolve and planning.

The prime minister also acknowledged the hardships faced by the common people who bore the burden of price hike during the process of achieving economic stability. Besides, he paid tribute to the salaried persons who contributed a major portion in tax collection. The government will receive \$1.3 billion from the IMF, which will bolster Pakistan's foreign reserves to \$8.3 billion, the prime minister said terming it a big achievement to stabilize the country's economy.

He also highlighted the contributions of all the provincial governments and their relevant chief ministers in supporting the federal government in securing the IMF agreement. Highlighting the government's success in surpassing tax collection targets, he said the IMF had aimed for a 10.2% tax-to-GDP ratio, but with strong performance from the economic team, the tax-to-GDP ratio had reached 10.6%, marking the highest achievement in the last four years. "This performance reflects a 26% increase in tax collection

## Cabinet postpones approval of net metering policy for solar energy-users

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the positive economic indicators during the last one year were a reflection of the positive policies of the government as the country's economic stability strategy was determined for effective performance and sustainable planning. The prime minister made these remarks while chairing the federal cabinet meeting held here at the Prime Minister House. Addressing the participants of the meeting, the Prime Minister expressed satisfaction over the staff-level agreement between Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the review of the Extended Fund Facility and the agreement on the provision of \$1.3 billion funds to support Pakistan's efforts against climate change.

He said that the review of the first staff-level agreement of \$7 billion with the IMF had completed; through these agreements, the IMF had expressed confidence in the Pakistani economy. He added that the IMF had noted the progress made in restoring macroeconomic stability during the last 18 months, the improvement in the financial situation and inflation plummeting to its lowest level since 2015. The IMF has also appreciated the steps and commitment of the government to reform the economy and improve governance, which was propitious, he added. Prime Minister Shehbaz praised the performance of Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb and the government's economic team regarding these agreements. He said that these agreements would help stabilize Pakistan's economy and put it on the path of long-term recovery. "The government is working on priority basis on important areas such as tax reforms, efficient performance of the energy sector and development of the private sector. Allah Almighty has blessed us with Pakistan in the blessed month of Ramadan, we should work together for the development and prosperity of the country," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said.

so far", he added.

"Pakistan's tax collection target for the year 2024-25 was set at Rs 12.9 trillion, and despite the IMF initially suggesting a downward revision of this target, I personally insisted on maintaining the original figure. Following successful negotiations, the target which was initially revised down to Rs 12.1 trillion was adjusted to Rs 12.3 trillion," the prime minister added. He underscored that the government had planned to fast-track the cases relating to taxes pending in the tribunals worth billions of rupees and informed that as a result of this decision, the government had recovered Rs 34 billion.

Similarly, he said the faceless interaction in Karachi was successfully ongoing while process of hiring of

international corporate lawyers was underway. Due to the government's reforms in sugar sector, the prime minister said Rs 12 billion more taxes were collected this year as compared to the last year and hoped that Rs 60 billion in total will be collected this year. "This model will be replicated in cement, tobacco and textile sectors soon," he added.

As regards, Ramadan Package, the prime minister emphasized that unlike in the past, the government had introduced a new digital wallet system to disburse amount to the deserving families through a transparent way. PM Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and eradicating terrorism as key pillars for the country's development.

## Israel threatens to seize parts of Gaza over fate of hostages

### No aid reached besieged Gaza in over three weeks: UN

UNITED NATIONS (APP): United Nations has warned that humanitarian supplies in Gaza continue to dwindle, with no cargo entering the war-shattered enclave in more than three weeks because of Israeli restrictions. Citing the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told the regular noon briefing in New York that "most attempts by humanitarian organizations to coordinate access with Israeli authorities in Gaza are being denied." And as supplies of food, medicine and other supplies run low, aid teams are increasingly concerned about growing anxiety in bread lines outside the enclave's remaining bakeries, it was pointed out.

"Most attempts by humanitarian organizations to coordinate access with Israeli authorities within #Gaza result in #AccessDenied," the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, said in an online post. Five out of seven such attempts were denied on Monday and six out of nine were rejected on Tuesday, it explained. Medical teams in Gaza are also exhausted "and urgently need protection and reinforcement" from ongoing strikes across the Strip, the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, said on Wednesday.

release our hostages, the stronger the pressure we will exert." "This includes the seizure of territories, along with other measures I will not elaborate here," he added, days after his Defense Minister Israel Katz had warned: "The more Hamas refuses to free the hostages, the more territory it will lose, which will be annexed by Israel."

Of the 251 hostages seized during Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel which triggered the war, 58 are still held in Gaza, including 34 the Israeli military says are dead. "Every time the occupation attempts to retrieve its captives by force, it ends up bringing them back in coffins," Hamas said in a statement.

The group said it was "doing everything possible to keep the (Israeli) occupation's captives alive, but the ran-

dom Zionist bombardment is endangering their lives." Gal Gilboa-Dalal, an Israeli survivor of the 2023 attack whose brother was taken hostage, has told AFP he can "constantly imagine our reunion."

"This moment felt closer than ever and unfortunately, it's drifting away from me again," he said of his brother Guy Gilboa-Dalal, taken from a music festival near the Gaza border and last seen in a video shared by Hamas last month. "We are fighting here against a terrorist organization that only understands force," said Gal. "On the other hand, I am terrified that those bombings and this operation... will endanger the hostages there. There's no way to know what the terrorists might do to them or if a missile might accidentally hit them," he added.

# Finance minister calls for inclusive, equitable globalization

BOAO (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has called for inclusive and equitable globalization to benefit the developing economies of the world. He emphasized the urgent need for an inclusive approach to globalization, one that benefits all nations, particularly the developing economies, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

He made this call while attending a high-level session titled 'Inclusive Globalization That Benefits All – Pathways and Actions' at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025, held in Boao, Hainan Province, China. Highlighting the growing inequalities within the global economic system, the Minister stated that while globalization has lifted over one billion people out of poverty, it remains fundamentally unequal, disproportionately benefiting developed economies while marginalizing the Global South.

He said the risks of rising protec-

tionism, unilateralism, and trade wars are exacerbating global divisions, threatening to disrupt supply chains and weaken international cooperation. For globalization to survive, it must be rebalanced to allow fairer participation for all nations, particularly those currently disadvantaged by restrictive trade rules and limited financial access, he said.

Senator Aurangzeb underscored that the time for rhetoric has passed, and decisive action is needed. Pakistan, like many developing nations, advocates for a more balanced model of globalization—one that promotes fair trade, sustainable growth, and equitable financial systems. He said this model must be multilateral, innovation-driven, and inclusive, to foster development and prosperity across all regions.

One of the key challenges facing inclusive globalization, according to the Minister, is the widening wealth and opportunity gap. The minister said that developed nations continue to

gain from high-tech sectors, digital trade, and broad financial access, while developing nations are held back by high tariffs, restrictive investment policies, and limited infrastructure.

In response, Pakistan has consistently called for greater regional connectivity, fairer market access, and stronger multilateral cooperation, citing initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) as steps in the right direction, he said.

The minister also called for a global coalition among developing nations to collectively demand fairer trade rules and greater representation in international financial institutions. He said these alliances are necessary to combat the disproportionate tariffs and trade restrictions that hinder the integration of developing economies into global markets.

He pointed out that Pakistan's textile and agricultural sectors—key driv-

ers of its economy—face significant challenges due to protectionist policies in developed countries and non-tariff barriers that limit their access to Western markets.

Addressing the issue of financial inequality, Senator Aurangzeb stressed the need for debt relief and financial justice through restructuring sovereign debt mechanisms to prevent cyclical debt crises, which are impeding the economic growth of many emerging economies, including Pakistan. He highlighted that global debt has soared past \$100 trillion, with over 60 percent of low-income countries at risk of debt distress, diverting resources from critical social and economic investments.

He called for reforms in international financial institutions to offer developing economies greater financial flexibility and sustainable debt relief mechanisms. The minister emphasized the transformative potential of technology in bridging global disparities. He called on governments and international bodies to establish global AI and

establish funds to support digital inclusion in developing economies. While Pakistan has initiated the Digital Pakistan program, there is a need for stronger international collaboration in artificial intelligence (AI), fintech, and e-commerce to empower small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and drive inclusive economic participation in the country, he said.

About the climate change, the minister stressed, must be central to any discussion of globalization. Developing nations contribute less than 10 percent of global carbon emissions yet suffer disproportionately from the consequences of climate disasters. Pakistan, despite contributing less than 1 percent of global carbon emissions, is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, he said.

Finance Minister said the devastating floods of 2022 inflicted \$30 billion in damages and displaced 33 million people. He said that Pakistan continues to advocate for urgent climate financing, green technology transfers,

and fair global climate policies to support climate resilience in developing economies.

Senator Aurangzeb concluded his remarks by calling for a more sustainable approach to globalization. Developed nations, he urged, must fulfill their \$100 billion annual climate finance commitments and prioritize renewable energy cooperation to help emerging markets transition to low-carbon economies. Furthermore, carbon-intensive trade restrictions that penalize export-dependent economies in the Global South must be reduced. He also called for reforms in the global financial architecture, including the enhancement of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) allocations and the promotion of green bonds and blended finance models to attract private-sector investment in emerging markets. The minister reiterated that the future of globalization must be one of inclusivity, fairness, and shared prosperity. The time to act, he emphasized, is now.





LAHORE: A man is selling chickens at low price on motorcycle at Chowk Noorian. —APP Photo

## Admin imposes fine Rs 300,000 over profiteering

LAHORE (APP): As the final days of Ramadan begin, the district administration has intensified efforts to control prices of essential commodities, imposing fines exceeding Rs 300,000 on violators.

The spokesperson for the district administration told media on Wednesday that under the directives of Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza, assistant commissioners conducted surprise inspections across the city to ensure compliance with official rates.

Assistant Commissioner Model Town Abdul Basit inspected various departmental stores and imposed a Rs135,000 fine on businesses overpricing sugar. Similarly, Assistant Commissioner Allama Iqbal Town Umair Mehmood inspected Model Bazaar Chuha and multiple poultry shops, penalizing two vendors for overcharging.

In Nishtar Town, several shops were fined for sugar price violations, while Assistant Commissioner Wagah Muhammad Amir inspected five stores but found no irregularities. In Raiwind, businesses were instructed to strictly follow government-fixed prices.

Assistant Commissioner Ravi Town Tariq Shabbir checked prices at Rehri Bazaar Shahdara and imposed fines totaling Rs 35,000 on three stores. Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner City Ali Babar Rai inspected Model Bazaar Sabzi Bazaar, confirming the availability of ample sugar supplies.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) seized six truckloads of illegal goods during anti-encroachment operations in Gulberg and Ravi Town. The drive, supervised by Chief Officer MCL Shahid Abbas Kathia, also led to cases against three individuals for obstructing official duties and threatening staff.

## Stakeholders in Sindh demand action on disaster risk financing



### F.P. Report

KARACHI : “The increasing frequency and intensity of disasters due to climate change demand proactive measures in disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and climate adaptation,” stated Ms. Fozia Aziz, Executive Director of FRDP.

Highlighting the need for provincial consultation on Disaster Risk Financing (DRF), she stressed the importance of enhancing institutional resilience and financial preparedness.

In her opening remarks, The Executive Director FRDP called for risk-sensitive budget reviews and dedicated funding allocations to strengthen disaster preparedness.

She emphasized that collaboration between the government, financial insti-

tutions, and development partners is essential to ensuring disaster risk reduction remains a priority in policy and budgeting.

The event, organized under the Building Institutional Capacity and Resilience Against Natural Disasters (BRAND) project, was a joint initiative by Welthungerhilfe (WHH), Cevsi, and FRDP brought together government officials, financial experts, policymakers, and National and international humanitarian organizations to discuss strategies for strengthening disaster risk management in Sindh.

Participants explored global and local DRF frameworks, financial instruments, and the challenges in implementing effective risk financing mechanisms.

## CM launches Women Police Squad

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has taken a landmark initiative to protect women and children by establishing a Women Police Squad in major markets across the province.

The squad has officially begun patrolling to ensure a safe shopping environment for women.

On the CM's directive, the Women Police Squad will patrol markets during peak hours on foot, bicycles, and motorbikes, actively preventing harassment and monitoring anti-social activities. The squad will also play a crucial role in curbing incidents of mobile snatching, wallet thefts, and robberies, particularly

during the Eid shopping rush.

Patrolling has already commenced in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Chiniot, Burewala, Vehari, Khanewal, and other cities. Additionally, a special Dolphin Police Squad has been deployed in Lahore, with a Quick Response Cycle Squad stationed at 65 major commercial centers, including DHA Raya Club, Ichhra, Anarkali, and Liberty Market. The Dolphin Force bicycle squad and PRU squad will provide additional patrolling support.

More than 4,000 police personnel will be on special squad duty across Lahore, with Dolphin Police patrolling after Iftar until market closures. The first Women Police Squad in Okara has also been mobilized, with police constables patrolling crowded markets on foot, bicycles, and motorcycles.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that the protection of women and children is a shared responsibility of both the government and society. Women have widely welcomed the initiative, expressing a greater sense of security and confidence while shopping in busy markets. Many have praised the move, stating that it is now easier to report harassment to women police personnel, making public spaces safer and more accessible.

## ICCBS—Karachi University and Indus Hospital sign MoU

KARACHI (APP): The International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) at the University of Karachi has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indus Hospital and Health Network (IHNN), Karachi.

This MoU aims to promote translational health research by enabling cooperation in biological, biomedical, and clinical research, including clinical trials, between the two institutions.

Prof Dr M Raza Shah, Director of the ICCBS, University of Karachi, and Dr. Syed Zafar Zaidi, CEO of the Indus Hospital, signed the MoU on behalf of their respective institutions during a meeting held at the ICCBS.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Raza Shah stated that the collaboration aims to advance joint research in biological and biomedical sciences, with a particular focus on clinical research and trials.

He highlighted ICCBS's status as one of the most eminent centers of excellence and a leading academic research institution in chemical and biological sciences in the developing world.

He further noted that the center houses several state-of-the-art research facilities, including the Center for Bioequivalence Studies and Clinical Research (CBSCR), a part of the Dr. Panjwani Center for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research. CBSCR

hosts the country's first clinical trial facility, capable of conducting studies that meet international standards.

Dr Syed Zafar Zaidi emphasized that the Indus Hospital is a not-for-profit health network comprising multidisciplinary hospitals and public health outreach clinics across the country.

He stated that the institution is committed to promoting safe and effective healthcare practices in resource-constrained environments while expanding its service delivery, global health initiatives, and research efforts.

According to the MoU, both institutions will collaborate to translate research into practical clinical solutions.

## Rana Sanaullah welcomes govt-PTI dialogue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination, Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday welcomed the idea of dialogue between the government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Talking to a private news channel, he expressed support for Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's suggestion to play a mediating role, stating that any effort to foster dialogue would be beneficial for political stability.

Rana Sanaullah acknowledged that previous attempts at negotiations with PTI did not succeed due to their rigid stance. However, he emphasized that the government remains open to dialogue if positive steps are taken by

the opposition.

He stressed the need for regulations to prevent the misuse of social media while protecting freedom of expression.

On the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), he called for discussions with journalist organizations to address concerns about the law's misuse.

## Man sentenced to death for nephew's murder

LAHORE (APP): A sessions court on Wednesday sentenced a man to death for murdering his nephew in 2021. The convict, Muhammad Imran alias Sabi, was found guilty of killing his nephew, Ali Shan. Additional District and Sessions Judge Chaudhry Shahid Hameed announced the verdict, also imposing a fine of Rs 300,000 on the convict.

During the trial, Deputy District Prosecutor Sajid Saeed Bhatti presented evidence against the convict, while 13 prosecution witnesses testified. The court ruled in favor of the prosecution after the charges were proven. According to prosecution, the Raiwind City Police registered a case against Imran in 2021 under murder charges. He had shot and killed his nephew over a personal dispute.

## 155 arrested in overspeeding crackdown

LAHORE (APP): Under the 'Safe Highways, Safe Pakistan' campaign, the Central Region intensified its crackdown on overspeeding vehicles.

The initiative, launched on the directives of IGP Riffat Mukhtar Raja, aims to enhance road safety and prevent accidents caused by reckless driving. According to the spokesperson, sector commanders are actively monitoring high-speed vehicles across major motorways. As a result, 155 drivers have been arrested and FIRs registered against them for violating speed limits.

Providing details, he said: On Multan-Sukkur Motorway (M-5), 62 cases were registered against overspeeding drivers; on the Pindi Bhattian-Multan Motorway (M-4), 22 vehicles were booked for violations, on the Lahore-Islamabad Motorway (M-2), 39 drivers faced legal action on the Lahore-Multan Motorway (M-3), 16 cases were registered and on the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway, 16 FIRs were filed.

The Motorway Police have urged drivers to strictly follow speed limits and adhere to traffic regulations to ensure the safety of all road users. The ongoing campaign is expected to significantly reduce accidents caused by overspeeding and reckless driving.

## PPSC announces results of various positions

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) has announced written and final results for various positions across multiple Punjab government departments.

According to the spokesperson for the PPSC, 45 candidates have successfully passed the written examination for nine Assistant Director positions in the Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries Department.

Additionally, final results for multiple departments have also

been declared. In the Punjab Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education Department, 22 candidates have been selected for the position of Assistant Professor of Pediatric Medicine.

Meanwhile, in the Environment Protection & Climate Change Department, one candidate has been selected for the post of Deputy Director. For the Primary & Secondary Healthcare Department, 50 candidates have been selected as Consultant Pathologists, while four

positions remained vacant due to the unavailability of suitable candidates.

Similarly, in the Labour & Human Resource Department, two candidates have been selected for five Consultant Nephrologist positions, leaving three vacancies unfilled for the same reason. PPSC Secretary Afzal Ahmad has officially issued the notification for successful candidates. The complete list of selected candidates has also been uploaded on the PPSC website for public access.



### BOARD OF INTERMEDIATE & SECONDARY EDUCATION MARDAN

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The board of intermediate & secondary education Mardan Invites Sealed bids from well reputed/established firms registered with relevant tax authorities i.e FBR, KPRA must be active on income and sales tax ATL. Tender documents containing bidding procedure terms & condition, technical evaluation criteria, scope of work can be obtained and submitted from the office of the undersigned as per below mentioned schedule on single stage two envelopes procedure" as per KPRA rules 2014

S.No	Tender description	Tender type	Tender fee	Tender submission date & time	Tender opening date/time
1.	Installation of solar system at BISE Mardan	Single stage two envelopes	Rs.3000 Non refundable	15-04-25 02:00 PM	15-04-25 02:30 PM

- Clarification/information (if can) may be obtained on working days during office hours from admin section, BISE Mardan. Tender documents (SBD,s) can be obtained from the admin section on depositing of Rs.3000 non refundable in ABL/UBL banks. No tender documents will be issued on tender opening date.
- The bid security in the shape of call deposit (CDR) at least 2% of the bid be deposited in favor secretary BISE Mardan from schedule banks of Pakistan.
- The sealed bids, complete in all respects, must reach the office of the secretary BISE Mardan as per mentioned schedule through registered posts, Courier services. By-hand tender will not accepted.
- This tender can also be downloaded from KPRA web site and BISE Mardan website (www.bisem.edu.pk).

Secretary BISE, Mardan.  
0937-9230257

INF(P)1181/25

## CORRIGENDUM SITUATION VACANT

Online applications were invited from suitable candidates under the control of District Health Officer Tank through ETEA, the following Corrigendum has been made in advertisement of Situation Vacant advertised in Daily Mashriq and The Frontier Post dated 16th March 2025. The detail of vacant position read as under:-



S.#	Nomenclature of Post	BPS	No. of Posts	Prescribed Qualification	Age Limit
01	PHC Technician MP (MT)	12	10	At least 2nd Division Secondary School Certificate in Science from recognized Board and Two years diploma in Health Technology from recognized medical faculty subject to candidate registered with faculty of Paramedical and Allied Health Sciences Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	18 to 32 Years
02	PHC Technician MP (EPI)	12	12	At least 2nd Division Secondary School Certificate in Science from recognized Board and Two years diploma in Health Technology from recognized medical faculty subject to candidate registered with faculty of Paramedical and Allied Health Sciences Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	18 to 32 Years
03	Clinical Technician Dental	12	04	At least 2nd Division Secondary School Certificate in Science from recognized Board and Two years diploma in Relevant Technology from recognized medical faculty subject to candidate registered with faculty of Paramedical and Allied Health Sciences Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	18 to 32 Years
04	Clinical Technician Pathology	12	02	At least 2nd Division Secondary School Certificate in Science from recognized Board and Two years diploma in Relevant Technology from recognized medical faculty subject to candidate registered with faculty of Paramedical and Allied Health Sciences Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	18 to 32 Years
05	Clinical Technician Radiology	12	03	At least 2nd Division Secondary School Certificate in Science from recognized Board and Two years diploma in Relevant Technology from recognized medical faculty subject to candidate registered with faculty of Paramedical and Allied Health Sciences Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	18 to 32 Years
06	Clinical Technician Pharmacy	12	05	At least 2nd Division Secondary School Certificate in Science from recognized Board and Two years diploma in Relevant Technology from recognized medical faculty subject to candidate registered with faculty of Paramedical and Allied Health Sciences Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	18 to 32 Years
07	PHC Technician MCH	12	02	At least 2nd Division Secondary School Certificate in Science from recognized Board and diploma in LHV / Midwifery from Nursing Examination Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and having valid registration with Pakistan Nursing Council as LHV	18 to 32 Years
08	Lady Health Supervisor Union Council: Dabara	11	01	Qualification, <b>Preference No. (1)</b> Diploma in LHV / Midwifery from Nursing Examination Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and having valid registration with Pakistan Nursing Council as LHV / Graduate, <b>Preference No. (2)</b> Lady Health Worker with Intermediate and one-year experience as LHV, <b>Preference No. (3)</b> Intermediate (preferable Married).	18 to 32 Years
09	Junior Clerk	11	01	Intermediate with minimum 2nd Division from recognized Board, Typing Speed 30 words per minute with sufficient experience of computer / MS Office.	18 to 32 Years
10	Store Keeper	07	01	At least 2nd Division Secondary School Certificate in Science from recognized Board and two years diploma in Pharmacy Technology from recognized medical faculty subject to candidate registered with faculty of Paramedical and Allied Health Sciences Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	18 to 32 Years

Te Post of Lady Health Worker BPS-05 lying at Serial No. 15 in advertisement of Situation Vacant advertised in Daily Mashriq and The Frontier Post dated 16th March 2025 in hereby withdrawn / cancel.

