

PAC to probe cases
LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has decided to investigate corruption cases from the PTI government era. As per details, 18 financial misconduct cases from 2019 have been shifted to the Anti-Corruption Department. PAC Punjab has assigned investigations into financial irregularities within the Dera Ghazi Khan and Faisalabad DHOs to the Director General of Anti-Corruption.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif presiding over a meeting on the supply of sugar in the country and price control.

Negotiations with Afghanistan KP asks Center to approve TORs

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has urged the federal government to approve the Terms of Reference (TORs) proposed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for negotiations with Afghanistan at the earliest. He emphasized that any further delay in the approval of these TORs should be avoided. Barrister Dr. Saif stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government intends to send a delegation to Afghanistan on an urgent basis. He reaffirmed that ensuring the safety and security of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains the government's top priority and responsibility. He further criticized the federal government for politicizing such a crucial issue instead of focusing on counterterrorism efforts in the province. He pointed out that the federal government does not object to foreign visits by the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Sindh. Referring to past diplomatic engagements, Barrister Dr. Saif questioned why the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's initiative to engage with Afghanistan on the issue of terrorism is being hindered when Maryam Nawaz could engage in "Smog Diplomacy" with India. He warned that the federal government's double standards are deepening the province's sense of deprivation. He urged the federal government to stop treating Khyber Pakhtunkhwa unfairly, stating that the province is an integral part of Pakistan. He called upon the federal authorities to address the grievances of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and provide it with the necessary support to combat terrorism effectively.

Pakistan soon be a strong economy: Sanaullah

FAISALABAD (APP): Federal Minister and Advisor to Prime Minister (PM) on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sana Ullah Khan said that the government, under visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has put the country on the road to progress and prosperity after saving it from default and it would emerge as a strong economy after a couple of years if the pace of national development continued. Addressing a Minority Cards distribution ceremony at Iqbal Auditorium University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) here on Sunday, he said that in 1999 Pakistan was making progress on a fast track under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif but the incident of October 12 occurred and the country plunged into unprecedented terrorism and loadshedding. He said that in 2012, people again mandated Mian Nawaz Sharif and he overcame issues and put the country on the track to development again. "The dollar rate was about Rs.106, petrol Rs.65 and growth rate was 6.2% but in 2017 a deep-rooted conspiracy was hatched and a project was launched by ousting the PML-N government. The new experiment resulted in an unprecedented price hike and inflation in addition to pushing the country to the brink of bankruptcy," he added. He said that the country was facing multifaceted crises and people were leading a very miserable life when the PMLN moved a "No Confidence Motion" and saved the country from default. He said that the government was also actively working to reduce inflation which has already dropped from 40% to 4% while more steps are being taken to further reduce it. The government has put the country on right track and it would surely emerge as a strong economy of the world after a couple of years if the progress pace continued and no incident like October 12 occurred again, he added.

Israel blocks aid into Gaza as ceasefire standoff escalates

JERUSALEM/CAIRO (Reuters): Israel blocked the entry of aid trucks into Gaza on Sunday as a standoff over the truce that has halted fighting for the past six weeks escalated, with Hamas calling on Egyptian and Qatari mediators to intervene. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said earlier that it had adopted a proposal by U.S. President Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza for the Ramadan and Passover periods, hours after the first phase of the previously agreed ceasefire expired. If agreed, the truce would halt fighting until the end of the Ramadan fasting period around March 31 and the Jewish Passover holiday around April 20. The truce would be conditional on Hamas releasing half of the living and dead hostages on the first day, with the remainder released at the conclusion, if an agreement is reached on a permanent ceasefire. Hamas says it is committed to the originally agreed ceasefire that had been scheduled to move into a second phase, with negotiations aimed at a permanent end to the war, and it has rejected the idea of a temporary extension to the 42-day truce. Reflecting the fragility of the ceasefire deal, local health officials said Israeli gunfire had killed four Palestinians in separate attacks in the northern and southern Gaza Strip. The Israeli military said that "suspects" were identified close to its troops in northern Gaza and that they had planted a bomb. It added that an airstrike was carried out to "eliminate the threat." Egyptian sources said on Friday that the Israeli delegation in Cairo had sought to extend the first phase by 42 days, while Hamas wanted to move to the second phase of the ceasefire deal. Spokesman Hazem Qassem said on Saturday that the group rejected Israel's "formula" of extending the first phase. In the first phase of the ceasefire, Hamas handed over 33 Israeli hostages as well as five Thais returned in an unscheduled release, in exchange for around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees from Israeli jails and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from some of their positions in Gaza. Under the original agreement, the second phase was intended to see the start of negotiations over the release of the remaining 59 hostages, the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, and a final end to the war. However the talks never began and Israel says all its hostages must be returned for fighting to stop. "Israel will not allow a ceasefire without the release of our hostages," Netanyahu's office said, announcing that the entry of all goods and supplies into the Gaza Strip would be halted. "If Hamas persists in its refusal, there will be additional consequences."