Terms & conditions will be remaining same.

INF(P) 1156/25

## DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICER TANK



### Medical Teaching Institution (MTI) Qazi Hussain Ahmad Medical Complex & Nowshera Medical College Nowshera

#### Notice Inviting Tender

- The Hospital Director, Medical Teaching Institution (MTI), Nowshera Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites sealed bids from Well-establish Security Firms for provision of security Services to this Institution, registered with the Income/Sales Tax and KPRA, reflected on Active Taxpayer list of FBR.
- Bid Solicitation Documents containing detailed description and other terms & condition may be obtained from the office of undersigned between **9:00 am to 3:00 pm** on any working day (Monday to Friday) from the date of publications of this advertisement till last date for submission of bids. This advertisement may also be downloaded from KPRA and MTI-Nowshera website.
- The bidders are required to submit bid security @500,000/-for the contract period of (03 Years) in shape of demand Draft (DD)/Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) in the name of Hospital Director MTI Nowshera . An affidavit is mandatory in the technical bid (Without indicating the figure) that bid security is placed in the financial bid.
- A Pre-bid meeting with the interested bidders will be held on (Tuesday) **08-04-2025 at 11:00 am** at the conference room of Administration bck of QHAMC Nowshera.
- Bidding will be carried out by adopting **"Single Stage Two Envelopes procedure"**
- All the Govt taxes will be charged as per Govt rule.
- Bids both Technical and Financial completed in all respect along with relevant documents must reach to the Office of the undersigned, on or before **21-04-2025 Monday till 11:30 AM** and the Technical bids will be opened on the same date at **12:00 PM** by the Purchase Committee in the presence of bidders and their representative.
- The Competent Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the bids as per provisions contained in Rule 47 of KPRA Rules 2014.

#### HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

**Qazi Hussain Ahmad Medical Complex (MTI) Nowshera**  
QAZI H USSAIN AHMAD MEDICAL COMPLEX NOWSHERA (MTI)  
MARDAN ROAD NEAR KABUL RIVER NOWSHERA  
PH: 0923-9220414 Website: www.qhamc.gov.pk

INF(P)1183/25





PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsud chairing a meeting regarding controlling aerial firing on Eid ul Fitr.

# CS reviews outsourcing of hospitals in remote areas

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chaired a meeting of the Health Foundation to assess the outsourcing of hospitals in remote areas, aimed at improving health-care services for underserved communities.

The meeting reviewed the progress of outsourced hospitals, with 19 health-care facilities outsourced in two phases to enhance medical services. In the first phase, eight hospitals were outsourced, while the second phase saw the outsourcing of 11 additional facilities.

The outsourced hospitals include Sari Mola Khan, Mamad Gat, Ghiljo, Dogar, Toi Khala, Darazinda, RHC Mastuj, RHC Garam Chashma, DHQ Wana, Cat-D Bazar Zaka Khel, Cat-D Pashat, Cat-D Nawagai, Cat-D Mamund, Cat-D Alizai, Cat-D Razmak, THQ Mir Ali, DHQ Dassu, Mishti Mela, and Sholam.

The meeting also reviewed the cost-per-patient indicator and discussed challenges faced by some hospitals.

Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah stressed the need for prompt resolution of issues in outsourced hospitals to ensure efficient public healthcare delivery. He directed that service providers be regularly assessed to identify areas for improvement.

He reiterated that healthcare remains a priority sector for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, which is committed to enhancing medical services in remote areas through the Public-Private Partnership model.

# Tordher participates in meeting on future of PTB

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries, Abdul Karim Tordher on Wednesday, attended a meeting at the Civil Secretariat Peshawar chaired by Finance Adviser, Muzammil Aslam.

The meeting was convened to discuss the future of the Pakistan Tobacco Board, in light of the federal cabinet's approval of proposal to dissolve the national institution and transfer its essential functions to the provinces.

During the session, the Special Assistant presented several constructive proposals for the continuation of the services of the relevant institution under the provincial government, specifically for the welfare of tobacco farmers and growers.

The meeting was attended by key officials including Secretary of Agriculture, Atta-ur-Rehman and representatives from the Departments of Finance and Excise & Taxation.

The Special Assistant suggested that in light of the possible transfer of the institution's functions and formulation of any legislative framework (Act), it should prioritize the protection of tobacco-growing farmers and cultivators.

Additionally, he recommended that the administration of the potential provincial board or institution be entrusted to qualified and experienced individuals who possess the necessary expertise in this field.

He emphasized that to make the provincial board more effective and reflective of the sector's development, particular focus should be given to research and development (R&D), aiming to enhance both the quantity and quality of tobacco production.

Furthermore, the Special Assistant proposed providing job security to the employees of the board to ensure a smooth transition.

The forum agreed that the suggestions put forward were both reasonable and beneficial for the province and a decision was made to hold further meetings to continue deliberations and work towards a final resolution, ensuring thoroughment, particular focus should be given to research and development (R&D), aiming to enhance both the quantity and quality of tobacco production.

# Muzzammil Aslam exposes Shehbaz Sharif's false IMF claim

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister on Finance Muzzammil Aslam has responded to the IMF program, stating that Shehbaz Sharif's claim of securing the last IMF program has proven false. Aslam noted that when Pakistan obtained the IMF program in July 2024, Sharif made this claim. However, today Pakistan has secured another program - a 28-month Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) - in addition to the existing 37-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program.

Aslam emphasized that the key point is that the first review has been completed, and a staff-level agreement has been achieved. He said that Unfortunately, the government failed to secure any concessions for the common people. Advisor on finance added that no relief was provided in terms of tax reductions, real estate, or power tariffs, leaving the public to face the current deteriorating economic situation.

Mr. Aslam further stated that during Shehbaz Sharif's three-year tenure, from 2022 to date, his government has secured four IMF programs.

# Launching International Language Training for dtudents NUML, MoFE&PT, and NAVTTC join hands

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: In a groundbreaking initiative to enhance global education and career prospects for students, the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), and the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) have signed a tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to introduce international language training for secondary and higher secondary students in the Federal Capital.

This flagship program aims to equip 10,000 students over the next five years with language skills that will improve their access to higher education opportunities abroad and boost their competitiveness in the global job market. The initiative will offer training in eight international languages, including Japanese, Chinese, Korean, German, Arabic, Spanish, French, and Russian.

A high-profile signing ceremony was held at the Ministry of Federal Education to mark the occasion, attended by Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Rector NUML, Major General Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI(M), Retired, Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Special Secretary MoFE&PT, and Executive Director NAVTTC, Mr. Muhammad Aamir Jan.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui congratulated NUML and NAVTTC on launching this visionary initiative and commended the efforts of his team in making this collaboration possible. He emphasized the significance of language proficiency in expanding educational and professional opportunities for Pakistan's youth.

In the first phase of the project, NUML has already trained over 1,000 students in five international languages, setting the stage for the initiative's expansion. Rector NUML, Maj Gen (R) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, reaffirmed the university's commitment to national development and expressed gratitude to MoFE&PT for its continued support in advancing language education.

Highlighting the long-term impact of this initiative, Special Secretary MoFE&PT, Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, emphasized the importance of equipping students with diverse linguistic skills to support their academic and professional growth.

The ceremony was also attended by Brig. Shahzad Munir, Director General NUML, Syed Junaid Akhlaq, Director General FDE, Joint Secretary MoFE&PT Capt. Asif Bhatti, Prof. Dr. Jamil Asghar Jami, Dean, Faculty of Languages NUML, and Dr. Syed Waqas Ali, Registrar NUML, among other distinguished guests.

With this initiative, NUML, FDE, and NAVTTC take a significant step towards empowering the youth of Pakistan, equipping them with essential language skills to thrive in an increasingly globalized world.



# KP considers establishing regulatory authority

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to establish a regulatory authority at the provincial level to make the electricity transmission system in the province more convenient and easier and has started considering various options.

In addition to this, a consultant has been formally engaged to establish a regulatory authority on the lines of NEPRA in the province, who will prepare a draft act in the next few days to establish the authority, keeping in mind various provisions of the constitution and law. After the cabinet approval, it will be presented in the provincial assembly for final approval in the form of a law.

In this regard, a special meeting was held under the chairmanship of Engineer Tariq Sadozai, Special Assistant to Chief Minister KP for Energy, the meeting was also attended by Secretary Energy and Power Muhammad Zubair Khan, Additional Secretaries Shah Fahad, Abdul Haseeb and senior officials of the department.

Meanwhile, the meeting was informed that in accordance with the special vision of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, consideration was given by establishing its own regulatory authority to carry out the licensing procedure at the provincial level for the transmission, distribution and sale of electricity generated from various energy projects in province with its own resources.

Moreover, a briefing was given by the private consultant company SEED regarding the establishment of the Provincial Regulatory Authority. It was decided in the meeting that a draft regarding the establishment of the Provincial Regulatory Authority would be prepared and presented soon after consultation with experts so that the matter could be finalized.

In this context, the Special Assistant to CM for Energy Engr. Tariq Sadozai issued instructions to authorities and said that the establishment of a regulatory authority at the provincial level is essential for the immediate resolution of energy problems in the province. In this regard, a provincial regulatory authority has already been established in Sindh province he added.

SACM expressed hope that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would become the second province to establish a regulatory authority on the lines of NEPRA, after which many energy-related issues in the province could be resolved easily, who concluded.

# RMI performs 174 cardiac surgeries under Sehat Card program

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Rehman Medical Institute (RMI) has successfully performed 174 Cardiac Surgeries out of which 26 are the Pediatric Cardiac surgeries under the Sehat Card program, providing life-saving treatment to adults and children.

All Pediatric Cardiac surgeries were conducted by Dr. Tariq Sohail Babar, a renowned pediatric cardiac surgeon at RMI.

Commenting on the achievement, Dr. Tariq Sohail Babar stated, "All the children who underwent surgery at RMI under the Sehat Card program are recovering well, and most have been discharged in good health, bringing hope to their families."

Every year, more than 60,000 babies in Pakistan are born with congenital heart disease (CHD)—a condition that includes various abnormalities such as leaky heart valves, missing or incomplete heart structures, and holes in the chamber partitions. CHD symptoms often include irregular breathing, stunted growth, and weakness, making early diagnosis crucial for survival.

Dr. Tariq highlighted that early detection of CHD is possible during pregnancy, and with timely intervention, 85% of affected children can survive into adulthood. However, in developing countries like Pakistan, over 60% of children with CHD do not survive past their early years due to delayed diagnosis, financial constraints, and a severe lack of specialized healthcare facilities.

Despite having one of the highest CHD prevalence rates in the world, Pakistan has only few hospitals equipped to perform pediatric cardiac surgeries. Due to limited awareness and access to treatment, many children with CHD remain undiagnosed or untreated, putting their lives at serious risk.

RMI remains committed to bridging this healthcare gap by providing state-of-the-art pediatric cardiac care under the Sehat Card program, ensuring that more children receive timely and life-saving treatment.

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# Pir Musavir expresses grief

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Forests, Environment, Wildlife, and Climate Change, Pir Musavir Khan, has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the passing of the mother of Sahibzada Sibghatullah, President of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Malakand Division and Member of the National Assembly.

In a condolence statement, Pir Musavir Khan extended heartfelt sympathy to Sahibzada Sibghatullah and his family, sharing in their sorrow during this difficult time. He prayed that Almighty Allah may grant the departed soul a high place in Jannah-tul-Firdous and bless the family with patience and strength to bear this irreparable loss.

# Actions against poor quality sweets before Eid intensified

PESHAWAR (APP): On the special directives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, the KP Food Safety & Halal Food Authority has intensified its crackdown on substandard and poor-quality sweets as Eid-ul-Fitr approaches.

During the province-wide operation, several bakery and production units were inspected, with strict action taken against those found violating hygiene standards and using hazardous ingredients. Sharing details of the crackdown, the Food Authority's spokesperson on Wednesday stated that late-night inspections were carried out across various districts, including Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, D.I. Khan, and Lower Chitral. In Peshawar, two bakery units located on Charsadda Road, Dilazak Road, and Gulbahar were sealed due to poor hygiene conditions, while 20 liters of substandard oil was disposed of on the spot. The spokesperson further mentioned that heavy fines were imposed in Abbottabad, Chitral, D.I. Khan, Upper Dir, and Hangu for violations of food safety standards. Improvement notices were also issued to several units, instructing them to upgrade their hygiene practices.

According to additional details, three bakery and production units in Abbottabad, along with several units in Katlang (Mardan), Hangu, D.I. Khan, Upper Dir, and Chitral, were fined for selling substandard sweets. They were also served improvement notices to ensure better compliance with hygiene standards.

Director General of Food Authority Wasif Saeed, commended the inspection teams for their successful operations and reiterated that ensuring the provision of safe and high-quality food to the public remains the authority's top priority. He vowed that the crackdown on substandard sweets would continue without compromise.

Meanwhile, Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru has ordered strict actions to continue, emphasizing that providing safe and hygienic food items to the public during Eid is crucial.

He warned that violators of food safety laws would face severe consequences.

# Bangles seller overjoyed as Eid shopping spree gains pace

PESHAWAR (APP): While defeating poverty with share willpower, Ms. Nishat Bibi (52)—a poor bangles seller—is all smile after started earning maximum capital in the lucrative market of Peshawar ahead of Eidul Fitr celebrations.

With many hands stretched for decoration of colourful and shimmering bangles designs at historic Qissa Khwani bazaar, she engaged two labourers in a bid to earn maximum capital.

Ms Nishat did not lose hope after untimely death of her father, and has jumped into the bangles and henna tattoos business that brought her laurels.

"The relatives abandoned me after my father fell prey to blood cancer, leaving me with no viable option except to enter the cost-efficient bangles and tattoos business in 2012," she told APP.

Selling her two tola jewelry to hire a shop on rent before entering the painstaking business, she said with each passing day her profit increased and today she was living a dignified life.

Associated with the bangle business for the last 13 years to support her children, she was now satisfied after completing education and marriages of their loved ones.

She has imported shiny crystals bangles and henna tattoos from Lahore due to its quality and affordable prices compare in local market as special Eid offer.

"Eidul Fitr has brought boom to bangles and henna business in Peshawar," she said, adding prices of bangles depend on shininess and shimmering designs.

In Peshawar, the outlets of traditional bangles and henna were flooded with girls and women where special stalls in shopping centres and markets were established that would open till Chand Raat.

The exchange of bangles and henna as special gifts among the girls on Eidul Fitr is an old tradition of the sub-continent especially in Peshawar where great rush of buyers especially of the girls and students are being seen making roaring business.

Therefore, many shopkeepers have set up colourful stalls in the main markets including Jinnah Street, Deans Trade Centre, Gora Bazaar in cantonment, Meena Bazaar, Karimpura, Qissa Khwani and other important locations in Peshawar, offering different kinds of henna, cosmetics, earrings, gleaming bangles, embroidered clothes, jewellery, handbags, shoes and colourful dresses as Eid special offer.

The shopkeepers selling daily goods and book sellers set up additional stalls of bangles and henna inside their shops keep-

ing in view the girls attraction towards these Eid items.

Sundas Ameen (35), who was busy shopping in Jinnah Street Peshawar Cantonment said that she came here from Nowshera to buy crystal bangles and henna for herself, relatives and friends to avoid rush on Chand Raat.

"I have bought 15 sets of bangles, henna and will use it during Eid days to look different," she said.

"Buying shimmering glass bangles matched with beautiful colours of dresses, adorning hands and feet with henna being essential features of eid festivities that multiply our joys" she remarked.

"This is the cheapest way of taking along your friends and relatives as one can buy a full set of bangles and henna for less than Rs 600," she said.

Malaika Bibi (12) who came along with his father for shopping at Deans Center told APP that shopping of bangles and henna always doubles her joy on Eid.

She said that her sister has already bought bangles and cloths to avoid rush on Chand Raat and will decorat her hands with a henna expert on the eve of Eidul Fitr.

She said the henna tattoos were also available in markets and were easy to paste on hands, feet and could be removed easily, adding the young girls admired henna tattoos associated with celebrations of Eid.

However, she was not happy over the shooting prices of the imported items including readymade garments and shoes and demanded strict action against profiteers.

The prices of the Eid special offers items are higher than the previous years and are beyond the purchasing capacity of the middle and salaried class.

The shopping spree have also reached to climax in Nowshera, Charsadda and Swabi where great rush was witnessed in traditional Peshawari and Charsadda Chappals.

"Personally, I like Peshawari and Swati Chappal due to its affordable prices and durability," said Umar Khan, a resident of Pabbi while talking to APP.

He said prices of these chappals were economically affordable than imported brands, saying we need to promote our local products to bolster of our economy.

The sale of these traditional items are likely to increase further when Eidul Fitr celebrations comes nearer in KP.







## In brief

### Police recovers ammunitions F.P. Report

PABBI: Police has recovered heavy quantity of weapons from a car bearing No: FG-952 at Masri Banda bridge in the premises of Akora Khattak police station, on Wednesday. According to details, as many as 13 Kalashnikovs, 17 pistols and three guns along with magazines and bullets of different caliber were recovered. Police claimed that the driver escaped from the vehicle after police follow up. Police has registered First Information Report against unknown smuggler and started further investigation.

### Search operation conducted Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: A targeted search and strike operation was conducted in the areas adjacent to the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Academy in the premises of Risalpur police station against anti-social elements, on Wednesday. According to details, the operation was carried out under the special instructions of District Police Officer and under the direct supervision of SDPO Risalpur Circle Naseem Khan. Station House Officers, in-charge of checkpoints, Elite Force, RRF personnel, and personnel of other agencies participated in the operation. The search operation was conducted in the areas of police station Risalpur, including Bahram Kale, Mira Khushgi, Baba Ji Kale, Rashkai, Akharaabad, Fazal Ganj, Sais Mandi/Gundri, and other areas.

### Two-member dacoit gang held F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Sati-ana police arrested two-member dacoit gang and recovered looted booty from their possession on Wednesday. According to police sources, the team on a tip-off, raided and arrested a two-member Shafoog gang. Police recovered Rs 500,000, 3 motorcycles, 2 pistols and other valuables. The accused were wanted by the police in 14 cases of dacoity and highway robberies. Police have initiated legal action against them.

### Ceremony organized F.P. Report

QUETTA: Acting leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Nazryati Pakistan, Maulana Abdul Qadir Loni, stated that the liberation of Jerusalem is the responsibility of the entire Islamic world, and granting Palestinians the right to self-determination has become imperative. He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony organized by the Iranian Consulate in Quetta. In his address, Maulana Abdul Qadir Loni mentioned that despite United Nations resolutions, the liberation of Palestine has not been achieved. He emphasized the need for the Islamic world to unite against Israel and engage in practical resistance. He remarked that Israel is like a malignant tumor in the region, and the leaders of the Islamic world should support the Palestinians not just verbally but through concrete actions. Maulana Abdul Qadir Loni highlighted the hypocrisy of global imperialism and the United Nations, stating that because of them, over a billion Muslims worldwide are subjected to political and economic exploitation. He mentioned that the conspiracies of imperialist forces have forced the Muslim Ummah to yearn for peace.



SIALKOT: A large number of people sitting for monthly Iftar program at Allama Iqbal Teaching Hospital.

## Date palm distributed to diversify Agri cultivation

F.P. Report

KARAK: On the special directions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister on Agriculture Muhammad Sajjad, the cultivation of date palms has been started for the first time in Karak district. Date palm trees have already been distributed among the local landowners, on Wednesday. District Director Agriculture Karak Dr. Jan Muhammad is himself demonstrating the methods of planting and maintaining date palms to the landowners through a video. The District Director gave detailed information about the cultivation of date palms, use of pesticides, land preparation, watering methods and even the fertil-

izer.

Dr. Jan informed, if the established method is adopted for date cultivation, the success of date orchards in Karak district is certain, which will have a very positive impact on the economy of the area, especially the condition of the farmers and landowners.

**Two killed over land dispute:** Two people were killed in a shooting incident over a property dispute in Tapi Kanda village on the outskirts of Karak.

According to the details, the shooting incident took place over a property dispute, in which Alam Noor and Muhammad Shafiq were seriously injured. Both the injured were shifted

to the hospital, but succumbed to their injuries.

Meanwhile, Shad Ali and Sohail, residents of Ahmadi Banda, were seriously injured in firing by unknown persons in Banda Daud Shah. The injured were immediately shifted to a nearby hospital in critical condition, where they are being provided medical assistance.

According to the police, the reasons for the firing are not yet known and the investigation into the incident is underway. Officials say that it is premature to reach any conclusion at this time, however, security has been tightened in the area and an operation has been launched to search for the accused.

## People urged to avoid aerial firing

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The district police have urged the people to avoid aerial firing and one-wheeling on Chaand Raat and Eid ul Fitr to celebrate the religious festival in a peaceful manner.

Police spokesman told on Wednesday that Regional Police Officer (RPO) Syed Ashfaq Anwar, in this regard, has issued to police of Dera' region, emphasizing that aerial firing, during joyous occasions, can cause harm and even be fatal, and it was a criminal act under the law.

Syed Ashfaq Anwar instructed police officers to use all available resources to prevent this crime and raise awareness among the public. He was of the view that the risk of aerial firing increases during the last ten days of Ramadan and with the arrival of Eid and the Chaand Raat.

Police were directed to conduct awareness campaigns at the police station level to protect the public from this dangerous practice. The RPO has also appealed to religious scholars, local leaders, and civil society members to play an active role in preventing aerial firing. He warned that if anyone was found violating the directives, not only will they spend Eid behind bars, but strict legal action would also be taken against them.

Moreover, during Eid, actions will be taken against vehicles plying on roads with tinted windows, unregistered vehicles, and motorcycles without number plates. Strict measures will also be implemented against underage drivers, who usually resort to one wheeling stunts on such joyous occasions.

Police were instructed to implement a one-way system in markets to control congestion and ensure the smooth flow of traffic. The Regional Police Officer further directed the police to monitor the entry and exit points of the city and markets for suspicious individuals. He also emphasized the need to enhance mobile and patrolling teams to ensure that no untoward incidents occur during the festive period.

## Commissioner directs fair SSC exam

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat chaired an important meeting at the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Kohat to ensure the transparent and fair conduct of annual examination, on Wednesday.

The meeting beside others, was also attended by the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, Chairman BISE Kohat Imtiaz Ayub, Controller Examinations Malik Maqsood Anwar and authorities concerned.