Eight dead in India avalanche as rescue operation ends

DEHRADUN (AFP): Rescuers recovered the eighth and final body from the site of an avalanche in a remote area of northern India, the army said Sunday, marking the end of a marathon operation in sub-zero temperatures. More than 50 workers were submerged under snow and debris after the avalanche hit a construction camp on Friday near Mana village on the border with Tibet in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. Authorities had revised down the number of workers on site at the time of the avalanche from 55 to 54 after one worker, previously believed to be buried, was found to have safely made his way home before the avalanche hit. The army used drone-based detection system to assist in its search operations. Multiple drones and a rescue dog were also employed. Construction worker Anil, who only gave his first name, recalled his rescue hours after being buried by the avalanche. "It was if God's angels had come to save us," Anil, who is in his late 20s, told AFP on Sunday by phone from his hospital bed. "The way we were engulfed in snow, we had no hope of surviving." Being alive now felt "like a dream," he said. Working on a project by the Border Roads Organization, the workers were living on site in steel containers considered stronger than tents and capable of withstanding harsh weather.

'Israel bears responsibility'
GAZA (AFP): Hamas said Sunday that Israel "bears responsibility" for the fate of hostages held in the Gaza Strip after it suspended the entry of humanitarian aid over a dispute on extending the ceasefire. "The occupation [Israel] bears responsibility for the consequences of its decision on the population of the [Gaza] Strip and for the fate of its prisoners" held by Hamas or other armed groups, Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said.

Provision of essential items at low rates top priority: PM

Shehbaz, Awais discuss energy sector reforms

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said that the provision of essential items to people at low rates is the top priority of the government. He presided over a meeting on the supply of sugar in the country and price control here on Sunday. The premier said that in previous months the government had taken strict action against sugar smuggling, which bore fruitful results. He directed the authorities to take solid steps to control the price of sugar besides taking stern action against elements involved in its hoarding. Shehbaz Sharif directed to prepare a strategy to ensure the provision of the commodity and other essential items at reasonable rates. "The federal and provincial governments should make joint efforts to ensure the provision of essential items to the common man at low rates," he added. He said that during the holy month of Ramadan, negligence would not be tolerated regarding control of prices of essential items. The meeting was briefed about the sugar production and that there was its sufficient stock available in the country. It was informed that fair price shops had been set up to sell sugar at low rates at the provincial level and all possible steps would be taken to completely overcome its smuggling. Action would be ensured against illegal hoarding of sugar and work at the district administration level would be taken vibrantly in this regard, chief secretaries briefed the meeting. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema, Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik and other high-ranking officials attended the meeting. Chief secretaries of all provinces also attended the meeting via video link. **PM, power minister discuss energy sector reforms** Federal Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday. During the meeting, they discussed key matters related to the power sector, reviewing ongoing projects, challenges, and strategies to improve efficiency and address power sector issues nationwide. The discussion also focused on addressing power shortages, modernising infrastructure, and implementing policies to ensure uninterrupted electricity for consumers. They also exchanged views on the country's broader political and economic landscape. **Mashhood briefs Shehbaz on youth empowerment initiatives** Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYM) Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday and briefed him about progress on various ongoing initiatives aimed at empowering the youth of Pakistan. Rana Mashhood provided a comprehensive briefing on the development and implementation of youth-focused projects across country. The discussion also covered strategies to enhance opportunities for young people in education, employment, and entrepreneurship. Overall political and economic situation of the country was also discussed in the meeting.

NIRC introduces modern digital system to minimise pendency, 80% pending cases resolved in three months


ISLAMABAD (APP): Justice (R) Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui, Chairman of the National Industrial Relations Commission (NIRC), has launched full bench hearings via video link to accelerate and streamline case proceedings and in the initial phase, the system has been implemented in Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, with plans to expand to Quetta, Multan, Sukkur, and Peshawar in the next phase. Speaking to journalists in his chamber, the NIRC Chairman stated that in the past, he and his staff had to travel to various cities for week-long hearings, causing inconvenience to petitioners and lawyers while also incurring high TA/DA expenses.