The meeting discussed in detail various aspects of security arrangements during the examinations, monitoring of examination halls and ensuring discipline. An effective strategy to this effect was formulated to prevent any kind of irregularities in the examinations and ensure transparency.

Furthermore, it was also decided that the appointment of invigilators will be done through a draw so that there is no scope for any bias or corruption and the examination process can be made completely transparent and impartial.

## Distribution of Ramazan package

# PPP Dir alleges irregularities

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Former Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) candidate for NA-7, Advocate Alam Zeb, has accused the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) law-makers and tehsil chairmen of misappropriating the Ramazan relief package, claiming it was distributed based on political favoritism among party workers.

Addressing a press conference alongside PPP councilors and local leaders at Timergara here the other day, Mr Alam Zeb alleged that the Rs. 425 million Ramazan package was unfairly allocated to PTI supporters, sidelining the poor and deserving individuals. The PPP Councilors including Malik Azam Khan, Malik Tariq Wahab, Malik Sarbiland Khan, former chairman Shah Nawaz Khan, Gul Mir Khan, Fazal Wahid, and Suleman were also in attendance.

He claimed that PTI legislators handpicked 5,000 beneficiaries each, while tehsil chairmen selected 2,500 recipients, ensuring the aid primarily benefited party loyalists rather than deserving individuals. He further alleged that chil-



dren, siblings, and other relatives of PTI lawmakers were included in the package, while widows, orphans, daily wage earners, and other vulnerable groups were deliberately overlooked.

According to Alam Zeb, some beneficiaries were reportedly added to the list on the condition that they would forfeit Rs. 5,000 from their share, highlighting what he described as blatant financial misconduct.

Criticizing PTI's governance, he asserted that a party that came to power on promises of justice and transparency had instead used public funds as political incentives for its workers. He accused the provincial government of approving the Ramazan package

solely to reward party affiliates rather than to support the genuinely needy.

Alam Zeb further alleged that corruption has been rampant in PTI's provincial government for the past 12 years, with law-makers amassing wealth while public welfare suffered. He called on the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to investigate the assets of PTI legislators and some of its workers; and scrutinize irregularities in the Ramazan package's distribution. Alam Zeb urged NAB, the Anti-Corruption Department, and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to launch a thorough inquiry into the alleged large-scale corruption in the Ramazan relief program.

## FIR lodged under PECA Act against politician

F.P. Report

WANA: The first-ever case under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) has been registered in South Waziristan against social worker and politician. The case marks a new phase in the enforcement of cyber laws in the region, aiming to curb the misuse of social media platforms, on Wednesday.

According to official sources, police have lodged a First Information Report (FIR) against prominent political, social, and business figure Taj Muhammad Wazir at Wana City Police Station. The case has been filed under Section 10 of the PECA Act, which pertains to offenses related to cyber defamation and misinformation.

District Police Officer (DPO) South Waziristan

confirmed that FIR was registered following allegations of social media misuse by Taj Muhammad Wazir. He emphasized that despite repeated warnings, certain individuals continue to spread false and misleading information online, inciting the public and creating unrest.

"We have observed that some individuals, for their personal interests, propagate baseless and unverified news on social media, misleading the public and disrupting social harmony. The police will take strict action against such violations under the PECA Act," He further urged social media users to verify information before sharing it, cautioning that legal consequences await those who engage in spreading misinformation.

The PECA Act, which was recently passed by

Parliament, has introduced stringent measures to regulate online content and combat cybercrimes. This case in South Waziristan Lower is the first of its kind under the new law, setting a precedent for future cyber-related offenses in the region.

Legal experts, however, highlight that while the FIR has been registered, the burden of proof lies with the police. They must present substantial evidence in court to establish the strength and validity of the case against Taj Muhammad Wazir.

"This case will be closely watched, as it will determine how effectively the PECA Act is enforced in tribal districts. The police will have to prove beyond doubt that the accused intentionally spread misinformation," remarked a senior legal analyst.

## Science Lab at GGHSS Bhera inaugurated

F.P. Report

LODHRAN: On the special directives of Tareen Education Foundation Founder, Jahangir Khan Tareen, a state-of-the-art science lab has been inaugurated at Government Girls Higher Secondary School Bhera, Sardogha.

The lab was inaugurated by Akbar Khan, Chief Executive Officer of TEF, with a total investment of PKR 10 million. This modern facility is expected to benefit over 2,000 female students, equipping them with advanced scientific learning resources to enhance their educational



experience and skills. In his message, Jahangir Khan Tareen emphasized the importance of providing modern educational facilities, stating that it is the need of the hour. He reaffirmed TEF's commitment to collaborate with the government to

ensure that students have access to quality education and skill development opportunities. The inauguration ceremony was attended by CEO Education Sardogha, Kalsoom Mansha, Assistant Commissioner Bhera, and other distinguished guests.

## Japanese delegation visits Mohan Jo Daro

Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: A 11-member Japanese delegation led by Ms. Raina, reached the archaeological site of Mohan Jo Daro, on Wednesday.

The guide Irshad Ahmed Solangi, gave a complete briefing about the ancient civilization of Mohan Jo Daro. On this occasion they said in theirs statement that in our Japan country schools, the teachers give a lecture to students about Harrappa and about Mohan Jo Daro.

The delegation further said that the 5 thousand years old civilization of Mohan Jo Daro was a masterpiece of the early civilization, while the way in which the people of Mohan Jo Daro built the city in ancient times is a priceless example of masterpiece craftsmanship.

**Residents hold protest against electricity load shedding:** Hundreds of citizens

protested against HESCO in Badeh, a large population city of Larkana district, and staged protest and tire-burning sit-in on the road leading to Mohan Jo Daro, due to which the traffic coming to different cities was completely suspended for a few hours.

The demonstrators also raised slogans against WAPDA's HESCO company. In this occasion Comrade Dodo Deshi, Zafer Ali Sanjrani and others said that the HISCO administration has been charging electricity for many hours on a daily basis even in the Ramazan.

**GDA secretary general's public response:** The Secretary General of the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), Dr. Safdar Ali Abbasi, stated that the people of Sindh have rejected the protest call by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) regarding the canals issue.

From Karachi to Kashmore, the public

refrained from taking to the streets, which Dr. Safdar described as a clear vote of no confidence against the PPP. In his statement issued here today, Dr. Safdar Ali Abbasi said that the PPP should recognize the hatred and anger of the people of Sindh. He advised the PPP that there is still time to part ways with the federal government in the interest of Sindh.

Furthermore, Dr. Safdar mentioned that the people of Sindh are well-aware and can clearly differentiate between traitors and patriotic politicians. He also highlighted public awareness regarding the deal on the Indus River water and questioned why PPP's success in the general elections was only possible under Form 47. Dr. Safdar clarified that by not participating in the PPP's protest, the people of Sindh have expressed their disdain and distrust.





SEOUL: A house is surrounded by wildfire in Uiseong county, South Korea.

## Student anti-corruption rallies spread across Balkans

BELGRADE (AFP): Massive student-led anti-graft protests have spread from Serbia to neighboring Balkan countries, with thousands rallying under the slogan "Corruption kills" following a series of deadly tragedies that have claimed dozens of lives.

Young people have used the rallies to vent their anger in a region of Europe that rights groups say suffers from endemic corruption, prompting hundreds of thousands of mostly young people to go onto the streets in Serbia alone to demand change. The wave of demonstrations on a scale unseen in Serbia since the 1990s kicked off after a recently renovated train station canopy collapsed on November 1 in the northern city of Novi Sad, killing 16 people.

With many blaming the deaths on corruption and inadequate oversight, the tragedy fueled outrage across Serbia and prompted the prime minister to resign in the protests' wake. After the Serbian example, young people have organized similar anti-graft rallies in North Macedonia and Montenegro, while protesters in European Union member state Bulgaria have offered solidarity with their Balkan neighbors.

Now the symbol of those protests — a bloodied red hand print — has turned up at rallies in neighboring North Macedonia after a fire at a

nightclub operating under a questionable license killed 59 mostly young concert-goers on March 16. "Girls from my generation died," Ema Peseva, a 20-year-old student from Skopje, told AFP during Monday's protest in the capital which drew thousands.

As in Serbia, demonstrators at the Skopje rally chanted "Corruption kills" while accusing officials of being "murderers." "Everyone is bribed so they can line their pockets for travels, yachts, private schools. Meanwhile, children are dying from fire and pyrotechnics at concerts," Peseva said, referring to the stage effects blamed for the blaze.

Milena Janevska, one of the organizers, said that students wished to "demand accountability for the tragedy in Kocani," where the fire took place. "We demand transparency from all institutions, simply to be accountable to the citizens who have a duty to show this revolt," the 26-year-old told AFP.

In a show of solidarity Bulgarian anti-graft protesters last week held a few minutes' silence remembering the Kocani fire dead along with their own, with some drawing comparisons to the country's 2001 Indigo Disco stampede that killed seven queueing teenagers. "We said a long time ago that corruption kills — literally. We saw in Bulgaria how corruption killed

children in front of the Indigo nightclub. We saw it when people died in bus crashes, on unsafe roads, in incidents caused by poor construction," said lawyer Velislav Velichkov, one of the organizers.

Montenegro meanwhile was likewise shaken in early 2025 by protests after a man shot dead 13 people in the street on the evening of January 1 — the second mass killing in the small town of Cetinje in less than two and a half years. Directly inspired by the Serbian protest movement, demonstrators demanded the dismissal of senior security officials, police reform, the confiscation of illegal weapons and better mental health care.

"Students in Serbia are truly an inspiration to all those frustrated by the high levels of corruption — which, as we have seen from concrete examples, can be deadly," Aleksandar Popov, president of the Center for Regionalism, a Novi Sad-based think tank, told AFP. And compared with the rest of Europe many Balkan countries struggle with graft, according to watchdog Transparency International.

Serbia ranks 105th out of 180 countries on the latest global corruption perceptions index — its worst position in more than a decade. North Macedonia fares only slightly better at 88th place, while Bulgaria ranks 76th and Montenegro 65th.

## Japan, Korea would struggle to fill US demand

SINGAPORE (Reuters): US allies Japan and South Korea would struggle to quickly ramp up shipbuilding to meet US demand for alternatives under President Donald Trump's plan to impose port fees on China-linked ships, a top Japanese shipping executive said.

The Trump administration is drafting an executive order in a bid to revive domestic shipbuilding and weaken China's grip on the industry. Japanese shipbuilding is running near full capacity, with little scope for expansion until 2028, while shipbuilders in South Korea, as well as in the US, face financial challenges, said Takaya Soga, CEO of Nippon Yusen (NYK), Japan's largest shipping line.

"The capacity of Japanese shipbuilding is almost full at the moment, until say 2028. So it is not so easy for them to increase the capacity," Soga told Reuters on the sidelines of the Singapore Maritime Week conference. Soga said expansion by South Korean shipbuilders was also not imminent, as they had "suffered from a very bad financial situation" for nearly two decades. US shipbuilders need both investment and technology to boost capacity, Soga said.

Trump's order would establish a Maritime Security Trust Fund as a funding source and create shipbuilding incentives through tax credits, grants and loans, according to a draft fact sheet. China, South Korea, and Japan account for 90% of global shipbuilding, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Chinese shipbuilders have built their market share to more than 50% of merchant vessel cargo capacity, up from 5% in 1999, winning share from their Asian neighbours.

## Russia starts trial of former defence official

MOSCOW (Reuters): A former Russian deputy defence minister went on trial in Moscow in the first of a series of cases that signal a drive by President Vladimir Putin to punish corruption in the armed forces. Timur Ivanov was arrested in April last year on suspicion of taking bribes, and investigators added new embezzlement charges in October.

State news agency TASS said the total sum alleged to have been embezzled by Ivanov and others was 4.1 billion roubles (\$48.8 million), mostly in the form of bank transfers to two foreign accounts. Ivanov and Anton Filatov, a former subordinate who is also on trial, have denied the charges. According to TASS, Filatov has "actively cooperated" with investigators and testified against Ivanov. The news agency said that the court had accepted a request from prosecutors that the proceedings should take place behind closed doors on the grounds of state secrecy. At least a dozen people have been arrested in the past year, including two other former deputy defence ministers, in the biggest wave of scandals to hit the military establishment in years.

While waging a war in Ukraine that is now into its fourth year, Putin is trying to eliminate waste, mismanagement and the siphoning of funds from Russia's rising defence budget. Ivanov, who had served as a deputy minister since 2016, was in charge of property management, housing, construction and mortgages at the defence ministry. He had long been the subject of journalistic investigations. The Anti-Corruption Foundation of late opposition leader Alexei Navalny alleged that Ivanov and his family lived a life of luxury including yachts, helicopters, visits to the French Riviera, purchases of diamonds and a 19th century mansion in Moscow. Forbes magazine listed him as one of the wealthiest men in Russia's security structures.

## UN fears war as barrel bombs dropped in S Sudan

NEW YORK (BBC): Barrel bombs believed to contain a highly flammable liquid have been used in airstrikes in South Sudan as escalating violence pushes the world's newest country to the brink of another civil war, the UN has said. The comments by Nicholas Haysom, head of the UN mission in South Sudan, follow recent fighting between the army and a rebel militia, known as the White Army, at a military base in the northern town of Nasir in oil-rich Upper Nile State.

Since the White Army overran the base, there had been persistent aerial bombardment causing "significant casualties and horrific burns", he said. "A conflict would erase all the hard-won gains made since the 2018 peace deal was signed," he warned. "It would devastate not only South Sudan but the entire region, which simply cannot afford another war," Mr Haysom said.

The government has not responded to the barrel bomb allegations. President Salva Kiir and his rival Vice-President Riek Machar agreed in August 2018 to end a five-year civil war that killed nearly 400,000 people. But over the last seven years their relationship has become increasingly strained amid ethnic tensions and sporadic violence. In early March, several of Machar's most senior allies were arrested by security forces, which his allies called a "grave violation" of the peace deal. This followed

the clashes between the military and the White Army, which fought alongside Machar during the civil war that erupted in 2013 - not long after the country had gained its independence from Sudan. "In retaliation, communities across Upper Nile are being subjected to persistent aerial bombardment using devices, barrel bombs, allegedly containing a highly flammable liquid that acts as an accelerant on explosion," Mr Haysom said. "These indiscriminate attacks on civilians are causing significant casualties and horrific injuries, especially burns."

Such allegations were first made last week by local leaders in Upper Nile. James Gatluak Lew, Nasir county commissioner, told the BBC that state forces and their allies had carried out "chemical bombardments". Local media reported that ethyl acetate, a highly flammable chemical compound, was found at the attack sites. In an earlier interview with the BBC, Edmund Yakani, the head of a local non-governmental organisation, said he had heard similar reports. Eyewitnesses, including local community leaders and business informants, had told his Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO) about the use of "unusual weapons", he said.

Government spokesman Michael Makuei confirmed there had been a military operation in Upper Nile last week, insisting "the bom-

bardment was strictly against White Army positions and did not harm civilians". But Mr Haysom said civilians, including women and children, had been greatly affected, with an estimated 63,000 people forced to flee their homes.

He added that such violence was escalating as the country drew closer to elections, expected next year. "Rampant misinformation, disinformation and hate speech is also ratcheting up tensions and driving ethnic divisions, and fear," he said. The UN mission, which oversees an estimated 18,000 peacekeepers in South Sudan, was engaging in intense shuttle diplomacy to try and prevent a return to civil war, Mr Haysom added.

Meanwhile, Machar has accused neighbouring Uganda of violating the UN arms embargo on South Sudan by conducting airstrikes in the country. In a letter seen by the Reuters news agency and addressed to the UN, the African Union and the regional bloc Igad, Machar said Uganda's military intervention in South Sudan had violated the peace deal. "The Ugandan forces are currently taking part in air strikes against civilians in counties of Nasir, Longechuk and Ulang in Upper Nile State, and Akobo County in Jonglei State," it said. Earlier this month, Uganda said it had deployed troops to South Sudan at the request of President Kiir's government, though Juba has denied this.

## Estonia warns of Putin 'upper hand' through talks

WASHINGTON (AFP): Estonia's top diplomat said that Russia has gained an upper hand after President Donald Trump initiated talks to end the Ukraine war and suggested the United States consider a time limit if there is no progress. Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna and his counterparts from Latvia and Lithuania met jointly in Washington with Secretary of State Marco Rubio as the Baltic nations -- all NATO members -- lead concerns over the new US push on Russia and Ukraine.

"Putin has now an upper hand in some ways," Tsahkna told AFP in an interview ahead of his talks with Rubio. "The question is now, how long is Trump actually going to give Putin to play the games?" he said. Trump campaigned vowing to end the war, which began when Russia invaded its neighbor in 2022, and bristled at the billions of dollars in weapons sent to Kyiv under former president Joe Biden. Trump stunned many European allies when he reached out to Russia and berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in a disastrous

February 28 meeting at the White House. The Trump administration this week held talks separately with both Russia and Ukraine in Saudi Arabia and said both had agreed to avoid strikes in the Black Sea.

The White House said in turn that it would facilitate Russian exports of fertilizer, one grievance of Moscow as the United States slapped sweeping sanctions over the invasion. The Baltic foreign ministers said that while the Black Sea understanding was a welcome beginning, it was premature to see it leading to a full ceasefire. "The Baltic states are quite skeptical about Russia's intentions. Our intel assessments clearly show that Russia and their instruments of power are all aligned towards war, not towards peace," Latvian Foreign Minister Baiba Braze told a joint news conference. Tsahkna said Putin's main motivation was not to reach a ceasefire in Ukraine but more broadly to decrease US influence in Europe and restore his economy.

"The only person who can actually finish this war is Putin and we just don't

see within the last couple of weeks that actually he has put anything on the table," he told AFP. Putin is maintaining his "full-scale war on the battlefield" while diplomacy is ongoing, Tsahkna said. "He sees the opportunity to ask everything that he wants to get," he added. "If you see what Putin was like two months ago, or even more than two months ago, he was in a weaker position."

Tsahkna said there was no sign Trump would back Russia's demands and voiced support that the United States was again working with Ukraine. Putin, he said, "understands only strength and hard talks." The Baltic states, with their vivid memories of Soviet rule, have been at the forefront of defense spending and arming Ukraine. Amid questions of US support, Germany last week approved three billion euros (\$3.25 billion) in military aid for Ukraine, part of a shift that Tsahkna called historic. The Baltic nations and Poland last week also took the first step toward exiting a treaty banning anti-personnel mines, pointing to the risk of Russia.

## Sanctions won't stop fighting: Congo rebel leader

ABUJA (AP): The leader of the rebels who captured two key cities in eastern Congo tells The Associated Press that international sanctions and Congo's proposed minerals deal with the United States in search of peace will not stop the fighting. Meanwhile, neighboring countries announced a broader peace facilitation team to seek a resolution to the conflict.

With a \$5 million bounty placed on the rebel leaders by Congo's government, "we will fight like people who got nothing to lose in order to secure the future of our country," said Corneille Nangaa, leader of the Congo River Alliance that includes the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group. Nangaa dismissed Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi's comments last week that his country - whose mineral resources are estimated to be worth \$24 trillion and critical to much of the world's technology - is looking for a minerals partnership with the US. The US government has not publicly spoken about any such deal,

which local observers say could be similar to the Trump administration's recent offer to Ukraine to help end the war with Russia.

"This problem can be better resolved by the concerned Congolese, not foreigners with different geopolitical agendas," Nangaa told the AP over the weekend. "Trying to bribe US with mines can undermine US credibility." The rebel leader also rejected the outcome of last week's meeting between Congolese and Rwandan leaders in Qatar, saying such a move to achieve peace without his group's involvement would fail. He said the rebels can only have a dialogue with Congo's government if the country acknowledges their grievances and the root causes of the conflict. "Anything regarding us which are done without us, it's against us," Nangaa said.

Since launching a major escalation of their decade-long fighting with Congolese forces in January, the M23 rebels have captured the cities of

Goma and Bukavu and several towns in eastern Congo, prompting fears of regional war involving neighbors whose militaries are also on the ground. Efforts to achieve a ceasefire collapsed last week after the rebels pulled out of talks facilitated by Angola, condemning European Union sanctions on its leaders. After Angola's president and chairperson of the African Union, Joao Lourenco, withdrew as the key mediator, southern and eastern African leaders announced at a joint summit that a panel of five former African presidents to help seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The panel will appoint a mediator to replace the Angolan leader, the president's office in Congo said in a statement posted on X.

The M23 rebels said their planned withdrawal from the strategic town of Walikale, which they captured last week, is delayed because Congolese forces are allegedly still positioned in the area with attack drones.

## Brazil apologizes to families of victims of military dictatorship's mass grave

SAO PAULO (AP): Brazil's government apologized to families of victims of the country's military dictatorship whose remains could be among those found in a clandestine mass grave 35 years ago.

Dozens of families are still waiting to know whether their parents, children, siblings and friends are in one of more than 1,000 blue bags discovered in 1990 in a ditch in a São Paulo cemetery in the isolated district of Perus. That was the first of many mass graves uncovered by Brazil's authorities after the end of the 21-year military rule in 1985.

The clandestine grave at the Dom Bosco cemetery also contained remains of several unidentified people who were not linked to the fight against Brazil's dictatorship. The official apology is part of a deal between prosecutors, family members and the State. It took place during Right to Truth Day, which is also celebrated in other countries.

Human Rights Minister Macaé Evaristo said the Brazilian State was neglectful in the identification process of the bags and bones found in Perus. For almost 25 years, the remains were held by three state universities and laboratories outside Brazil, but only a handful of families finally had their loved ones identified. Evaristo said Brazil's government has invested about 200,000 Brazilian reais (\$35,000) each year for the identification of bags from Perus, but agreed that is not enough to give peace to families of victims. "What the Brazilian government has been doing is continuing the process of seeking investigation and accountability. We need to remember that our ministry was dismantled," Evaristo said, in a reference to the 2019-22 presidency of Jair Bolsonaro, an advocate of the country's military dictatorship. "Families have the right to the truth. Brazilian society has the right to the

truth." Families uncertain if their loved ones' remains were in the Perus mass grave attended the ceremony. Gilberto Molina, who represented them, had his brother Flávio's remains finally identified in one of the bags in 2005. The Brazilian State only recognized it was responsible for the crime in his brother's third death certificate, early in 2019. "It was a funeral of almost 50 years. For some other families it still is an even longer one," Molina said. "I hope that every family here still has perseverance in their quest for justice."

Brazil's truth commission in 2014 reported that at least 434 people were killed and more than 100 disappeared completely during the country's military dictatorship. The disappearance of former lawmaker Rubens Paiva, as portrayed in the Academy Award-winning film "I'm Still Here" renewed public interest in the dictatorship's

abuses, attracting an audience of more than 6 million in Brazil. Nilmário Miranda, a former government minister and long-time human rights activist, said uncovering a mass grave with victims of the dictatorship in 1990 - only a few years after redemocratization - was a major affair led by then Sao Paulo Mayor Luiza Erundina. Faced with anonymous death threats, she put City Hall officers to oversee the searches. "It was all under the rug of society, it was all hidden and you couldn't speak about it. That put the deal that ended the dictatorship in check, the one that spared torturers and executors," Miranda said, in a reference to Brazil's 1979 amnesty law that didn't punish crimes of the military during the regime.

That law could soon be partially reversed by Brazil's Supreme Court in cases of people who were killed then by state agents and had their remains vanished.

## Chad condemns Sudan's airport threat as 'declaration of war'

CHAD (BBC): Chad has condemned a senior Sudanese general's threat to target its airports, calling it a "declaration of war". Its foreign ministry said it would respond according to international law if a "square metre of Chadian territory is threatened". The warning follows comments from Lt-Gen Yasir al-Atta, the deputy commander of Sudan's army, who said the UAE was using Chad's airports to deliver weapons to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The Sudanese army has repeatedly accused the UAE of supporting its rival, the RSF, throughout the brutal two-year civil war, which has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis. UN experts have described accusations of the UAE smuggling weapons to the RSF through Chad as "credible", but the UAE has denied

this. Lt-Gen Atta's comments follow Sudan's recent decision to take the UAE to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over its alleged support of the RSF.

Speaking at a ceremony for an army officer killed in a drone attack by the RSF while the army was recapturing the presidential palace, he said airports in Chad's capital N'Djamena and the eastern city Amdjarass were "legitimate targets". Lt-Gen Atta said "retaliatory action" would be taken against the UAE, South Sudan and Chad's President Mahamat Déby. South Sudan has also been accused of backing the RSF. It has denied backing any side in the conflict. "We know what we are saying, and our words are not a joke at all, nor are they spoken lightly," Lt-Gen Atta warned. The BBC has reached out to Sudan's

authorities for clarification on his comments.

They reflect the Sudanese army's deep frustration with not only the UAE, but neighbouring countries, accused of allowing their territory to be used as supply routes for the RSF. In December, Sudan's defence ministry said that the weapons supplied included strategic drones that carry guided missiles. Chad has positioned itself as neutral, but the war of words exposes the growing regional instability caused by Sudan's civil war, which is complicated by the involvement of external players. "General al-Atta should stop uttering foolish threats and focus on the urgent need for an immediate cessation of hostilities and engage without delay in a constructive dialogue in favour of a peaceful and lasting solution," said Chad, highlighting that

it is hosting hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees, mostly from the neighbouring region of Darfur, which is largely under RSF control.

The harsh exchange came as the RSF claimed to have seized al-Malha in Darfur, a town located on a vital trade route from Chad and Libya. It also serves as a key crossroads leading to el-Fasher some 200km (125 miles) away, the last state capital in Darfur still in army hands, which the RSF has besieged for nearly a year. The group said it had "encircled the enemy... leaving behind 380 dead," after months of fighting with a coalition of armed groups allied to the Sudanese army known as the Joint Forces. It claimed to have "liberated" the area and declared that it "remained steadfast in [its] determination to end this war in favour of the Sudanese people".



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Transatlantic rift is not a temporary blip

**S**PEAKING on Tuesday with visiting Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel, who is now in Beijing for the second China-Portugal strategic dialogue at the foreign ministers' level, Foreign Minister Wang Yi stressed that "China regards Europe as an important pole in a multipolar world".

China-European Union relations, which had been strained in recent years mainly due to Brussels embracing the previous US administration's hawkish stance on Beijing to curry favor with the United States, are seeing signs of warming-up lately — with high-level European officials either speaking positively about the mutually beneficial relationship or visiting the country to seek closer ties.

Apart from Rangel, the French foreign minister and Italy's Senate president are also scheduled to visit China and meet with top Chinese officials this week.

The renewed efforts by China and Europe to strengthen political trust and boost their pragmatic cooperation have been given greater impetus by the change of administration in the United States.

The recent revelation of a Signal group chat among top officials of the Donald Trump administration, which inadvertently included a journalist, has laid bare the arrogant and contemptuous dynamics driving US foreign policy. While discussing military strikes on the Houthis in Yemen, Vice-President JD Vance and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth derided Europe as a "pathetic" free-rider, framing Washington's actions not as collective security measures but as reluctant favors to an ungrateful ally.

The US leader has previously described the EU as "abusive" and "hostile" for allegedly taking advantage of the US. This is emblematic of the transactional and divisive ethos of the Trump administration and underscores a harsh reality: Europe's reliance on US security guarantees is a liability in an age when the US' unilateralism and zero-sum geopolitics are not a temporary aberration but a structural realignment.

For Europe, long accustomed to sheltering under the US' security umbrella, strategic autonomy is no longer a theoretical debate but a practical necessity. This changed reality was evident at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, early this year, when European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen exhibited a marked change of stance, calling for the 27-nation bloc to "deepen" ties with China. The challenge for Europe is not recognizing the need for autonomy, which has long been mooted, but in executing it, as its realization has been hindered by internal EU divisions.

But Trump's tariff attacks and demand for higher EU defense spending prove that any US support will come at a steeper cost and the erosion of European agency, with members of Trump's coterie such as Vance and Elon Musk openly meddling in European politics, amplifying far-right narratives to fracture Europe into subservient "partners".

China's investments during Europe's sovereign debt crisis — purchasing bonds in Greece, Portugal, and Spain, and funding infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe — have demonstrated its commitment to upholding the bloc's stability, not exploiting its divisions.

The Belt and Road Initiative, often misrepresented as a divisive tool, in fact complements EU integration by bridging infrastructure gaps and reducing core-periphery disparities. A cohesive Europe, capable of independent action, strengthens global multipolarity — a vision China actively supports. In contrast, Washington's pressure on Europe to adopt a confrontational stance toward China reveals its aim: to subordinate European interests to the US' agenda to curtail China's development.

The path to European autonomy no doubt appears daunting to Europeans, as it means a break with the familiarity of playing second fiddle to the US. But partnership with China offers a pragmatic way to reduce the risks. While the US sows discord, China invests in connectivity; while Washington demands alignment against Beijing, Beijing advocates dialogue and development.

The choice for Europe is clear: cling to the US, which views it with disdain, or embrace a future of sovereign agency through cooperation with a trustworthy partner on the basis of mutual respect. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the EU and China, it marks an ideal time for the EU to chart its own course rather than letting Washington dictate the heading. China stands ready to support Europe's journey toward strategic autonomy — not as a patron, but as a collaborator in building a stable, multipolar world.

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The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Why any plans on Israel's part to normalise ties with Lebanon would be a no go

Michael Young

**A**S a follow-up to the ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel in November, the two countries agreed to form committees earlier this month to discuss three issues: their outstanding land border disagreements; Israel's withdrawal from five border hills it still occupies in Lebanon; and the release of Lebanese prisoners being held by the Israelis.

From the beginning, Israel has sought to portray such negotiations as the first step towards diplomatic relations. "The goal is to reach normalisation," an Israeli official recently declared, quoted by The Times of Israel newspaper. On the Lebanese side, however, the official position is that there is no intention to normalise, only to secure an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory, seek the release of Lebanese citizens, and reach an agreement over disputed border points and close this contentious file.

From the Lebanese perspective, allegations that the administration of US President Donald Trump is trying to push Beirut in the same direction as Israel have been even more disturbing. On March 18, Lebanon's An-Nahar newspaper published an article quoting an unnamed "Lebanese personality" who met US special envoy Steve Witkoff in Doha recently. The envoy reportedly told him that "Lebanon will be asked to move to direct face-to-face political negotiations with Israel and name a civilian official for this task". The Israelis, Mr Witkoff is believed to have added, would be represented by that country's Minister of

Strategic Affairs, Ron Dermer.

The envoy also allegedly told his Lebanese interlocutor that there would be no reconstruction in the south, the Bekaa, and Beirut's southern suburbs before such a process begins, nor would the inhabitants of "frontline border towns" be allowed to return home. Israel would continue to hold the occupied hills for about a year and would not negotiate over the 13 land border points still in dispute.

Mr Witkoff publicly denied the An-Nahar report, describing it as "baseless, false and misleading". Yet few in Beirut were reassured, given the Israeli statements on normalisation and how close the Trump administration is to Israel. One can speculate whether such off-the-record remarks were designed to raise the heat on Lebanon, given that Mr Witkoff allegedly told his interlocutor that the Americans were dissatisfied with how Lebanon was dealing with Hezbollah.

If that's the thinking in Washington, the Americans should be careful. Lebanon is too divided a country today to be able to afford a divisive internal dispute over relations with Israel, particularly when it has much more pressing challenges. Any idea that, because Lebanon is fragile and Hezbollah is weakened, the country can be bludgeoned into a normalisation process that it doesn't want may crack open its dangerous rifts.

At the same time, if there is some truth in the An-Nahar report, and this echoes the mood in the Trump administration, it's

albeit indirectly through Amos Hochstein, the US envoy at the time.

Direct talks through the Mixed Armistice Commission and indirect talks through President Joseph Aoun on the land border disputes may be a way of nipping any potential American demands in the bud, thereby relying on precedents that can preserve domestic unity. This won't lead to a peace agreement, but it will revive an Armistice Agreement that guarantees that no military actions again take place across the southern border.

In parallel, the Lebanese should initiate negotiations with the new government in Syria to resolve the contested border in the Shebaa Farms area. Their outcome would end any ambiguity over to which country the farms belong — Syria or Lebanon.

Finally, the Lebanese government must begin a dialogue with Hezbollah on finding a solution to the group's weapons and implementing UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701. A return to the Armistice Agreement, like the large Lebanese majority's opposition to the group's holding weapons, could compel Hezbollah to make concessions on this front.

Such measures may fall short of normalisation, if that is indeed what the Americans want, but they would fall within the confines of what the government could sell at home. By pushing too hard, the US may throw the baby out with the bathwater. Most Lebanese want an end to hostilities with Israel, but do not necessarily embrace normalisation. A formula that balances these aims is what is needed today.

With regard to Mr Witkoff's purported demand that a civilian representative be designated, there is a precedent from which Lebanon can take advantage: the maritime border negotiations concluded in 2022. Ultimately, it was then-president Michel Aoun, a civilian, who carried them out,

China further opens its door to attract FDI

**F**OREIGN direct investment (FDI) is essential for achieving sustainable economic growth and navigating the geopolitical complexities. Accordingly, China recently unveiled a strategic action plan for stabilizing foreign investment in 2025 to align its high-level opening-up with international economic and trade rules after having removed many restrictions on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector last year. The action plan, jointly devised by the Ministry of Commerce and the National Development and Reform Commission, was approved by the State Council, China's Cabinet, at its executive meeting.

As part of China's latest efforts to attract more FDI, the action plan includes 20 specific measures in four aspects. China will implement pilot programs to open up such sectors as value-added telecommunications, biotechnology and wholly foreign-owned hospitals, providing comprehensive services for foreign-invested projects in these sectors.

In addition to progressively liberalizing the education and culture sectors, China hopes to expand its pilot programs by opening up industries such as the services sector, telecom and medical services. China is also committed to removing all market access restrictions in the manufacturing sector, ensuring equal treatment of goods produced by domestic and

foreign enterprises, improving access to credit, and allowing more foreign companies to participate in sectors such as those related to animal husbandry including animal breeding, and production of feed and feeding equipment and veterinary medicine, as well as eldercare, cultural tourism and sports.

About 59,080 new foreign-invested businesses were started in China in 2024 alone, up 9.9 percent year-on-year. On the other hand, China's overseas investment has increased significantly from 2021 to 2023 — to more than 1 trillion yuan (\$139.5 billion) a year. In January, total FDI in China reached 97.59 billion yuan, an increase of 27.5 percent over the previous month, with 12.5 percent of all FDI being used in high-tech manufacturing.

China's action plan will play a key role in attracting high-quality foreign investment, boosting economic development by increasing tax revenue, creating a large number of local jobs, and improving the living standards of local people. This is due to the further opening-up of the manufacturing and other industries to foreign investors, the growth in FDI, and the optimization of pilot programs in sectors such as telecom, healthcare and education. Increasing FDI in the telecom sector will further boost China's high-end manufacturing, the green sector, cross-border e-commerce, digital transformation, and research and

development of artificial intelligence. Amid the unveiling of DeepSeek, AI's Sputnik moment, China made a calculated decision to open up its telecom sector, which would spur innovation-led growth and improve China's ability to advance cutting-edge digital technology. Notably, China launched a new pilot program last October, expanding foreign access to data centers and value-added telecom services in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Hainan province.

The action plan is a milestone in China's healthcare sector in that it enabled the establishment of wholly foreign-owned hospitals in some major cities. Aside from easing restrictions on FDI in the healthcare sector, China has also been upgrading and expanding healthcare infrastructure to better address medical issues and develop the "Healthy China 2030" program. The country may also expand youth and research education exchanges with other countries, attract and train foreign talents, and promote vocational education by further opening up the education sector.

This might prove to be a turning point in China's economic recovery, which in turn will improve the country's healthcare and technology infrastructure, enrich its cultural heritage and boost its silver economy. China is still a coveted investment destination, and the action plan will further boost investor confidence

in China's market, encourage foreign entities to invest more in the country, attracting more foreign capital in the shape of long-term investment in Chinese publicly-traded companies.

Besides, the government's policy to improve financial flexibility will allow foreign-invested businesses to access domestic finance for equity investment by lifting restrictions on domestic loans. The strategic investment of foreign entities in Chinese equity offers the opportunity to unleash the unrealized growth potential of the stock market, while boosting flexibility and encouraging larger-scale investment.

By creating a more business-friendly environment through, among other things, the continuous shortening of the negative list, and with 21 free trade zones, a vast market, growing numbers of foreign enterprises, and comprehensive and efficient industry and supply chains, China is set to draw more foreign investment. The Chinese government is also promoting innovation, building mega projects, advancing new quality productive forces, further deepening reform and making concerted efforts to achieve sustainable development. In particular, the action plan's long-term investment attraction strategy is essential for China to meet its development requirement as it proceeds to realize high-quality economic development.

Business education must innovate to stay relevant

Sergei Guriev

**T**HE world has always looked to leaders to navigate times of change. Yet, as we enter the second quarter of 2025, the challenges confronting the leaders of today have reached a scale and complexity that feels unprecedented.

In its recently released "Global Risks Report 2025," the World Economic Forum revealed a world fractured across geopolitical, environmental, societal, economic and technological fronts. Over the past year, conflicts have escalated, extreme weather events have intensified and society has become more polarized. According to the report, 52 percent of respondents anticipate an unsettled global outlook over the next two years, with an even bleaker long-term forecast.

There is a widening gap between the risks we face and the capacity of institutions — governments, businesses, nongovernmental organizations and academia — to respond effectively. This gap demands leaders who can unite people around shared goals, navigate complexity and drive solutions that work for the many, not just for the few.

The UAE is committed to being a global leader in economic diversification and innovation. The "D33" agenda includes the launch of innovative projects designed to drive sustainable economic growth and double gross domestic product by 2033.

According to the Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, the emirate aims to shift toward a knowledge-based economy, placing strong emphasis on leadership education, entrepreneurship and digital transformation. Dubai's 2040 Urban Master Plan further highlights the need for adaptive leadership capable of driving sustainable growth in an evolving

global landscape. These ambitious plans demand leaders who can bridge divides, navigate uncertainty and drive meaningful solutions. But as the complexities of business evolve, so too must business education. We must equip leaders with the right tools and learning experiences to navigate the fast-changing environment.

Leadership today requires more than just technical expertise or financial acumen. It demands systems thinking, agility and the ability to collaborate across disciplines and borders. Challenges such as climate change, technological disruption and economic instability do not exist in sectoral or geographical silos. Their interconnected nature requires leaders who can think holistically and act decisively.

Research has shown that diverse perspectives lead to better decision-making. When leaders embrace different viewpoints, they unlock innovation that benefits not just their organizations but society at large as well. Business schools, as well as being incubators of leadership talent, must create an environment where students learn not only from academics, but also from each other, from different experiences, industries and cultures. This is important at the organizational level and not just the individual level — for example, in the LBS Corporate 100, which brings 100 different organizations, industries and cultures together in a pre-competitive environment to discuss and tackle some of the world's biggest interconnected challenges.

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This is a new era for business education. The next generation of leaders is looking for more flexibility, real-world immersion and more focus on continuous learning, rather than a one-time educational experience. Demand for multiyear degrees is still strong, but new market segments are also appearing with the growing demand for flexibility and stackable qualifications. And our students want and need curricula based on real-world challenges that align with the fast-changing needs of the modern workforce.

In the UAE, universities and institutions such as the Dubai Future Foundation are integrating artificial intelligence, sustainability and digital leadership into their curricula. Dubai's "One Million Arab Coders" initiative demonstrates the growing demand for upskilling programs that prepare professionals for a digitally driven economy.

Forward-thinking institutions are reimagining how they teach business. Accelerated programs are providing experienced professionals with specialized knowledge. Online platforms are widening participation in leadership training, enabling professionals to improve their skills wherever they are in the world. Executive education is shifting toward blended learning models, allowing professionals to integrate study with their careers.

The World Economic Forum estimates that, by the end of this year, 50 percent of all employees will require retraining, with critical thinking, leadership and problem-solving among the most sought-after skills. AI and automation are transforming industries and leaders must continuously evolve alongside these changes. This makes lifelong learning

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# The politics of the Yemen chat scandal is obscuring key foreign policy shifts

**THE White House switched from stunned inertia over its Yemen group chat scandal to its regular truth-trashing, brutal attacks on its critics and a perennial defense – that President Donald Trump is the victim of a witch hunt.**

Its response to the embarrassing spectacle revealed by Atlantic journalist Jeffrey Goldberg gripped Washington on Tuesday. An increasingly aggressive tone and the lack of resignations among top national security officials suggested the plan is to give no inch and to turn the storm into another example of the second Trump presidency’s capacity to defy the constraints that normally apply.

In a divided nation hardly fixated on air strikes on Iran-backed Houthi militants, and as conservative media and GOP lawmakers run interference, political impact from the furor may be minimal.

But the substance of the group chat, its impact on the reputation of Trump’s top national security aides and several important developments in US foreign policy that are unfolding as it plays out offer important insights into how the administration sees the world and how it will wield American power.

Trump is straining the Atlantic alliance to the breaking point; he wants to end the Ukraine war and to bring peace and geopolitical realignment to the Middle East; he aims to combat superpower China; and he is threatening territorial expansion in the Western hemisphere. But his crack foreign policy team apparently didn’t know enough not to discuss sensitive and even operational details of military strikes on their mobile devices, which are vulnerable to foreign intelligence agencies. Trump prioritized a telegenic appearance and ultra-loyalty over experience in his Cabinet picks. And this doesn’t seem like the kind of crew with the aptitude to defuse world crises.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth came across in the published chats just as might be expected for a TV anchor with negligible top-level national security experience. His boast that “we are currently clean on OPSEC (operational security)” is now a grinning metaphor for his greenness in his new job. And a post-strike round of clenched fist emojis and team self-congratulation in the Signal app seemed more appropriate for high schoolers than hardened national security operatives.

The standing of national security adviser Mike Waltz, who reportedly added Atlantic editor-in-chief

Goldberg to the chat, may have been irretrievably damaged. Waltz, a decorated Green Beret, comes across in his books as a serious national security thinker who appreciates US allies thanks to the especially collaborative mission of his special forces unit and harrowing battlefield experiences. His selection by Trump was greeted by the foreign policy community in Washington with some relief.

The president may have warmly praised Waltz on Tuesday, but he’s notoriously fickle with top subordinates. Characteristically, Trump used Waltz’s embarrassment to extract a public show of loyalty and adulation – in the mold of ruthless authoritarian leaders that he

**Trump’s White House communications director also launched an attack on Goldberg – even though the journalist’s selective publication of sensitive details showed more circumspection than Trump’s national security aides. Steven Cheung warned on X of a “Signal hoax outrage” and a “witch hunt,” alleging a conspiracy by the national security “establishment community” determined to bring Trump down. European leaders took the hint from the first two months of the new Trump administration that the transatlantic alliance is over – at least by comparison with the unshakeable bond between United States and the continent for 80 years. The private vitriol shown to US allies in the Signal chat when officials thought they couldn’t be overheard suggests the breach is even more serious than it seemed. “I just hate bailing Europe out again,” JD Vance wrote in. The vice president’s disdain for transatlantic allies shone through in the zeal he brought to his speech lacerating their political culture at the Munich Security Conference last month. And he’s likely to irk them again this week after announcing he’ll join his wife Usha on a trip to Greenland – which Trump is vowing to annex.**

most admires. “There’s a lot of journalists in this city who have made big names for themselves making up lies about this president – whether it’s the ‘Russia hoax,’ or making up lies about Gold Star families,” Waltz said on camera.

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In the group chat, Hegseth seeks to ingratiate himself with the vice president, saying he thinks that European freeloading is “PATHETIC.” And a chat member identified as “SM” – presumably, Trump’s top adviser Stephen Miller – talks about forcing Europe to “remunerate” the US for the cost of strikes against Houthi rebels in Yemen. This appears to be a reference to the White House view that reopening shipping lanes in the Red Sea would benefit Europe’s economy more than America’s.

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This may be true, but requiring allies to pay for air strikes they weren’t consulted about is a bizarre way of conducting foreign policy, even for an administration as transactional as this one. And Washington is hardly acting against Yemen-based Houthis out of altruism toward Europe – it’s mostly sending a message to the militants’ sponsors in Iran and to protect Israel.

The key takeaway for Europe from the chats is that antipathy toward the continent runs far deeper than Trump’s obsessions with NATO spending and trade deficits. Officials with the president’s ear are more hostile than he is.