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PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

HEADQUARTERS WESTERN AIR COMMAND

INVITATION OF TENDERS FOR SUPPLY OF RATION ITEMS FY 2025-26

1. Sealed tenders {Technical (Without Price) and Financial (With Price)} are invited from reputable, well-experienced, financially sound and Income Tax - registered Pakistani Firms / Contractors / Millers for supply of Dry / Fresh Ration items for **WAC Bases / FOBs / Hospitals / AD Sites** under Western Air Command, PAF during the Financial Year 2025-26 (01 July, 2025 to 30 June, 2026). Dry ration would be concluded at HQ WAC, PAF (Samungli); whereas Fresh Ration Contracts would be concluded at respective PAF Base. Firms / Contractors which are not registered with PAF can also participate in tendering process and approach to concerned Base for collection of Tender / Registration documents.

Central Contracts at Headquarters Western Air Command, PAF Samungli

(a) **Cooking Oil** Canola (Branded)

(b) **Full Cream Milk Powder:** Branded Full Cream Milk Powder (Locally manufactured) packed in Aluminium foil and Polythene bag (Nitrogen or a mixture of nitrogen and carbon dioxide layers) fortified with vitamins A & D contents. Bidders are to provide Halal Certification, OHSAS-18001 (Occupational Health and Safety) / ISO-14001 (Environmental Management System), Manufacturing License from PSQCA / Province, FSSC 22000 (Food Safety System Certification) / ISO-9001 (Quality Management Certification) / Hazard Critical Control Points (HACCP) Certified, Laboratory Analysis report of latest batch produced from PNAC - accredited Labs, Complete details of Milk Collection Centres, Chiller Vans which can maintain temperature between 0-4 degree centigrade, quantity of Fresh Milk collected through suppliers and **a certificate that the firm's own production plant is operational round the year.**

(d) **Rice Group**

(i) Rice Saila {Basmati (Grain length 8 mm or more)}

(ii) Rice Basmati {Super (Grain length 8 mm or more)}

(e) **Tea Group**

(i) Black Tea (Premium quality Tea Leaf Branded)

(ii) Green Tea (Branded)

(f) **Lentil Seeds Group**

(i) Daal Chana, Mong (Split), Masoor (Split), Mash (Split), Channa Kabuli (Channa white) & Red Beans (Lobia) shall be of one variety and of good cooking quality

(ii) Bengal Gram Flour (Besan) of good quality

(f) **Condiments Whole** {Red Chillies (whole), Turmeric (whole), Cumin Seeds (whole), Coriander Seeds (whole), Tamarind (with seeds) & Black Pepper (whole)}

(g) **Sugar** (Good quality)

(h) **Local Contracts at respective Bases / FOBs / Hospitals / AD Sites of Western Air Command.**

(i) Meat Group {Mutton, Beef & Beef Boneless for (Dogs)}

(ii) Poultry Group (Chicken Dressed, Eggs & Fish)

(ii) Misc Group {Onion, Potato, Milk Fresh, Squash (Branded), Ice MM, salt iodized, Ginger (Fresh), Garlic (Fresh) and Fire wood}

(iii) Fruit Group 'Citrus / Non-citrus' (as per seasonal chart provided with guidelines)

(iv) Vegetable Group (as per seasonal chart provided with guide lines)

(v) PAF Base Samungli will conclude contract for Fresh Ration and Tinned Foods Group for AD Sites.

(j) Criteria for Supply of Meat Items (Mutton, Beef, Chicken & Fish) for PAF WAC Bases / FOBs / Hospitals / AD Sites.

(i) Bidders are to provide certificate regarding availability of Serviceable (Running Condition) Airconditioner / Chiller fitted Meat transport with proper hood. Moreover, it is to be ensured that the vehicle is in good condition.

(ii) Butchery at the supplier's premises must be clean, hygienic, and installed with air conditioner. The butchery should have Marble Flooring and Marble / Tiles fitted on the side walls (tiles fitting till six feet height, at least).

(iii) To inspect live animals, slaughter procedure and to ensure safe transportation of meat to the Base, a team of PAF representatives will visit butchery on daily basis.

(k) Local Contracts for Horses / Dogs Ration at PAF Bases.

(l) Detail specifications of all items / Evaluation Criteria and Tender form can also be provided through email.