The uproar in Washington over the group chat distracted attention from the meager takeaways from the administration’s talks in Saudi Arabia aimed at ending the Ukraine war. The White House highlighted what it claimed was an agreement involving Russia and Ukraine to “eliminate” the use of force in the Black Sea. But Moscow imposed prohibitive conditions, including the lifting of restrictions on its market access for agricultural and fertilizer exports and curbs on its banks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of trying to deceive US mediators and twisting the agreements. And Washington may not be able to deliver on Russia’s demand for concessions: European states have

warned against lifting key sanctions on the Kremlin until a full ceasefire has been agreed.

The slow negotiations, which look nothing like the swift march to a peace deal Trump keeps promising, are consistent with Moscow’s classic approach. This is what Zelensky warned him about during a recent meeting in the Oval Office, causing the president and Vance to erupt in fury. Painful and incremental progress will only fuel the impression that Russia has no intention of ending a war in which its troops are making slow progress.

The Russians are extremely skilled at using negotiation processes as a smokescreen for carrying on

with their military ambitions.” Samir Puri, a former ceasefire monitor in Ukraine, told CNN’s Audie Cornish on “CNN This Morning” on Monday. “They fight and they talk at the same time,” said Puri, now director of the Centre for Global Governance and Security at Chatham House in London.

The Trump administration has decided that US interests are best served by a quick halt to the war, which it fears could erupt into a third world war. Trump was empowered to make his move toward negotiating a ceasefire by his election victory and his constitutional prerogatives over foreign policy. But his administration’s behavior is nevertheless raising concerns over its motives in the talks, not least because of the way that Trump’s envoy to the talks, Steve Witkoff – another official on the notorious Signal chat – has been reading from the Kremlin script about seized regions in eastern Ukraine since meeting President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

It was a coincidence that two other members of the Signal gang, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and CIA Director John Ratcliffe, were set to testify before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on Tuesday. Neither official emerged unscathed from an excruciating session, but Gabbard especially struggled to provide credible answers to

Adrian Monck

abide by such arrangements – not just in principle, but in practice.

Without this foundational commitment backed by meaningful enforcement

**remains the absolute prerequisite for normalization. This represents the fundamental misalignment in Witkoff’s vision. His Gaza-centric peace formulation (“Imagine if Lebanon normalizes, Syria normalizes, and the Saudis sign a normalization treaty with Israel because there’s peace in Gaza”) fails to acknowledge the deeper structural changes required for genuine regional transformation. For any normalization process to succeed, both American and Israeli leaders must shoulder their responsibility by formally accepting and implementing a viable two-state solution. More crucially, Washington must provide substantive guarantees that Israel will**

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Democratic senators furious about the administration’s cavalier attitude to sensitive information.

But her appearance may be most remembered for a major shift in US foreign policy. The intelligence community’s annual worldwide threat assessment led for the first time with a warning that transnational criminals, terrorists and other non-state actors pose a major danger to the homeland and are producing and trafficking vast quantities of drugs. The assessment brings the covert agencies in line with Trump’s political views and warnings that undocumented immigration over the southern border represents a major national crisis.

Gabbard testified that drugs cartels and criminal gangs “most immediately and directly” threaten the US and the well-being of its people. She highlighted Mexico-based transnational criminal organizations as the main suppliers of illicit fentanyl to the US market and warned of the threat from cartels promoting human trafficking and criminal groups that engage in extortion, weapons, and human smuggling.

So what does this mean? Intensifying administration rhetoric on Mexico is not occurring in a vacuum. Since Trump’s return to office, the US military has stepped up surveillance of Mexican drug cartels, with sophisticated spy planes flying at least 18 missions over the southwestern US and in international airspace around the Baja peninsula, CNN has reported. Her remarks Tuesday are likely to fuel speculation about the administration’s willingness to take military action against the cartels. Gabbard’s testimony also undermined Trump’s claims that Canada is a major source of fentanyl coming into the United States – which is a prime justification for his tariff threats.

New Mexico Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich pointed out that the annual threat assessment didn’t mention fentanyl coming through Canada. Gabbard replied, “The focus in my opening and the ATA was really to focus on the most extreme threats in that area, and our assessment is that the most extreme threat related to fentanyl continues to come from and through Mexico.” Heinrich then noted that less than 1% of the synthetic drug entering the US comes over the country’s northern border.

Which raises the question of why Trump has wrecked Washington’s relations with one of its oldest and closest friends largely over a threat that barely exists.

— CNN

# AI crucial for China-ASEAN cooperation

Amitendu Palit

**ARTIFICIAL intelligence has become a priority for a number of countries as they try to ensure their citizens derive greater benefits through digital applications. This has made two issues very important. The first is the ability of countries to use AI for digital functions and solutions. And the second is the ability of countries to develop AI that will enable users of AI to get optimum results.**

Addressing these two issues is crucial for deepening economic cooperation between China and Southeast Asia, as well as among countries within the Southeast Asian region.

Most countries, including Southeast

**Most countries, including Southeast Asian countries, are focused on developing capacities for using various AI applications. Without these applications, it is no longer possible to boost economic growth and strengthen regional cooperation in the long run. The application of basic AI tools includes the use of chatbots and digital recognition technology, such as facial recognition systems. There are many other applications that have found their way into delivery services, making them essential for individuals and enterprises alike. These include robotics used to operate industrial robots for carrying out specific tasks, speech recognition systems produced by deep learning, and machine-learning tools enabling predictive analytics. Regional economic cooperation can no longer be strengthened without adequate emphasis on AI and its role in all sectors of society. AI is also crucial for understanding future economic cooperation between China and Southeast Asia. The ability to adopt various AI applications for widespread use in households and businesses requires the development of robust national information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, which should be accessible to institutions, organizations and the wider public. The availability of quality broadband and internet services at affordable rates, too, is an important requirement. In this regard, the scope of cooperation between China and Southeast Asia is huge, with Chinese investment poised to play a significant role in enhancing regional ICT capacities.**

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China has taken a decisive step in using AI for digitalizing the day-to-day functions of the

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people, which extends from online retail and mobile banking to a variety of citizen-specific applications, such as the increasing use of digital payment platforms, online communication, and facial recognition features.

Similar apps, including digital platforms for necessary services like hailing cabs, ordering food, and availing household services are becoming increasingly popular in practically the whole of Southeast Asia. The Chinese example of using AI for simplifying complex tasks for a large number of people offers regional economies, especially the smaller ones, valuable lessons.

However, regional economic cooperation cannot be strengthened without addressing the risks arising from the use of digital technologies and AI.

Such risks include cyber frauds and various other digital malpractices. “Scam factories” being run by cyber criminals in some parts of Southeast Asia have become rampant, posing a grave risk to unsuspecting individuals. They also pose a serious risk to countries’ national secu-

rity. These risks cannot be eliminated by any one country alone. Therefore, it is imperative that countries collaborate to effectively handle these cyber threats.

With businesses in Southeast Asia carrying out transactions across borders using digital technology, countries, especially China and Southeast Asian nations, must collaborate to ensure the risk-free, seamless flow of financial information and other sensitive business data, and maintaining the secrecy of information.

As the region’s largest economy, and the one with which Southeast Asian businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, are integrated with, China —

**Most countries, including Southeast Asian countries, are focused on developing capacities for using various AI applications. Without these applications, it is no longer possible to boost economic growth and strengthen regional cooperation in the long run. The application of basic AI tools includes the use of chatbots and digital recognition technology, such as facial recognition systems. There are many other applications that have found their way into delivery services, making them essential for individuals and enterprises alike. These include robotics used to operate industrial robots for carrying out specific tasks, speech recognition systems produced by deep learning, and machine-learning tools enabling predictive analytics. Regional economic cooperation can no longer be strengthened without adequate emphasis on AI and its role in all sectors of society. AI is also crucial for understanding future economic cooperation between China and Southeast Asia. The ability to adopt various AI applications for widespread use in households and businesses requires the development of robust national information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, which should be accessible to institutions, organizations and the wider public. The availability of quality broadband and internet services at affordable rates, too, is an important requirement. In this regard, the scope of cooperation between China and Southeast Asia is huge, with Chinese investment poised to play a significant role in enhancing regional ICT capacities.**

in collaboration with ASEAN — should work on rules and frameworks that would strengthen cybersecurity. This collaboration should not be limited to adopting mutually acceptable rules for digital transactions and data transfers; it should extend to the development of mutually acceptable learning processes, such as digital literacy courses and managing data training.

One of the most important aspects of economic cooperation between China and the Asia-Pacific region, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is to understand the need to connect and align with existing and upcoming regulation frameworks. Since AI applications are poised to play a greater role in regional cooperation, it is necessary for China and ASEAN to review the existing rules, including those for digital payment and data transfer, and collaborate on future rules-based frameworks, such as the “Digital Economy Framework Agreement”, to ensure smooth progress to the next phase of regional economic cooperation.

— China Daily

# Saudi Arabia’s pragmatic approach to US transactionalism

**IN the understated private meeting rooms of Riyadh’s Ritz-Carlton, away from the ornate carpeting and intricate decoration of the hotel’s public spaces, an extraordinary diplomatic dance took place this week. Russian officials met with their American counterparts, following discussions between American and Ukrainian delegations.**

These talks, focused on a potential limited ceasefire in Ukraine and shipping safety in the Black Sea, did not take place in Geneva or Vienna, but in Saudi Arabia. This is not diplomacy as usual; it is the culmination of a carefully orchestrated Saudi strategy to transform the Kingdom from regional player to global diplomatic powerhouse.

To understand how, look at Steve Witkoff’s remarkably unvarnished interview with Tucker Carlson, which offered something rarely seen in diplomatic circles: brutal honesty. “Trump sets the table for all of us,” Witkoff declared with directness. The subtext could not be clearer — America’s power is being redeployed with a vengeance and every nation, including Saudi Arabia, must recalibrate accordingly.

Gone are the human rights lectures tucked discreetly into diplomatic portfolios. In their place: unvarnished transactionalism focused on mutual interests, economic integration and hard security. For states accustomed to Washington’s often tortuous rhetorical

gymnastics, this represents a refreshingly straightforward proposition: define objectives clearly, negotiate from strength, but — crucially — recognize that sustainable deals require mutual benefit.

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For any normalization process to succeed, both American and Israeli leaders must shoulder their responsibility by formally accepting and implementing a viable two-state solution. More crucially, Washington must provide substantive guarantees that Israel will

abide by such arrangements — not just in principle, but in practice.

Without this foundational commitment backed by meaningful enforcement

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mechanisms, Saudi Arabia’s participation remains a diplomatic fantasy rather than an achievable outcome.

This is not mere real estate rhetoric. As Saudi Arabia drives forward with

its Vision 2030, regional integration offers exponential benefits beyond what any single nation can achieve alone. Witkoff specifically highlighted how

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Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar are already positioning themselves at the forefront of technology sectors, including artificial intelligence and blockchain.

What is missing is not talent or capital — it is regional stability founded on justice. Here lies the prize worth pursuing, but not at any cost.

One particularly insightful observation? The economic rationale behind security treaties: “Everybody thinks the peace treaty is about physical defense.

What it’s really about is the United States providing a security wrapper so that they’re all financeable today.”

This perspective should resonate with Saudi financial strategists. Without

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robust security frameworks built on sustainable political solutions, financial institutions must “underwrite war risk” — making capital more expensive and constraining economic development.

For the Kingdom, whose Vision 2030 looks to engage global investors, this offers a compelling financial argument for genuine, justice-based regional security arrangements that transcend traditional defense concerns. When capital becomes cheaper and more accessi-

ble, transformation accelerates — but this cannot come at the expense of Palestinian rights.

“In that region, you have young leadership,” Witkoff observed. “People who don’t have the old sensibilities, people who want to do business.”

This generational shift creates a unique historical moment. The new group of leaders understands that economic prosperity ultimately delivers more benefits than ideological entrenchment — yet they remain firmly committed to core principles of regional justice.

What should Saudi policymakers make of all this? Three considerations stand out.

First, there appears to be partial understanding in Washington that peace is a prerequisite for Saudi normalization with Israel. However, Witkoff’s Gaza-focused framing suggests a fundamental misreading of Saudi requirements. The Kingdom demands a comprehensive two-state solution, not merely a Gaza ceasefire.

Second, the economic benefits of regional stability extend far beyond direct investment from the US. The “security wrapper” that enables lower-cost financing could accelerate Vision 2030 initiatives across sectors — but this security must be founded on justice, not merely power.

Third, while the administration’s transactional approach offers potential benefits, it must be accompanied by meaningful

American pressure on Israel to accept and implement a viable two-state solution. Without this, no amount of economic incentives will suffice.

The Kingdom’s diplomatic evolution was on full display this week. That Saudi Arabia now serves as mediator in a conflict thousands of kilometers from its borders speaks volumes about its growing global influence.

For Saudi Arabia, positioned at the geographical and strategic center of potential regional transformation, the opportunity is clear: engage pragmatically with this outcome-oriented approach while maintaining firm, nonnegotiable advocacy for Palestinian rights through a viable two-state solution.

The prize — a Middle East transformed from conflict zone to innovation hub — remains tantalizingly possible. As Witkoff put it: “Can you imagine all these countries working collaboratively together and creating that type of market? It could be much bigger than Europe.”

That vision aligns remarkably well with Saudi Arabia’s own ambitions — but only if built on foundations of justice and sustainability.

The Saudi position remains clear and consistent: normalization requires a comprehensive two-state solution, with meaningful American guarantees that Israel will comply. Without this, no amount of economic incentivization will suffice.

— Arab News





# Haroon urges improving local manufacturing of automobile parts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Haroon Akhtar here on Wednesday urged the need to improve the local manufacturing of automobile parts.

According to press release issued by Ministry of Industries and Production, chairing a significant meeting with the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) delegation, he emphasized that under the Prime Minister's vision, new job opportunities will be created through

the growth of manufacturing industries and the localization of automobile parts production.

During the meeting, several key topics were discussed, including federal budget proposals and plans for improving the local manufacturing industry.

The discussion also touched upon the importance of technological upgradation and support for industrialists.

Haroon Akhtar outlined how the Ministry of Industries and Production

could assist manufacturers in upgrading their technology. He highlighted that a new research and development (R&D) policy is being considered to encourage investment in innovation and support the development of local industries.

Furthermore, Haroon Akhtar indicated that a new policy for the local production of automobile parts will soon be introduced. This policy aims to strengthen the local industry and provide greater opportunities for growth

and employment.

He assured the LCCI delegation that the Prime Minister was working tirelessly to enhance the efficiency and performance of the manufacturing sector, which is expected to drive economic growth.

He assured the delegation that the government will fully support the development of industries and technological advancements to ensure the long-term growth and competitiveness of the manufacturing sector in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferring the award of Hilal-e-Imtiaz to Ms. Sadia Rashid, Chancellor Hamdard University, President Hamdard Foundation Pakistan & Chairperson Hamdard Pakistan her outstanding contributions to education, health and social work in Pakistan.

## Sadia terms 27th Ramazan night a great honor for all humanity

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: The President Hamdard Foundation Pakistan Ms. Sadia Rashid said that tonight is the blessed 27th night of Ramazan, a great honour for all humanity. It is the sacred night in which Allah, the Almighty, opened the doors of His guidance and mercy, revealed His commandments, and bestowed the blessing of freedom and liberation upon mankind. On this very night, the Almighty bestowed the eternal code of life, the Holy Qur'an, guiding humanity towards eternal freedom from mental and physical bondage. It was on this sacred night Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala bestowed a special favour upon the Muslims of the subcontinent and blessed us with the gift of the creation of Pakistan. Despite our shortcomings and negligence, Allah Almighty granted us the gift of a free state for the revival and strengthening of Islam, so that we may fulfil our reli-

gious, moral, and national duties with conviction.

The 27th of Ramazan, which is also the day of the revelation of the Qur'an, was not a mere coincidence for the creation of Pakistan.

Rather, it is an eternal and divine connection established by Allah Almighty, linking this sacred land with the commandments of the Qur'an. Celebrating this day as Pakistan's Independence Day is an expression of gratitude for this great blessing from Allah.

The founder of Hamdard Pakistan, Shaheed Hakim Mohammed said, recognised this truth and initiated the movement for 27th of Ramazan Lailatul-Qadr as Pakistan's Independence Day. When he observed that the true objectives of Pakistan's creation were being neglected, he dedicated his life to reminding the nation of this ideology. He not only spread this message intellectually but also provided a platform for action, where the

movement to mark Pakistan's Independence Day on this holy day with religious and national spirit was launched.

This is why, even today, all offices and educational institutions of Hamdard Pakistan specially commemorate 27 Ramazan as Pakistan's Independence Day, ensuring that the new generation is introduced to the true identity of Pakistan and the objectives behind its creation.

It is our national and religious duty to celebrate the 27th of Ramazan as Independence Day, as it aligns perfectly with reality and provides us with an opportunity to present the true image of Pakistan to the world.

On this day, we can revive the memory of that eternal covenant upon which this sacred land was bestowed upon us.

On this night of immense reward, we must seek Allah's forgiveness in our prayers for our shortcomings, especially for the mistakes that led us to for-

get the commandments of the Qur'an and the true purpose of Pakistan's creation. We have wasted our collective strength and promoted ethnic, regional prejudices, causing division within the nation.

Tonight, along with special prayers for Pakistan's progress and security, we must pledge to express gratitude for the divine blessing of Pakistan. We must play our role in its development and stability and dedicate our lives to following the commands of Allah.

If we move forward with this sense of responsibility, Pakistan can become the ideal Islamic state envisioned by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, and Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said-a state for which millions of Muslims sacrificed their lives for its creation and stability.

### COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Javeria Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge II /Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No. 20/13. Institution. 14/2/2024. Date of hearing. 17/4/2025. Ajmali Khan VS Sikhawat Shah etc. Notice to No.14/1. Israr Ahmed.14/2.Muhammad Ataz. 14/3. Khalid sons of Seraj resident of Bar Teraj tehsel Chaghorzal 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 dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 17/4/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

### COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Javeria Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge II /Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No.3/14. Institution. 11/3/2025. Date of hearing. 7/4/2025. Jalal Husain VS Saedur Rehman etc. Notice to No. 1.Saedur Rehman. 2.Muhibur Rehman sons of Said Kamal Shah resident of Daggar tehsel 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 dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 7/4/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

It is published through this notice that I Muhammad Mushtaq Son of Mir Ahmed Khan Resident of Hangu Road Naway Kalay District Kohat is the owner of Plot no. 27 Sector no. A-1 Size (1) Kanal Phase 11 KDA/UADA Kohat Has Appointed has Mst. Saeeda Mushtaq Wife of Muhammad Mushtaq Resident of Hangu Road Naway Kalay District Kohat Through (Special) Deed no. 74 Bahi no. 04 Volume no. 296 Dated 12/02/2025 which is Registered in The office Kohat of Tehsildar/Sub Registrar the Attorney Holder now wants to Transfer The Above Said Plot if anyBank/Institution/Firm/Person has any objection About The Transfer he Should Contact The Housing officer UADA Within 15 Days in Writing with Proofs otherwise Plot will be Transfer and no objection will be Accepted (Housing Officer Urban Area KDA Kohat)

## Stock Exchange stays bullish, gains 1,139.14 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 1,139.14 points, a positive change of 0.98 percent, closing at 117,772.31 points as compared to 116,633.17 points on the last trading day.

A total of 356,729,109 shares were traded during the day as compared to 268,098,907 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs37.498 billion against Rs19.455 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 438 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 206 of them recorded gains and 167 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 65 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Pak Elektron with 29,179,304 shares at Rs47.48 per share, PSO with 26,879,128 shares at Rs419.93 per share and Chenergyco PK with 26,879,128 shares at Rs8.00 per share.

Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs67.07 per share closing at Rs737.77 whereas runner-up was Indus Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited with Rs56.22 rise in its share price to close at Rs1,258.27.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs549.00 per share price, closing at Rs23,000.00, whereas the runner-up was Services Industries Limited Limited with Rs38.17 decline in its per share price to Rs1,254.81.

**Rupee gains 16 paise against US Dollar**

The Rupee on Wednesday gained 16 paise against the US Dollar in the

interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.26 against the previous day's closing of Rs 280.42.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.50 and Rs282, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 17 paise to close at Rs 302.39 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.56, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.86, whereas a decline of 23 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs361.82 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 362.05.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 04 paise and 05 paise to close at Rs 76.30 and Rs 74.70, respectively.

**Gold prices remain unchanged at Rs317,800 per tola**

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed no change on Wednesday and was traded at existing rate of Rs.317,800, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat and 10 grams of 22 karat gold were also traded at the same prices of Rs 272,462 and Rs.249,765 respectively.

The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,475 and Rs.2,979 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$3,021 whereas that of silver remained unchanged at \$33.10, the Association reported.

## SECP seeks feedback on draft certification regulations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued the Draft Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (Certification of Associated Professionals in the Financial Services) Regulations, 2025, for public consultation.

These proposed regulations aim to enhance the competency and professionalism of individuals engaged in financial services by establishing a structured certification framework, said a release issued here on Wednesday.

The draft regulations introduce mandatory certification requirements for professionals operating in the financial sector, including intermediaries, agents, and distributors, ensuring they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to serve investors effectively.

The SECP will notify a credible institute to conduct the certification process, administer examinations, and oversee Continuing Professional Education (CPE) programs.

The financial services sector plays a critical role in economic stability and investor confidence.

Ensuring that professionals within this sector adhere to high standards of knowledge, ethics, and competency is essential.

The proposed certification regime will strengthen investor protection through well-trained financial professionals, enhance market integrity by ensuring compliance with international best practices and promote continuous learning and professional development via structured CPE requirements.

The SECP invites all stakeholders, including financial institutions, industry professionals, and the public, to review the draft regulations and provide their feedback. Comments and suggestions may be submitted within 30 days from the date of this announcement.

## Asian stocks rise on trade optimism, but US policy uncertainty lingers

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Lingering hopes that Donald Trump's planned tariff blitz next week will not be as painful as feared helped lift Asian markets Wednesday, though uncertainty about the president's policies and the US economy tempered optimism.

With the White House's "Liberation Day" on April 2 approaching, investors have been bracing for a wave of sweeping levies on imports amid warnings of crippled global trade, recession and a fresh spike in inflation.

But suggestions from Trump and others in Washington that the measures could be more targeted, with some countries hit harder than others, have provided a sliver of hope that the worst-case scenario can be avoided.

The president told Newsmax that "I don't want to have too many exceptions" but added: "I'll probably be more lenient than reciprocal, because if I was reciprocal, that would be very tough for people".

Signs of a less severe approach helped Wall Street record two successive days of gains, paring hefty losses suffered in

recent weeks fuelled by fears that the hardball US policies would hit companies' bottom lines.

And after a mixed day Monday, Asia followed suit. Hong Kong pushed higher a day after tanking more than two percent on profit-taking and selling in the tech sector, while Tokyo, Sydney, Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore and Wellington also advanced.

Jakarta jumped almost three percent after a hefty sell-off this year fuelled by worries over the Indonesian economy. However, the country's rupiah remained stuck around its lowest levels since the Asian financial crisis at the end of the last century.

Taipei and Manila edged down. But while there is some hope over tariffs, Americans' fears about the economic outlook indicated the United States could be in for a bumpy ride.

The Conference Board's closely watched gauge of consumer confidence dived to its lowest level since 2021 -- during the pandemic -- as concerns grow over higher prices.

Meanwhile, another reading on expectations for the next six months hit a

12-year low.

The figures come as the Federal Reserve re-evaluates its monetary policy in light of Trump's tariffs agenda, with some analysts warning it might have to hold off any interest rate cuts this year. At the end of a volatile first quarter, Charu Chanana, chief investment strategist at Saxo, said it had "challenged conventional thinking".

"While rate cut hopes dominated headlines early in the year, markets moved on quickly as economic resilience, sector rotation, geopolitical shifts, and regional divergences took centre stage," she wrote in a commentary.

"Trade policy returned to focus as the US election narrative picked up. Even without concrete tariffs, the potential for disruption hit sentiment across global sectors."

There was little major reaction to news that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to halt military strikes in the Black Sea and on energy sites following talks brokered by Washington. The Kremlin said the deal could come into force only after the lifting of restrictions on its agriculture sector.

## Net metering policy changes threaten solar energy growth

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: The recent amendments in Pakistan's net metering policy pose a significant threat to the country's renewable energy sector, potentially halting investments worth billions and depriving both industries and households of affordable solar energy.

In the modern era, solar power has emerged as an essential solution for reducing energy costs, ensuring sustainability, and meeting the growing electricity demands of consumers.

However, the proposed reductions in net metering tariffs may significantly impact this progress, making solar power less accessible for businesses and residential users.

This was stated by the participants of a ceremony of held to strengthen partnership with local distribu-

tors by a solar energy company.

In response to these developments a globally recognized solar technology provider, has partnered with multiple companies in Pakistan to deliver cost-effective solar solutions.

The objective of these agreements is to cater to the energy needs of industrial, commercial, and residential sectors, ensuring affordable and uninterrupted electricity supply.

Industry experts warn that any policy shift that discourages solar adoption will have far-reaching economic consequences, particularly for industries already struggling with high electricity costs.

During a recent discussion, the CEO of a leading solar energy company Trina Solar highlighted the benefits of modern solar modules, emphasizing their abi-

lity to enhance energy production while reducing the overall cost of electricity.

He stressed that for a developing country like Pakistan, energy sustainability is not just a luxury but a necessity for economic growth and environmental stability.

To ensure a brighter future, he urged policymakers to formulate a balanced and progressive energy strategy that actively supports the renewable energy sector rather than hindering it.

Furthermore, he pointed out that a well-known Chinese company is already assisting Pakistan by providing advanced solar power systems designed to mitigate the impact of rising electricity prices.

However, the government's decision to lower the net metering tariff threatens to undermine these

efforts.

If implemented, this policy change will push affordable solar energy beyond the reach of households and businesses, making it increasingly difficult for consumers to escape the burden of expensive conventional electricity.

Experts argue that high energy costs directly contribute to inflation, making it even more challenging for the average citizen to manage their daily expenses. If Pakistan is to control rising inflation and support economic growth, it must prioritize sustainable energy solutions rather than imposing restrictions that discourage investment in renewables.

Without an enabling policy framework, the vision of a more energy-efficient and economically stable Pakistan will remain unfulfilled.



### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Politics and trade should be treated separately to ensure that political tensions do not disrupt bilateral economic activities between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Given the significant complexities involved, achieving this would require exceptional diplomacy from both sides.

Despite ongoing political challenges, trade and economic cooperation must continue uninterrupted through a structured approach to enhance competitiveness, address transit trade issues, and improve trade facilitation mechanisms.

This was conveyed during a session on 'Pakistan-Afghanistan Economic and Trade Ties' held at the

Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman IPS and Pakistan's former ambassador to Afghanistan, Ambassador (r) Ayaz Wazir, Pak-Afghan affairs expert, Brigadier (r) Said Nazir, senior analyst, Jumaad Ismail Makda, president, Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi, patron-in-chief, Khyber Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Fazal Moqeeem Khan, president, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Sheharyar Khan, executive director, National Dialogue Forum, and Tahir Khan, senior journalist and Afghan affairs analyst.

The speakers noted that challenges in Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations are longstanding, largely due to political instability and frequent regime changes, which continue to disrupt economic productivity. The key obstacle remains the repeated closure of trade routes, particularly at the Torkham border, which hampers transit trade and affects access to key international markets, including Europe.

In addition, structural issues such as smuggling, limited infrastructure, banking and payment challenges, weak border management, poor implementation of trade agreements, limited digital trade processing, absence of a transparent digital supervision system, and outdated trade regulations also hinder ease of doing business.

These challenges, coupled with an unstable security environment, have led regional players like Central Asian states to explore alternative trade routes. The speakers highlighted that, on the one hand, it might seem to reduce Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan, but, on the other hand, geographical limitations of alternative options like Iran's Chabahar Port would be less feasible, keeping Afghanistan's interest in trading with Pakistan intact.

To address these challenges, experts emphasized the need to strengthen the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) by ensuring the rule of law, improving banking facilities, and revising trade regulations to facilitate smoother business operations.

It was also suggested that a dedicated trade development policy should be introduced, along with a stakeholder-led management committee, to resolve minor trade issues promptly and prevent unnecessary disruptions.

Moreover, it was observed that the Torkham border, a key trade gateway, must be managed more effectively, with a focus on maintaining uninterrupted trade flows rather than using border closures as a tool. Engaging external partners and implementing cross-border tariff strategies can also enhance economic cooperation.

To ensure the stability of long-term trade relations, the discussants suggested a comprehensive economic treaty between both coun-

tries is necessary, ensuring mutual benefits that remain unaffected by security concerns.

Additionally, integrating local communities into trade discussions, strengthening digital supervision, and fostering collaboration with regional and international organizations can help sustain economic ties.

In his concluding remarks, Khalid Rahman pointed out that while Pakistan declared a shift toward a geo-economic strategy in 2018, its implementation has been inconsistent. He underscored the necessity of an integrated regional approach rather than crisis-driven decision-making, advocating for a comprehensive, well-coordinated, and long-term strategy.





In brief

Saim returns home after rehab

LONDON (Web Desk): Pakistan cricket team's star opening batter Saim Ayub has returned home after rehabilitation in London. Saim Ayub suffered an injury during a Test match against South Africa in January. Saim Ayub has returned home after completing his treatment in the UK. Saim Ayub's future will be decided in the light of the opinion of the medical experts. A decision on Saim Ayub's participation or non-participation in PSL-10 will be made later. Due to the injury, Saim Ayub could not play the ICC Champions Trophy and Pakistan cricket team had to face unbearable loss after losing an important and in-form batter in one of the biggest international cricket event. Earlier, the star batter Saim Ayub played a number of extraordinary innings in domestic and international cricket matches against South Africa and other countries.

Qalandars Night on April 6

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise Lahore Qalandars, has announced the return of Qalandars Night, a grand celebration of cricket, music, and entertainment on April 6 at Minar-e-Pakistan. The event will be attended by the entire Lahore Qalandars team. This exciting event will bring together fans, players, and musicians for an unforgettable experience, said a press release. Qalandars Night will feature electrifying performances from some of Pakistan's top musical talents, headlined by Asim Azhar, Bilal Saeed, Sara Altaf, and Sahir Ali Bagga. Lahore Qalandars will also unveil the official kit for the upcoming season and release the much-anticipated anthem launch at the same event. Following that, a laser show will light up the night sky as well. The night is promised to be a grand spectacle, embodying the passion and commitment Lahore Qalandars have towards entertaining our loyal fanbase, who have supported us throughout. With such a large youth following, Qalandars Night will cater to the demands of our young fans. Atif Rana, CEO of Lahore Qalandars, said, "Qalandars Night is more than just a celebration; it's a tribute to our fans, our journey, and our love for cricket. We are excited to bring together some of the biggest music stars and unveil our new kit and anthem in such a grand setting. This event is for our Qalandars family, and we can't wait to share the excitement with them."

Two UFC fighters banned

NEW YORK (Agencies): Former UFC fighters Jeff Molina and Darrick Minner have been banned by the Nevada Athletic Commission. Minner, 34, received a 29-month suspension for not disclosing a "serious injury" he received before a UFC fight on 5 November, 2022. Molina, 27, has been suspended for three years for placing a significant bet on Minner's bout and failing to disclose his team-mate's injury. The Nevada Athletic Commission say Molina admitted to the violation. Minner failed to reveal his knee injury on a pre-fight medical questionnaire and was quickly finished by S h a n a y i l a n Nuerdانبieke in round one. The featherweight bout was flagged by US Integrity as being the subject of suspicious betting and has sparked an investigation into an illegal gambling scheme involving UFC fighters and a coach.

## Fatima Sana to lead Pakistan in ICC Women's WC Qualifiers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Women's National Selection Committee has named a 15-member squad for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifiers, set to take place from April 9 to 19 at the Gaddafi Stadium and LCCA ground in Lahore.

The squad was selected after the selection committee evaluated players' fitness and form in the ongoing second phase of preparation camp, where the players took part in warm-up matches and practice sessions, said a press release.

Fatima Sana, who has led Pakistan in six T20Is and two ODIs, will continue to lead the women's cricket team in the 50-over event, while Shawaal Zulfiqar makes a comeback to the national side after suffering from a shoulder injury during the tour of New Zealand in December 2023.

Squad: Fatima Sana (cap-

tain), Muneeba Ali (vice-captain), Aliya Riaz, Diana Baig, Gull Feroza, Najiha Alvi (wicket-keeper), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Omaira Sohail, Rameen Shamim, Sadia Iqbal, Shawaal Zulfiqar, Sidra Amin, Sidra Nawaz (wicket-keeper) and Syeda Aroob Shah. Reserve players: Ghulam Fatima, Waheeda Akhtar and Umm-e-Hani.

Player support personnel: Hina Munawar (manager), Muhammad Wasim (head coach), Junaid Khan (assistant coach bowling), Abdul Rehman (assistant coach spin bowling), Abdul Saad (assistant coach fielding), Waleed Ahmed (analyst), Muhammad Rafi Ullah (media manager), Muhammad Ramzan (strength and conditioning coach), Tehreem Sumbal (physiotherapist) and Kiran Shahzadi (masseuse).

The six-team ICC event,

which includes Bangladesh, Ireland, Scotland, Thailand and West Indies alongside hosts Pakistan, will feature a single-league round-robin format. Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium and LCCA ground will host 15 matches of the event, with Pakistan playing Ireland in the opening match of the competition at the Gaddafi Stadium.

On April 11, Pakistan will play Scotland at the LCCA ground in a day game, while the hosts will take on West Indies in a day-night fixture on April 14 at the Gaddafi Stadium.

Pakistan will face Thailand in their fourth fixture of the event scheduled on April 17 in a day-night fixture at Gaddafi Stadium, while their final group stage match will be against Bangladesh on April 19 at the LCCA ground, which will be a day match.

## Djokovic marches into Miami quarters as Ruud exits

MIAMI GARDENS (AFP/APP): Novak Djokovic cruised into the quarter-finals of the Miami Open on Tuesday with a 6-2, 6-2 win over Italian Lorenzo Musetti in one hour 22 minutes.

Musetti, the 15th seed from Tuscany, got off to a flying start to take a 2-0 lead in the first set but then proceeded to lose the next nine games as the Serb, looking confident and sharp, ran away with the game.

Djokovic has won the Miami Open on six occasions but has not featured in the quarters since his last victory here in 2016.

The 37-year-old is now just three wins away from winning his 100th tour-

level title.

"He had a really good start of the match. First couple games I started a little bit slow and then I knew that if I give him time, he's going to make his shots," Djokovic said.

"He loves kind of running around his backhand, hitting forehands. But he is so talented, he can play any shot in the game on any surface.

"It was tough, particularly in the first seven, eight games of the match. But I think breaking his serve to come back to two-all and break right away at 3-2, it was a momentum shift and I tried to use that," he added.

Djokovic will face American Sebastian Korda

on Wednesday for a place in the semi-finals after the 24th seed beat French veteran Gael Monfils 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 in a rain-affected match.

Korda visibly struggled with his wrist, however, and said after the match that he had been in discomfort with an injury that has caused him trouble in the past.

"It's pretty painful right now, we'll see how it goes tomorrow. Will do a lot of work with my physio now, we'll see how it is tomorrow.

"I haven't played a lot of tournaments this year. Hopefully I can play some good tennis and see where it takes me," he said.

Korda later pulled out of his doubles match with partner Jordan Thompson.

## World Club Cup winner to score up to \$125 million prize money

PARIS (AFP): The winner of this year's expanded Club World Cup in the United States will receive up to \$125 million in prize money, FIFA announced on Wednesday.

A total prize fund of \$1 billion for the event, which runs from June 14 to July 13, had already been made public, but FIFA has now broken down the sums for the 32 participating teams.

Each team will share in the \$525 million pot for participating while a further \$475 million will be distributed according to performance in the tournament.

With additional bonus-

es, the team that emerges victorious from the seven matches played could receive up to \$125 million.

Europe will receive the lion's share of the prize money, with each of their clubs receiving between \$12.81 and \$38.19 million, the exact amounts to be determined according to sporting and commercial criteria.

South American teams will each receive \$15.21 million in participation bonuses, while those from North and Central America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa will receive \$9.55 million.

Auckland City, the Oceania representative,

will take home \$3.58 million for taking part.

"The distribution model... represents the biggest prize money ever awarded to a competition comprising a group stage and a knockout phase," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino in a press release.

"In addition to the prize money earmarked for the participating clubs, an unprecedented solidarity programme will be put in place with the aim of redistributing an additional \$250 million to football around the world."

Infantino said all proceeds from the event will be redistributed to club football.

## Tour de France champion Pogacar bids to add Paris-Roubaix to his laurels

PARIS (AFP): Three-time Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar will bid to avenge his defeat by Mathieu van der Poel in the Milan-San Remo and race in the Paris-Roubaix, another of the 'Monuments', for the first time, his team UAE announced on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old Slovenian will be the first reigning Tour de France champion to tackle the most dangerous of the Monument races since Greg Lemond in 1991 -- the American finished 55th.

Cycling legends Bernard Hinault and Eddie Merckx also tried to win the one-day race in 1982 and 1975 respectively, a year after winning the Tour de France. Neither was successful although Merckx finished second, edged out on the line by Roger De Vlaeminck. However, they both achieved perhaps an even greater feat in landing the two races in the same year, with Merckx doing the double in 1970 and Hinault in 1981.

Victory on April 13 would set Pogacar up nicely to join that elite duo. He already has seven Monument victories to his credit, including the 2023 Tour of Flanders.

"It was initially planned

for Tadej Pogacar to participate in both the E3 Saxo Classic and Gent-Wevelgem," read UAE's statement.

"However, after discussions with the team, it has been decided that he will adjust his calendar to focus on the Tour of Flanders and Paris-Roubaix instead, aiming for peak form in those iconic races."

The change of plan is a victory for Pogacar, who has said he prefers the one day races to multi-stage ones, as he had argued to compete in the Paris-Roubaix, against the wishes of the team directors who were concerned about the possibility of injury. "Huge moment" Paris-Roubaix is considered the most dangerous race of them all, largely owing to its six million cobble stones, many of them uneven, which has resulted in serious injuries to the riders.

Mauro Gianetti, UAE team manager, highlighted their concerns for the best paid member of the peloton - he is believed to earn 8 million euros (\$8.6 million) a year -- in the one-day races after he had fallen in the Strade Bianchi before getting back up to win it.

"A bad fall could put a

question mark over his competing in the Tour de France and maybe the rest of the season," said Gianetti.

"He has enough time in his career to ride in the Paris-Roubaix."

However, his decision, after finishing third in the Milan-San Remo, delighted Paris-Roubaix race director Thierry Gouvenou.

"It is a huge moment for cycling," said Gouvenou. "It has been a long time since we had a Tour de France winner who is a genuine contender to win the Paris-Roubaix. "He is going to face a challenge suited to his talent."

Gouvenou, though, believes Pogacar is up against it with rivals like Dutch ace Van der Poel, Belgian Wout Van Aert and Italy's Filippo Ganna, who was second in the Milan-San Remo. "If Van Der Poel is at the top of his game, it will be very difficult for Pogacar," said Gouvenou.

"He is going to race on a route that is not suited to him. "If ever he wins Paris-Roubaix it will be against the odds. But that is what we all expect: to see champions up against it. "This race could make him even greater than he is now."



WELLINGTON: New Zealand sealed the series 4-1 against Pakistan.

## Seifert blitz as New Zealand crush Pakistan to win series

WELLINGTON (AFP): A destructive Tim Seifert ensured New Zealand made short work of their 129-run target to win the final Twenty20 against Pakistan by eight wickets on Wednesday and take the series 4-1.

Seifert, who made an unbeaten 97 off 38 deliveries, set the big-hitting tone in Wellington with 18 off the first over by Jahandad Khan after being hit on the body with the first ball.

Fellow opener Finn Allen followed with 14 in the second over from Mohammad Ali. When Jahandad returned in the sixth over Seifert was even more belligerent when he belted 25, including three sixes.

"After I nearly got hit on the head with that first ball I thought there's only one way to play," Seifert said.

"A few shots go your way and you're backing yourself and backing your skills and when you do get a match up you commit 100 percent and try to take that bowler down." Seifert's rollicking innings included six fours and 10 sixes.

Allen compiled a bright 27 from 12 deliveries, including five fours and a six, before he was first to fall in the seventh over when New Zealand had reached 93. Mark Chapman had a short stay and was gone for three before Seifert and Daryl Mitchell (two not out) brought the hosts home as they finished 131-2.

Pakistan captain Salman Agha said the one positive for him in a lop-sided series was the experience gained by his young squad. "Obviously they (New Zealand) were outstanding

and you have to credit to them. They just outplayed us in the whole series," he said. "But we have a few positives and we'll take that and move forward. We will back them. They will have more games and they will have experience and they will come good."

Pakistan, batting first, struggled before reaching 128-9 on the back of a mid-order rally by Salman and Shadab Khan. The pair came together at 52-5 and put on 54 for the sixth wicket, refusing to be pressured by the New Zealand pace attack which dominated the first half of the innings.

Shadab put on 28 off 20 deliveries, including five boundaries, while Salman scored 51 off 39. Both fell to Jimmy Neesham, the pick of the New Zealand bowlers with impressive figures of 5-22, his maiden

five-wicket bag in T20Is, from his four overs.

Jacob Duffy, who took 2-18, started the Pakistan batting rout when he claimed the first wicket in the second over with the removal of Hasan Nawaz for his third duck in the series.

He added Omair Yousuf in his following over as Pakistan struggled to cope with Duffy's swing and seam movement, as well as the bounce generated by Will O'Rourke and Ben Sears.

New Zealand, who won the toss, made one change for the match with Sears coming in for Zak Foulkes. Pakistan made five changes with Omair, Usman Khan, Jahandad, Sufyan Moqim and Mohammad Ali all coming in. The teams now move onto a one-day international series starting in Napier on Saturday.

## Draw, seedings announced for U23 World Squash C'ships

ISLAMABAD (APP): The seedings and draws have been announced for the 2025 U23 World Squash Championships, which are taking place at DHA Creek Club, Karachi, from April 6 to 10.

The 2025 U23 World Squash Championships is the first edition of the new event, which features a 32-player draw in both men's and women's events, a \$60,000USD prize pot and a spot in the PSA World Championships for the winners, said a press release.

In the women's event, World No.13 Fayrouz Aboelkheir tops the draw, with the 19-year-old receiving a bye through to round two and set to play the winner of the round one clash between Spain's Noa Romero Blazquez and Pakistan's Mariam Malik. Aboelkheir is one of two Egyptians in the women's

draw and, should the tournament go to seedings, the Alexandrian will take on No.2 seed Malak Khafagy in an all-Egyptian final.

Hoping to spoil the party will be Malaysian No.3 seed Aira Azman, a silver medal winner at the 2023 World Junior Championships, and No.4 seed Sin Yuk Chan of Hong Kong, China. Chan is joined by two compatriots in the top eight seeds, with Heylie Fung seeded fifth and Toby Tse seeded eighth. Completing the seedings are Japan No.2 Akari Midorikawa, who has been seeded sixth, and No.7 seed Xin Ying Yee of Malaysia.

Also in action for the hosts are Sana Bahadar and Amna Fayyaz, with Bahadar up against Czechia's Tamara Holzbauerová and Fayyaz taking on Japan's Kurumi Takahashi. In the men's event, World No.61 Ibrahim Elkabbani tops the

draw, with the Egyptian drawn against Poland's Leon Krysiak in the opening match. Noor Zaman represents the hosts' best hope, with the 20-year-old Peshawari - grandson of the legendary Qamar Zaman - the tournament's No.2 seed and drawn against Kuwait's Hussain Alzaatari in round one.

Also representing Pakistan in Karachi are 2023 World Junior Champion Hamza Khan, who plays Spain's Hugo Lafuente Jaen in round one, and Muhammad Ammad, who has been drawn against No.4 seed Mohammed Naseer. Khan is one of two former world champions in the men's draw, with the 19-year-old joined by the Netherlands' Rowan Damming. Damming, World Junior Champion in 2022, is No.7 seed and will face Malta's Nisjan Sultana in round one.

## Argentina rout Brazil to cap World Cup qualification party



BUENOS AIRES (AFP): Argentina celebrated their 2026 World Cup qualification with a dazzling 4-1 thrashing of arch-rivals Brazil in Buenos Aires on Tuesday.

Julian Alvarez, Enzo Fernandez, Alexis Mac Allister and Giuliano Simeone sealed an emphatic win for the world champions, who had been assured of their World Cup berth after Bolivia's 0-0 draw with Uruguay earlier Tuesday.

That goalless stalemate ensured a festive atmosphere at the Estadio Monumental before a ball had been kicked and Argentina kept the party going with a blistering performance.

A Atletico Madrid forward Alvarez opened the scoring after just six minutes, latching onto Thiago Almada's through ball and dinking a close-range finish past Brazil goalkeeper Bento. It got better for Argentina six minutes later when Chelsea's Fernandez tucked away the hosts' second goal of the night

after Brazil's back four failed to deal with a low cross.

With Brazil being run ragged by a rampant Argentina, they were thrown a lifeline on 26 minutes after a blunder by Cristian Romero gifted a goal to Mattheus Cunha. Tottenham defender Romero was caught in possession 25 yards from goal, allowing Cunha to steal in and drive a low shot past Emiliano Martinez to make it 2-1.

But any hopes of a Brazilian fightback were snuffed out in the 37th minute with a superb goal from Mac Allister. Almada was once again the creator, lofting a pass into the area which Mac Allister met with a first-time volley to make it 3-1.

With Argentina in complete control, Simeone then brought the house down with a 71st minute strike to make it 4-1 -- his first international goal.

Ecuador on track

Simeone, the 22-year-old son of Argentine legend Diego Simeone, somehow blasted into the roof of the net from an acute angle to crown a dominant performance by the hosts.

The win means Argentina have qualified for next year's finals in the United States, Mexico and Canada with four games to spare.

The Argentines lead the 10-team qualifying group with 31 points from 14 games and are guaranteed one of the six automatic qualifying slots awarded to South America. Brazil are fourth.

In other South American games, Ecuador stayed on course for qualification with a 0-0 draw against Chile in Santiago. Ecuador are second in the standings, eight points adrift of Argentina on 23 points.

Uruguay's draw with Bolivia -- and Brazil's heavy loss -- allowed them to move up to third place on goal difference.

Colombia meanwhile missed the chance to close the gap on the leaders after a 2-2 home draw with Paraguay in Barranquilla.

Goals from Luis Diaz and Jhon Duran fired Colombia into a 2-0 lead after just 13 minutes but Paraguay grabbed a share of the points with goals from Junior Alonso and Julio Enciso.

Venezuela boosted their hopes of a first-ever World Cup qualification with a 1-0 win over Peru in Maturin.

Salomon Rondon's 41st-minute penalty secured three precious points for Venezuela, who are the only South American team never to have qualified for the World Cup.

Venezuela's win lifted them into seventh place in the table, leaving them on course for an inter-confederation playoff.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 55,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 55,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 55,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, River Indus stood at dead level of 1402 feet at Tarbela Dam. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,100 cusecs and 16,600 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1070.00 feet, which was 20.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 18,400 cusecs each. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 23,700, 21,300, 18,600 and 6,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 2 killed in rival groups clash

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two persons were killed and two others injured in a clash between two rival groups in Gujar Khan on Wednesday. The Rawalpindi Police spokesman said according to initial information, the firing incident between the two groups took place due to a previous enmity. The dead identified as Shahzeb and Ehtesham belonged to one side, while the injured Umar and Bilal were from the other side. Superintendent of Police Saddar Muhammad Nabil Khokhar and Sub-Divisional Police Officer Gujar Khan along with contingent reached the spot. The bodies and injured were shifted to the hospital, while the police cordoned off the crime scene for collecting evidence. Meanwhile, City Police Officer Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani took notice of the double murder incident and ordered to immediately arrest the accused involved.

### Police nab 11 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police continued its operations against criminal elements on Wednesday and held 11 accused, including drug peddlers, illegal arms owners and Tenancy Act violators. According to the police spokesman, the Ratta Amral Police nabbed accused Jahangir with 1.45 kilograms charas, while the Taxila Police recovered 1.16 kg of the contraband item from accused Yasir. Similarly, the Ratta Amral Police recovered a 30-bore pistol along with ammunition from accused Ali Haider, while the Taxila Police held accused Zubair and Fakhruddin with a 30-bore pistol and a knife respectively. The Kallar Syedan Police also recovered a knife from accused Arsalan. Meanwhile, during search operations in different areas, five accused, including Adnan, Ibrahim, Ahsan Jamil, Mehar Ali and Hidayat Azam, were taken into custody for violation of the Tenancy Act.

### 12 gamblers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The RA Bazaar Police on Wednesday caught 12 accused red-handed while gambling on playing cards with the amount at stake. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the arrested accused included Abu Bakr, Abdul Khaliq, Omar, Azad, Adnan, Bilal, Taha Sajid, Saleh, Zain, Ahmed, Sunil and Zafar. Besides the bet amount of Rs 15,660, three mobile phones, cards and two motorcycles were also seized from the spot.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Ch meeting with Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Irfan Naziroglu in his office. —APP Photo

## Pakistan Polio Programme strengthens eradication efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Polio Programme has strengthened the disease eradication efforts due to rising cases in the country.

The National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) convened a high-level meeting of the National Polio Management Team (NPMT) to assess progress, address emerging challenges, and refine strategies for the upcoming nationwide immunisation campaigns scheduled to take place in April and May.

Chaired by the Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Eradication, Ms Ayesha Raza Farooq, the meeting brought together national and provincial coordinators, core group members, and key stakeholders, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to eliminating poliovirus.

Emphasizing the urgency of the moment, the

Prime Minister's Focal Person said, "The ongoing outbreak is alarming, with six children already paralyzed in 2025. We must remain vigilant, proactive, and committed to refining our approaches to stay ahead of the virus."

This NPMT meeting is an opportunity for comprehensive reflection and strategic assessment, ensuring our upcoming campaigns are impactful and leave no child unprotected.

Discussions centered on strengthening coordination between national and provincial teams, optimizing resource management, and addressing operational challenges such as security concerns, vaccine hesitancy and strategies to overcome missed children.

Muhammad Anwar-ul-Haq, the National Coordinator, highlighted the

critical need for efficient execution of campaigns and stressed provincial teams to double down efforts to improve coverage and overcome gaps in the campaigns.

The meeting also reinforced the importance of gender-inclusive workforce participation, the synergy between Essential Immunization and Polio Eradication efforts, and adherence to the latest Technical Advisory Group (TAG) recommendations.

As Pakistan moves toward its goal of interrupting transmission by the end of 2025, the unwavering support of the government, provincial leadership, and frontline workers remains crucial. The Pakistan Polio Programme remains steadfast in its mission to ensure that every child, especially in high-risk and underserved areas, receives life-saving vaccines.

### 294 constables promoted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Babar Sarfraz Alpa on Wednesday issued orders to include 294 constables of the Rawalpindi District in the promotion list C-II.

The constables were included in the C-II promotion list after meeting the proposed procedures and performance as per standing operating procedures issued by Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar. The promoted constables included Tariq Saleem, Mohsin Naseem Akhtar, Mudassar Raza, Zafar Iqbal, Muhammad Akbar, Tariq Mahmood, Naeem Al-Hussein, Gulraz Ahmed, Zafar Iqbal, Muhammad Akhtar, Jamil Akhtar, Munir Ahmed, Muhammad Afzal, Sajjad Hussain, Muhammad Jamil, Abdul Hameed, Rashid Khan, Azmat Hussain and others.

### Dacoit gang attacks police

ISLAMABAD (APP): A team from Islamabad Capital Police's I-9 Police Station was attacked late at night while transporting members of an inter-provincial dacoit gang for identification and recovery purposes. An official told APP on Wednesday that the suspects, whom the attackers attempted to free, were also involved in a Rs 5 million robbery in the Sabzi Mandi area and opened fire on the police team.

He said the police personnel remained unharmed due to their precautionary measures and bulletproof jackets. He said the dacoits in police custody were identified as Saim Ali and Muhammad Taimoor.

He said two dacoits were injured in the cross-fire after their associates fired indiscriminately. He said the injured suspects were shifted to a hospital for medical treatment. He said the police thwarted the attack with remarkable bravery and professionalism, preventing the suspects from escaping. He said inter-provincial dacoit Saim Ali was involved in 56 cases of robbery. He said another suspect, Muhammad Taimoor, had nine cases registered against him for serious crimes.

## Turkish ambassador call Pakistan second home for Turkish citizens

ISLAMABAD (APP): Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Naziroglu, described relations between Pakistan and Turkey as two countries with one heart, expressing that Pakistan is Turkey's second home, just as Turkey is regarded as a second home for Pakistan.

He made these remarks during a ceremony, where Ramadan packages were distributed to members of the National Press Club (NPC).

Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Naziroglu, participated in the event as chief guest, while other key dignitaries, including Religious Affairs Attaché

Dr Abdul Rehman Akkus, Deputy Attaché Dr. Alam Khan, and NPC officials such as President Azhar Jatoi, Senior Vice President Ehteshamul Haq, and Vice President Shah Muhammad, among others, said a press release on Wednesday.

During his address, the ambassador highlighted the enduring bond of love, respect, and brotherhood between the two nations, which has spanned over a century. "We have always supported each other in difficult times," he said, adding that when Turkey faced a natural disaster three years ago, Pakistan was the first to offer help.

The ambassador also expressed Turkey's commitment to strengthening ties with Pakistan in various fields, including defense, education, and the media.

"We consider Pakistan's challenges as our own and celebrate its successes as our own," he said. NPC President Azhar Jatoi expressed gratitude to the Turkish ambassador, reaffirming the media community's dedication to enhancing Pakistan-Turkey relations. Jatoi also proposed a collaborative initiative to launch a journalist training program with Turkey's support after Eid, further deepening the bonds between the two nations.

## Talal lauds "Facilitation on Wheels" Service

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhary inspected the "Facilitation on Wheels" service by Islamabad Traffic Police for citizens and praised the initiative.

He stated that this facility has been launched under the vision of Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi, aiming to provide services such as the issuance, renewal, and learner permits for driving licenses at citizens' doorsteps.

Talal Chaudhary further said that this service is facilitating citizens in various educational institutions, colleges, universities, and commercial centers across Islamabad.

He commended Islamabad Traffic Police for providing modern facilities and stated that this initiative would play a vital role in delivering convenience to the public and promoting modern governance principles.

The minister highlight-

ed that efforts were underway to introduce more such public services in different institutions to ensure maximum convenience for citizens.

On this occasion, he also appreciated the "Mechanic on Wheels" service, which provides immediate assistance to vehicles on major highways. He advised citizens to take full advantage of these modern facilities and contact \*Helpline 1915\* for any guidance or assistance.

## Citizens seek action against encroachment

RAWALPINDI (APP): A massive crowd of buyers has created mess on main roads. Despite continued anti-encroachment operations by Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) in many areas, the challenge of congestion remains still standing.

The residents of Tench Bhatta, Mughalabad, Kamalabad and other adjacent localities have complained of difficulty in their movements. "On return from the offices, we have to combat long cues from Octroi No 22 for a long time" said Fawad a resident of Tench Bhatta.

Fawad said the issue of encroachments still stands as it was before the anti-encroachment operations. "Because of the absence of

follow up by the authority, moveable stalls and carts re-enter to the main bazaars. The campaign of removing encroachments by RCB continued for more than 2 weeks in which various concrete sheds and moving shops were destroyed. However, one can't walk an inch during the rush hour.

"Symbolic presence of traffic wardens at partial timings will never tackle the issue, instead it needs regular deployment of traffic police officials and continuous movement by RCB personnel are required on an urgent basis", said Aziz Butt who resides and runs a shop in Tench Bhatta.

The residents also criticized the bazaars' trade unions in this regard. They said that elected represen-

tatives of the market should not allow the moving carts remain stay in front of the shops.

"Even the shopkeepers wrongly park their bikes on main roads in a way to create hurdles in traffic flow", said Tariq who resides in Kamalabad. He blames the business owners for letting the small spaces to be rented out for such moving stalls.

The residents appealed to the authorities to take urgent collective actions for restoration of traffic flow and easy pedestrian movement. They demanded for special deployment of traffic wardens and regular monitoring of encroachers in Tench Bhatta and Kamalabad roads, particularly during the month of Ramadan.

## IGP Punjab visits Rawalpindi Safe City project I

RAWALPINDI (APP): Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar on Wednesday visited the Safe City project Rawalpindi.

Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Babar Sarfraz Alpa and City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani gave a briefing to the IGP regarding the working of Safe City.

The IGP took a round of the Command and Control Room of Safe City and gave instructions to the staff to improve their working. He directed that

the remaining civil work, planning and decoration of the project should be completed at the earliest.

He said the Safe City's artificial intelligence-based facilities should be fully used for effective investigation and tracing of criminals.

The Safe City projects, he said, were also playing a key role in traffic management, environmental protection surveillance, and prevention of encroachments in the cities.

They had set an example in community polic-

ing, besides providing services to the citizens, he added.

He directed the Safe City Rawalpindi officers to improve their performance with effective coordination with their counterparts in Islamabad.

He further directed to improve coordination with other law enforcement agencies to ensure better law and order, and security in the city. The IGP said the scope of Safe City projects was being extended to all districts and tehsils of Punjab.

## Senate body reviews major infrastructure projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Communications on Wednesday reviewed the progress and future plans for key infrastructure projects across Pakistan. The meeting chaired by Senator Pervaiz Rasheed, was attended by senior officials including the Secretary of Communications, Chairman of the National Highway Authority (NHA), and provided critical insights into the Ministry of Communications' plans and the status of ongoing development works.

The Ministry of Communications presented its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the upcoming financial year 2025-26, highlighting its ambitious roadmap for national infrastructure development. The ministry is currently overseeing a total of 105 projects for the ongoing financial year, with 15 new projects and 90 ongoing projects being actively pursued. These projects are part of a larger national effort with a cumulative cost exceeding Rs 240 billion. Chairman NHA emphasized that the Ministry of Finance had released Rs 56 billion for the second quarter of the

current financial year, with an additional similar amount expected to be disbursed in the remaining quarters.

A detailed briefing on the progress of the Hyderabad M6 Motorway was provided during the meeting, marking it as one of the key projects currently under development. In addition, Senator Maulana Abdul Wasi raised concerns over the DI Khan Kuchlak Zhub Highway, calling for an expedited pace of work on the critical route. Addressing these concerns, the Chairman of NHA noted that security challenges were impacting the project's progress. However, he reassured the committee that this highway remains on the priority list, stressing its importance for regional connectivity.

The meeting also highlighted several major infrastructure projects that are expected to drive growth and connectivity across the country. Chairman NHA confirmed that, under the instructions of the then prime minister M-25 and M-28 motorways in Balochistan are now among the top priorities for the government. Additionally, the M-6 Motorway in Sindh and the Dasu Dam section of the

Karakoram Highway in Gilgit-Baltistan were confirmed to be on the priority list, ensuring enhanced connectivity in key regions.

The committee also discussed the financial aspect of these projects, with Chairman NHA stating that the Ministry of Finance has been proactive in releasing funds to maintain the momentum of ongoing projects. With the government's support and the anticipated funds in the coming quarters, the completion of these strategic highways and motorways will play a pivotal role in Pakistan's economic development.

Earlier, the Calling Attention Notice regarding the issue of imposition of toll tax without completion of 17 Km road from Rajarasti to Umerkot despite passage of four years since the construction started in 2021 against the scheduled completion time of six months moved by Senator Poonjo Bheel in the Senate sitting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 was taken up and resolved. The NHA assured the committee after deliberations that the toll plaza will be removed.



ISLAMABAD: Workers dyeing clothes as per customers demand ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr at Aabpara Market. —APP Photo



#### 4 robbers killed in Parwan

CHARIKAR (Pajhwok): Four robbers have been killed in a clash with police in the Syedkhel district of Parwan province. The clash occurred in the Kamangar area of the district on Tuesday night, according to a statement from the police headquarters. It said: "The group had been carrying out robberies in various parts of the province, posing as security personnel. The operation took place at 7:30pm when the armed robbers barged into a house."

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 26, 1446 — Thursday, March 27, 2025

#### 3 killed, 2 hurt in accident

KABUL (Pajhwok): At least three people have been killed and two others injured as a result of a traffic accident in Mashli Tangi area on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway in eastern Laghman province, police said on Wednesday. In a statement, the Laghman police said the accident took place around 12:30pm today in Mashli Tangi area of Laghman's Qarghayo district on Kabul-Jalalabad highway when a corolla type car collided with a truck.

## ‘IEA desires formal relations with US’

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) says it desires formal relations with the United States of America. Zabiullah Mujahid, chief spokesman for the caretaker government, said it was in the interest of both Afghanistan and the US to forge formal ties.

In an interview with Al Arabiya, Mujahid said Afghanistan enjoyed good relations with many countries and wanted to have similar ties with the US as well.

He said: "Although officially not announced but in practice, we have diplomatic links with neighbouring and regional countries,

including China and some Islamic nations. Their embassies are functional in Kabul."

The IEA spokesman added: "We want to have official relations with the US too, because it is in the interest of both Afghanistan and the US."

"Afghanistan imposes no condition on other countries in this regard. Other countries should also have good relations with us based on their new policies towards this country and according to the importance of stability and security in Afghanistan."

Mujahid insisted: "All should have diplomatic relations, revive their eco-

nomie and trade ties (with Afghanistan), which will be in their interest."

About the US, he said: "Yes, enmity must end one day; no one remains the enemy of another one until doomsday. It was a time when the US invaded our country, it's forces were in Afghanistan fighting against us and took away our independence."

He went on to explain: "Once we signed the Doha agreement, US troops withdrew and we came out of war. Now that we are no longer at war with the US or any other country ... we must be in a state of trust, dialogue and interaction."

## China, Iran, Turkey lead mining investments

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum says that the largest investments in Afghanistan's mining sector have been made by companies from Uzbekistan, China, Turkey, and Iran.

Hayatullah Afghan, spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, stated that the total value of these investments is estimated at eight billion dollars.

These companies have invested in Afghanistan's copper, gold, iron, cement, and oil and gas mines.

Emphasizing that numerous facilities are now available for both domestic and foreign investors, Afghan said: "The biggest investors in Afghanistan's mining sector are companies from Uzbekistan, Turkey, China, and Iran, which have invested in oil and gas, cement projects, and copper, gold, and iron mines."

Ministry of Economy believes that foreign investments in various sectors of the country play a vital role in economic growth.

Abdul Rahman Habib, spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, said: "Our country has considerable economic potential, especially in mining, agriculture, energy production, and other sectors. At present, the necessary opportunities and facilities for attracting foreign investment are available."

Ahmad Firdaws Behgozin, an economic analyst, said: "Foreign investors can be effective inside Afghanistan, especially since they have access to advanced machinery. Mining is a very delicate and sensitive sector." This comes as, following the return of the Islamic Emirate to power and the improvement in security, some foreign companies have shown interest in investing in Afghanistan.

## State land allocated for deported Afghans

JAWZJAN (TOLONews): By order of the leader of the Islamic Emirate, 7,000 acres of state-owned land have been allocated in Jawzjan province to settle Afghans deported from Iran and Pakistan.

According to officials, efforts to support the deportees from neighboring countries are ongoing in coordination with aid organizations.

Gul Haidar Shafaq, the governor of Jawzjan, stated: "The Amir al-Mu'minin issued the directive, and the land will be distributed soon. You will benefit from state land. In one area, we identified 5,000 acres, and in another area, nearly 2,000 additional acres have been identified for the deportees." Some of the Afghans deported from Iran and Pakistan and currently residing in Jawzjan are requesting shelter from the authorities.

Sher Mohammad, 64, a resident of Sheberghan city, is one of the thousands of Afghans forcibly deported from Pakistan after 30 years of living there. As the sole breadwinner of a ten-member family, he is seeking both aid and shelter.

Sher Mohammad, deported from Pakistan, said: "They should give us land and homes, and create job opportunities for us."

Mohebullah, deported from Iran, said: "We were deported from Iran and came to Jawzjan province. We would be very happy if they could help us with house rent as well."

Meanwhile, a foreign aid organization recently distributed cash assistance to 940 families of deported migrants in Jawzjan.

Amanullah Talha, Head of Refugee Affairs in Jawzjan, stated: "A total of 940 families received 42,760 Afghans in cash assistance from the WHH organization." According to Department of Refugees and Repatriates of Jawzjan, over 4,000 families who returned from Pakistan since last year are currently residing in the province.

## 3 new transportation projects inaugurated



K A N D A H A R (TOLONews): Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, stated at the inauguration ceremony of three ground transportation projects in Kandahar that, in addition to implementing major development projects, the Islamic Emirate has also made significant progress in the field of mining.

The spokesperson added that since last year, beyond projects such as TAPI, Trans-Afghan, the Wakhjan trade corridor, and mining, there have also been notable advancements in the political sector.

"In the political sector, the Islamic Emirate made substantial progress last year. Many countries opened embassies in Afghanistan, trade agreements were signed and foreign companies invested. All this is part of our successful diplomacy and foreign policy," said Mujahid.

The Acting Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA) stated that since the return of the Islamic Emirate, the country's transportation system has been progressing toward modern standards.

"With the return of the Islamic Emirate and the establishment of security, transport conditions are now more favorable than

ever, and we are on the verge of achieving this goal," said Hamidullah Akhundzada, acting minister of Transport.

He added that within the next 14 months, two ground transportation hubs will be built in Kandahar and another in Urugzan province at a cost of 500 million Afghani, which will provide numerous facilities for passengers and drivers.

"A total of 500 million Afghani will be spent on these three projects, funded by the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation's budget," stated Rustam Hafizyar, Director

of Planning at the MoTCA.

"This project is being carried out according to the specifications of the Ministry of Transport, and all necessary facilities for passengers and drivers have been considered," said Niaz Ahmad, a representative of the contracting company.

Residents of Kandahar also believe the construction of transportation terminals will help reduce traffic congestion.

"Building bus terminals outside the city is an important and positive step. This move will reduce congestion and traffic accidents. We demand more similar

projects," said Amir Lali, a resident of Kandahar.

"The city of Kandahar is expanding, and we hope that bus terminals are built outside the city so that people can be relieved of difficulties," stated Rahmatullah, another resident.

According to IE officials, in addition to the development project of Ahmad Shah Baba International Airport in Kandahar, there are also projects underway for the development of other airports and ground terminals, which, once operational, will provide job opportunities for thousands of Afghans.

## Tehran, Kabul drafting plan for repatriation of migrants: Araghchi

KABUL (TOLONews): Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi announced the drafting of a joint plan with Islamic Emirate officials for the gradual and dignified return of Afghan migrants from Iran.

According to Iranian media reports, Araghchi stated that with the implementation of this plan, the return process of Afghan migrants to their country will be carried out in a "gradual and dignified" manner.

The Iranian media report stated: "We are in consultation with the

Afghan government to ensure this process is conducted in a principled and organized manner, and full negotiations were held with the Afghan side. It was agreed that a joint plan will be developed and implemented for the gradual and dignified departure of these migrants from Iran."

"This initiative can be seen as a positive step, but we must not forget that the deportation process should be carried out under the supervision of international bodies, including the UNHCR and the

International Organization for Migration," said Juma Khan Pouya, a migrant rights activist.

"We have moved past the notion of it being 'voluntary,' but if this process is conducted with respect for privacy or at least in a more dignified way, the migrants will have no complaints," said Safar Barez, an Afghan migrant in Iran.

This agreement comes amid reports in recent years of increasing arrests and mistreatment of Afghan migrants in Iran.

"Neighboring countries in the process of deporting

Afghan migrants should act according to international laws and with a clear mechanism, in cooperation with international organizations and in coordination with the current Afghan government," said Enayat Alokozai, another Afghan migrant.

Earlier, on October 3, 2023, Iran's Interior Minister announced that his country could no longer accommodate Afghan migrants and that deporting undocumented migrants was one of the Iranian government's priorities.

## Trade ties strengthened between Afghanistan and China

KABUL (BNA): During a recent meeting, Nooruddin Azizi, the Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, and Zhou Xing, the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Afghanistan, highlighted the critical importance of achieving a balanced trade relationship between their two countries.

In discussions facilitated by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, both parties focused on enhancing Afghanistan's export capacity to China. Key products identified for export include pine nuts, pomegranates, gemstones, and valuable minerals such as nephrite, onyx, lapis lazuli, and talc.

The meeting also addressed the necessity of streamlining the export



process by reducing transit and transportation costs, which could significantly benefit Afghan exporters.

As a positive outcome of the discussions, the two sides agreed to establish a

joint working group aimed at improving coordination and facilitating regular meetings to bolster trade relations and increase exports.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce

reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening trade ties and promoting national exports, signaling a proactive approach to enhance economic collaboration between Afghanistan and China.

## UN and ICRC warn of serious water shortage in Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat) warned this week that 21 million people in Afghanistan are currently facing a serious water crisis and that the country needs major investments in water infrastructure.

Stephanie Loose, the head of the programme, said in a report that major Afghan cities such as Kabul, Kandahar and Herat are also facing a serious shortage of clean drinking water and that groundwater resources in these cities are decreasing significantly.

However, last week, the International Committee of

the Red Cross (ICRC) in Afghanistan reported that an estimated 33 million people in the country face severe water shortage.

Marking World Water Day on March 22, the ICRC quoted a Kabul resident Shafiqullah Hamkar of District 5 in Kabul city as saying: "Our borewells have completely dried up because of the minimal snowfall and rainfall over the last few years."

"The sharp decline in groundwater levels has left us no choice but to rely on commercial water tankers for our most basic needs. It is a big challenge for us in the city," he said.

ICRC said Hamkar represents an estimated 80%

of Afghans who are dealing with the severe impact of erratic rainfall patterns, rising temperatures and droughts.

The situation is even worse in rural areas where people often rely on untreated surface water, which leads to the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrhea.

"For millions of Afghans, who are already struggling with many challenges and facing a dire humanitarian situation, vital activities such as getting water to drink or cook and providing irrigation for crops are often impossible. This has a devastating impact on people's health

and access to food, and hampers the country's potential for economic development," says Martin De Boer, the head of programs for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Afghanistan.

He added that the lack of required infrastructure – including water-supply systems, dams and irrigation networks – further exacerbates the challenges. Responding to the needs of the people, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) plays an important role in supporting communities and assisting authorities to improve and manage water supplies.

## Acting FM meets UN Special Representative



KABUL (BNA): Acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi held a meeting today, Wednesday with Roza Otunbayeva, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, in his office.

During the meeting, Ms.Otunbayeva shared insights regarding her recent address to the UN Security Council, emphasizing the Council's decision to extend the mandate

of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). She also discussed her meetings in New York and Vienna, where critical topics surrounding Afghanistan's situation were addressed.

A focal point of the discussion was the United Nations' ongoing efforts to combat drug trafficking, enhance the private sector, and address banking issues

in Afghanistan. Otunbayeva underscored the importance of international cooperation in these areas.

In response, Minister Muttaqi articulated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's stance on various pertinent issues. He reiterated the commitment to collaborate with the United Nations on initiatives, provided that the perspectives of the Islamic Emirate are acknowledged and respected.

## UNAMA concerned over girls' education ban

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has expressed "deep disappointment" over the continued restrictions on girls' education beyond grade six for the fourth consecutive year.

In a statement, UNAMA said that the ban on girls' education only worsens Afghanistan's human rights situation, humanitarian aid efforts, and economic crises.

The statement, quoting Roza Otunbayeva, head of UNAMA, noted that the prohibition on girls' education not only damages their prospects for the future but also harms peace and the overall well-being of the Afghan people.

Roza Otunbayeva stated:

"I am deeply disappointed that the authorities continue to ignore the voices of people across Afghanistan – people who have endured decades of war and are now struggling through a humanitarian crisis. This restriction undermines the prospect of Afghanistan's recovery and must be reversed."

UNAMA further stated that the restriction on girls' education beyond grade six is one of the main reasons for Afghanistan's ongoing isolation from the international community.

The head of UNAMA added: "This restriction remains one of the key factors keeping Afghanistan isolated from the global community, delaying the country's path to recovery. Nevertheless, I call on

international donors to continue supporting the people of Afghanistan, particularly in the education sector."

Meanwhile, according to statistics from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the restriction on girls' access to education above grade six has so far affected 2.2 million Afghan girls, including 400,000 just in this year alone.

UNICEF added that if the restriction continues until 2030, more than 4 million girls will be affected.

This comes as the Ministry of Education, on Thursday of last week, announced the beginning of the new academic year for boys and girls below grade six, but made no mention of education for girls above that level.

## Qatar to support Afghanistan's health sector

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, the acting Minister of Public Health, met with the Qatari Chargé d'Affaires to discuss health initiatives. The focus of their conversation was on the construction of a new 400-bed hospital in Kandahar, aimed at bolstering healthcare capacity in the region.

Acting Public Health

Minister expressed appreciation for Qatar's commitment to supporting Afghanistan's health sector.

The Qatari ambassador reiterated his country's dedication to continuing its support for Afghanistan's healthcare initiatives, assuring that collaboration would persist to improve the health services available to the Afghan population.

## Lightning strike leaves child dead

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): A child has been killed by a lightning strike in the Pasaband district of western Ghor province, security official said on Wednesday.

Police spokesman Maulvi Abdul Rahman Badri told Pajhwok Afghan

News the freak incident took place in the Burj Kakari area of the district last night.

Over the past couple of days, Ghor province as received heavy rains, followed by the lightning strike.





GAZA CITY: Mourners reacting beside the bodies of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes, at al-Ahli Arab Hospital, also known as the Baptist Hospital.

## Journalists Waheed, Farhan remanded

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD. KARACHI: A judicial magistrate approved a two-day physical remand for senior journalist Waheed Murad on Wednesday and handed him over to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

During the hearing, he took the rostrum, saying: “My mother-in-law is a cancer patient and has come from Canada for treatment.” He further claimed, “I was handed over to them [FIA] just 20 minutes ago.” His defence counsel, Hadi Ali, requested access to the FIR, arguing that Murad was subjected to unlawful treatment. “Police broke into his house and even assaulted his mother-in-law,” he alleged.

Another defence lawyer, Imaan Mazari, informed the court that a petition had already been filed against his alleged illegal detention. When questioned by the judge about the time of Murad’s arrest, the FIA prosecutor confirmed that he was taken into custody last night. The prosecution argued that Murad had shared a post related to a banned organisation in Balochistan and that further investigation was required regarding his social media accounts. They also

requested the recovery of his mobile phone.

Mazari questioned why a journalist’s remand was necessary, asking whether the FIA had issued any prior notice. Hadi asserted: “Journalism has become a crime in this country. Journalists are being arrested to harass them.” Murad, in his statement to the court, said he was taken at 3am, blindfolded for hours, and only had his blindfold removed 20 minutes before being presented in court. The FIA has registered a case against him under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA). The sections include 9 (glorification of an offence), 10 (cyber terrorism), 20 (malicious code), and 26.

Meanwhile, journalist Farhan Mallick has been remanded to the Federal Investigation Agency’s (FIA) custody for five days in a fraud case after being presented before Judicial Magistrate Malir-I.

The FIA officials presented Mallick before the court for hearing on the new case and it subsequently granted them a five-day physical remand of the journalist. Speaking to media outside the court, Mallick’s lawyer, Advocate Moiz Jafri, said that the FIA had kept the journalist in its custody despite a court order against it.

According to Jafri, the law requires that after sending an accused to jail, authorities must inform jail officials before making an arrest in another case. Jafri further said that Mallick’s family visited multiple prisons in search of him, but he was not found in any of them. He described the FIA’s actions as arbitrary and unlawful.

He said that the detained journalist was supposed to be presented for remand yesterday, but the process was deliberately delayed. Jafri claimed that the FIA had conducted a raid yesterday and arrested the individuals named in the FIR. Based on their statements, Mallick was also taken into custody. He dismissed the charges as baseless, asserting that a false case was registered against Malik on the same day to justify his arrest.

He said that the latest case was registered at a time when the journalist was scheduled to appear in court on Tuesday. He further contended that the entire sequence of events — case registration, raid, and arrests — took place within a single day. The FIA had initially took the journalist into custody for allegedly violating the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) and involvement in defamation.

## Misuse of govt land: KP CM takes notice

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has taken notice of the alleged misuse of land allotted for industrial development in the province. He has directed the Chief Secretary to form a task force to probe into the matter. A formal letter has been issued from the Chief Minister’s Secretariat to the Chief Secretary on Wednesday, highlighting concerns that land purchased and allocated by the government for industrial purposes remains either unused or reportedly being utilized for other purposes.

The letter emphasized that using such lands for other purposes not only deviates from its intended objective but also violates relevant regulations and terms of allotment. To ensure a thorough inquiry, the CM has instructed the formation of a task force comprising officials from the industries, law, and Board of Revenue departments.

The letter suggests that he task force should scrutinize all legal aspects related to land acquisition, awards notification and all the relevant documentation; and present a comprehensive plan with actionable recommendations to Chief Minister for consideration.

Moreover, it emphasizes a province-wide audit of all land acquired and allotted for industrial development, identifying instances where land has been repurposed adding that legal status of such land must be determined in accordance with existing laws and regulations. The investigation should also involve consultations with key stakeholders, including local administration, representatives from the industrial sector, and affected landowners.

If necessary, recommendations will be made for reclaiming misused land, pursuing legal action, and imposing penalties. Where feasible, plans will be developed to ensure that the land is used for its original industrial purpose.

## Pak-S Arabia discuss Hajj, Umrah facilities

JEDDAH (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Wednesday held a meeting with the Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, to discuss matters related to Hajj and Umrah pilgrims from Pakistan.

Dr. Al-Rabiah congratulated Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on assuming the portfolio of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and reaffirmed Saudi Arabia’s commitment to facilitating Pakistani pilgrims.

During the meeting, both ministers discussed enhancing facilities for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims and expanding the Road to Makkah project to other cities in Pakistan. Sardar Yousaf said, “I extend my gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for their unwavering commitment to providing excellent services to the pilgrims.” He emphasized that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share deep-rooted ties based on a common faith, history, and culture.

# Fear of more war haunts Kursk as Russia expels Ukrainian troops

RYLSK, Russia (Reuters): In the Russian region of Kursk, where Ukraine has been fighting for more than seven months, people say they want peace but fear there will be more war. Ukraine’s incursion into Russian territory was launched in August — more than two years into a major war triggered by Moscow’s invasion of its neighbor — shocking a border region that hadn’t seen conflict since World War Two.

Now, with Russia close to expelling the last Ukrainian troops, Kursk’s populace is counting the cost. For some residents like Leonid Boyarintsev, a veteran of the Sino-Soviet border conflict of 1969, the surprise enemy offensive served as justification for Russia to double down on its military activities in Ukraine.

“When we are victorious there will be peace because no one will dare to come crawling in again,” the 83-year-old told Reuters in the town of Rylsk, adding that he blamed the West for stoking the conflict in Ukraine. “They will be too afraid to.” The damage that has been unleashed on towns and cities in the Russian region has brought home the horrors of war long suffered by Ukrainians.

In ancient Rylsk, 26 km (16 miles) from the border, the scars are everywhere — from the smashed merchant buildings from Tsarist Russia to the families still struggling with children living apart in evacuation. “We want peace but it is very important that the peace is long term and durable,” town Mayor Sergei Kurnosov told Reuters in the ruins of a cultural center that was destroyed in a Dec. 20 Ukrainian attack. Six people were killed and 12 injured in the attack, Russia said. Russia said the cultural center was destroyed by US-made HIMARS missiles. Abandoned music books lay beside silent pianos and a theater stage showing a shattered scene of

rubble and glass.

Reuters is among the first international news outlets to gain access to the Kursk region since Russia began a lightning offensive to expel Ukrainian troops this month. While Russian officials did not check reporting material, the Reuters team was informed in advance that it could not report about the Russian military in the region or gather visuals of Russian forces. Just like Ukrainians, many Kursk residents crave a return to normality

Here too, air-raid sirens have become the daily soundtrack of life. While Russia has now pushed out almost all Ukrainian forces from Kursk, the area has been heavily mined and drones continue to attack. Many civilian cars speeding along a road near the vast Kurchatov nuclear power plant had drone jamming devices strapped onto their roofs. Residents shopped for food and vapes as artillery boomed in the distance. “It’s all very scary indeed,” said Rimma Erofeeva, a music teacher in Rylsk who said people in the town wanted the fighting to stop though believed that God was protecting them. “The really scary thing is that people have got so used to this that they don’t even react to the sirens anymore.”

Ukrainian forces smashed into the Kursk region on August 6, supported by swarms of drones and heavy Western weaponry, and swiftly seize almost 1,400 sq km of territory, according to Russian generals. But within weeks the area under Ukraine’s control shrank as Russia piled in forces. The latest battlefield map from Deep State, an authoritative Ukrainian site that charts the frontlines from open-source data, showed Ukraine controlled less than 81 sq km as of March 23. By contrast, Russia controls about 113,000 sq km, or about 20 percent, of Ukraine. The

strategic fortunes of the Kursk incursion are disputed.

Ukraine said the incursion was aimed at bringing the war to Russia, diverting Russian troops from advances in eastern Ukraine, embarrasing President Vladimir Putin and gaining a bargaining chip in potential future talks on ending the war. The operation “achieved most of its goals,” the armed forces’ General Staff told Reuters this week. The chief of Russia’s General Staff Valery Gerasimov told Putin, in a televised exchange during a trip by the president to a command post in the Kursk region on March 12, that Ukraine had lost tens of thousands of its best troops in a failed bid to distract Russian forces from the Donbas, in eastern Ukraine.

“The Kyiv regime aimed to create a so-called strategic foothold in the Kursk region for later use as a bargaining chip in possible negotiations with Russia,” Gerasimov said. “These plans of the enemy have completely failed.” Russia’s defense ministry says Ukraine has lost 69,700 troops dead or injured in Kursk, along with 5,700 tanks, armored cars and many Western-supplied vehicles. Russia has not given its own casualty figures. Ukraine has given no casualty figures but dismisses Russian estimates as fake.

New US President Donald Trump has vowed to end the three-year war in Ukraine, yet many people in the Kursk region are skeptical of any lasting peace because of deep-seated geopolitical tensions and distrust between Russia and the West. “I don’t think that there will be peace in our region in the near future,” said a resident of the city of Kursk who gave her name only as Yekaterina, citing resentment toward Russia from Ukraine and the West. “There will be some hostility toward our people, toward our land for a very long time.”

## Signal chat showing Hegseth’s detailed attack plans against Houthis

### US warplanes carried out 17 strikes in Yemen

SANAA (AFP): Houthi media in Yemen reported Wednesday at least 17 strikes in Saada and Amran, blaming the United States for the attacks. The militia’s Ansarollah website said US warplanes carried out “aggressive air raids... causing material damage to citizens’ property,” but gave no details of casualties. Washington on March 15 announced a military offensive against the Iranian-backed Houthis, promising to use overwhelming force until the group stopped firing on vessels in the key shipping routes of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

That day saw a wave of US air strikes that officials said killed senior Houthi leaders, and which the Houthi health ministry said killed 53 people. Since then, Houthi-held parts of Yemen have witnessed near-daily attacks that the group has blamed on the United States, with the militia announcing the targeting of US military ships and Israel. The Houthis began targeting shipping vessels after the start of the Gaza war, claiming solidarity with Palestinians, but paused their campaign when a ceasefire took effect in Gaza in January. Earlier this month, they threatened to renew attacks in the vital maritime trade route over Israel’s aid blockade on the Palestinian territory, triggering the first US strikes on Yemen since President Donald Trump took office in January. Last week, Trump threatened to annihilate the Houthis and warned Tehran against continuing to aid the group.

For reasons unknown, Goldberg’s phone number had been added to the group, also including Central Intelligence Agency Director John Ratcliffe, among others. Goldberg also revealed disparaging comments by the top US officials about European allies during their chat.

The Atlantic initially did not publish the precise details of the chat, saying it wanted to avoid revealing classified material and information that could endanger American troops. But on Tuesday, Ratcliffe and other officials involved in the chat played down the scandal, testifying before Congress that nothing critical had been shared or laws broken — and that nothing discussed was classified.

Trump himself brushed the breach off as a “glitch” and said there was “no classified information” involved. The Atlantic said on Wednesday that it therefore asked the government whether in that case there would be any problem in publishing the rest of the material. It got no firm indications

to the contrary.

The Atlantic said its full publication Wednesday included everything in the Signal chain other than one CIA name that the agency had asked not to be revealed. The text discussion includes Hegseth laying out the weather conditions, times of attacks and types of aircraft being used. The texting was done barely half an hour before the first US warplanes took off and two hours before the first target, described as “Target Terrorist,” was expected to be bombed.

The details are shockingly precise for the kind of operation that the public usually only learns about later — and in vaguer terms. “1410: More F-18s LAUNCH (2nd strike package),” Hegseth writes at one stage. “1415: Strike Drones on Target (this is when the first bombs will definitely drop, pending earlier ‘Trigger Bomb’ targets).” A short time later, Trump’s National Security Adviser Mike Waltz sent real-time intelligence on the aftermath of an attack, writing “Building collapsed.

## ‘Khartoum is free’ says Sudan Army chief al-Burhan after airport captured

KHARTOUM: Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has declared, “Khartoum is free” hours after his forces recaptured Khartoum airport from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Al-Burhan was speaking Wednesday from the presidential palace that government forces took control of Friday in a key victory.

Earlier, soldiers also encircled areas surrounding the airport in the Sudanese capital on Wednesday, a key development in a two-year-old conflict between the SAF and rival RSF, with the paramilitary’s forces fleeing across a bridge out of that part of the capital. SAF troops “surrounded the strategic Jebel Awliya area” south of central Khartoum, the last large RSF stronghold in the area, a military source told the AFP news agency, requesting anonymity because he is not authorised to brief the media.

The army also secured both sides of the Manshiya Bridge, which crosses the Blue Nile River in Khartoum, leaving the Jebel Awliya Bridge just south of the capital as the only crossing out of the area still under RSF control. The military, at war with the RSF since April 2023, launched a campaign this week to push the paramilitary forces out of cen-

tral Khartoum. RSF fighters had been stationed inside the airport, just east of central Khartoum’s government and business district, since the war began. Across the city, witnesses and activists reported that RSF fighters have been retreating southwards from neighbourhoods they previously controlled, ostensibly towards Jebel Awliya. Witnesses said that RSF had mainly stationed its forces in southern Khartoum to secure their withdrawal from the capital via bridges to the neighbouring city of Omdurman. “It is clear that the army has been making rapid progress, and rapid gains, especially when you look at where they’re located in the capital. So the advance from the army is coming from regions where they’re not only able to retake the bases. But also to take on the bases that used to belong to the RSF,” said Al Jazeera’s Hiba Morgan, reporting from Khartoum on Wednesday. “The RSF’s power up until five months ago was quite high and now has been greatly reduced”, she added.

Amgad Fareid Eltayeb from Fikra for Studies and Development in Cairo told Al Jazeera that the army’s advancement does not mean the conflict is finished. “The end of the war means a

political settlement that dismantles the RSF political institutions. The RSF is retreating towards West Sudan, towards Darfur, where they hold a significant amount of land, and this means the war continues, especially in the light of the continuous support of certain foreign powers, particularly the UAE [United Arab Emirates], who continue the supply of weapons and support to the RSF,” he said.

Elbashir Idris, an independent Sudan analyst and activist, told Al Jazeera: “The RSF’s collapse has been quicker than the army’s ability to deploy itself.” In Khartoum, “we have seen videos yesterday of many residents, and even prisoners who were under RSF-controlled territory, freeing themselves and running with full jubilation in the streets — without seeing an RSF militiaman in sight,” he noted. “This news [about the army retaking the airport] is very welcome to a lot of Sudanese people who have lost their homes within the capital city two years ago, and this win has come at the RSF’s collapse,” Idris added. In nearly two years, the war has killed tens of thousands of people, uprooted more than 12 million and created the world’s largest hunger and displacement crises. — Aljazeera

## 19 dead in ‘worst wildfires’ in South Korea’s history

SEOUL (BBC): At least 19 people have been killed and 19 injured as South Korea’s wildfires continue to ravage the country’s southeast, according to the latest numbers from the Ministry of the Interior and Safety.

The “unprecedented” crisis remains critical, according to acting president Han Duck-soo, who said the fires are “rewriting the record books for the worst wildfires in our nation’s history”.

More than 23,000 people have been evacuated and hundreds of structures damaged, with strong winds fuelling the blaze. Several heritage cultural sites have also been affected, including a 1,300-year-old Buddhist temple that was destroyed, while other national treasures are being relocated. Thousands of firefighters and about 5,000 military personnel have been deployed to contain multiple blazes, including

helicopters from the US military stationed in Korea.

The national fire agency said it had raised the crisis to the highest fire response level, the first time this year such an alert has been issued. Wildfires are relatively uncommon in South Korea, and related fatalities are rare. The current fires, which have killed 19 people within the past few days, are already the deadliest in the country’s history.