Tender Forms

2. **Central Contracts.** Tender Forms for **Central Contracts** with complete specifications, special Terms & Conditions and other details of Dry Ration items can be collected from the Office of **SSO (Support & AD) at Headquarters Western Air Command, PAF Samungli Tel: 081-9502063 or Mobile No 03239460401** on submission of application for tender on letter head pad along with photocopies of NTN, GST, Professional Tax Certificate & attested CNIC. Completed tender forms are to be submitted at **1300 Hrs by 20 March, 2025.**

3. **Local Contracts.** Tender Forms for **Local Contracts**, with complete specifications, special terms & conditions and other details of fresh ration items can be collected from PAF Base, Samungli Catering Flight on submission of application for tender on letter head pad along with photocopies of NTN, GST, professional tax certificate & attested CNIC between 0800 Hrs to 1300 Hrs and soft copy can also be provided through email. **Technical Tender** will be opened at **1330Hrs** in the office of **O i/c Catering Flight / O i/c S&T Sqn** of PAF Base Samungli (as applicable) as per given schedule.


4. **Opening of Tender.** The Tender Forms are to be submitted as per **PPRA Rule 36 (b) single stage - two envelope procedure** {**Technical** (Without Price) and **Financial** (With Price)}. Separate envelope shall be marked as “**Technical Proposal**” and “**Financial Proposal**” in bold and clear letter to avoid confusion. After vetting of Technical bids, qualified bidders will be informed through Letters / Telephone about the venue, date and time for opening of financial proposal.

S No	Base	Date / Time for Collection of Tender Forms	Technical Proposal Opening Date / Time	Contact No
(a)	HQs WAC, PAF Samungli, (Quetta)	03 Mar to 20 March, 2025 (0800-1300 hrs)	20 Mar, 2025 (1330 hrs)	Tel: 081-9502063-61 Cell 03239460711-401
(b)	PAF Base Samungli (Quetta) including Shamsi Air Field	03 Mar to 19 March, 2025 (0800-1300 hrs)	19 Mar, 2025 (1330 hrs)	Tel: 081-9505223 Cell 0333-8879421

Note:-

- Any Firm / supplier whose contract has been terminated / Blacklisted by PAF / Defence /Govt Organization, due to poor performance / un-ethical practices will not be eligible for taking part in bidding process for contracts.
- The Contract will have to be signed by the Owner of the Firm / Mill.
- If any Firm / Contractor is not registered with PAF, then relevant documents / information for registration can also be collected from the above mentioned PAF offices.
- Any information, if found incomplete / false at any stage, will result in immediate rejection of the application for the Tender, on technical grounds.
- Mill Owners will be preferred in case of Sugar, Rice & Atta contracts.
- In case of Canola Cooking Oil Contracts, reputed Mills / manufacturer will be preferred.
- Rates of Vegetables and Fruits are to quoted as per Seasonal Chart / Seasonal Schedule of Fruits and Vegetables which may be collected from Catering Flights.
- No of issues of Mutton, Beef, Chicken, Eggs & Fish can be modified (increase / decrease) in light of Air Headquarters policies.
- Interested Contractors / Firms are to deposit a bank draft of Five Lac / 2% of total Tender value as Earnest Money in favour of **Public Fund Account at respective RACs Base.**
- Firm / supplier will submit (04 bags / Packets each of 1 kg of Dry items, 01 Ltr of Canola Cooking Oil and 01 kg of Full Cream Milk Powder and Tea) to **SSO (Support & AD) at Headquarters Western Air Command, PAF (Samungli) till 1300 hrs by 20 March, 2025.** HQ WAC will decide / facilitate / monitor Lab testing process from any renowned laboratory like PCSIR & INTERTECH. Lab testing fee will be deposited by Contractors in advance. **On the parallel, all tests of Dry Ration items will also be carried out through AFIN Lahore by HQ, WAC.**
- SSO (Support & AD) HQs WAC, OsC Support, Oi/c S&T Sqn, O i/c Logistics Squadron & O i/c Catering Flight of concerned Bases may ask for any further information and details if required.
- For further information & queries SSO (Support & AD), HQs NAC, O i/c S&T Squadron & O i/c Catering Flight may be contacted as per abovementioned numbers given in schedule.

SSO (Support & AD)
Headquarters Western Air Command, PAF
PAF Base Samungli (Quetta)
Phone 081-9502063 - 61, Cell 03239460711 - 401



PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

HEADQUARTERS NORTHERN AIR COMMAND

INVITATION OF TENDERS FOR SUPPLY OF RATION ITEMS FY 2025-26

1. Sealed tenders {Technical (Without Price) and Financial (With Price)} are invited from reputable, well-experienced, financially sound and Income Tax - registered Pakistani Firms / Contractors / Millers for supply of Dry / Fresh Ration items for **NAC Bases / FOBs / Hospitals / AD Sites** under Northern Air Command, PAF during the Financial Year 2025-26 (01 July, 2025 - 30 June, 2026). Dry ration would be concluded at HQ NAC, PAF (Peshawar); whereas Fresh Ration Contracts would be concluded at respective PAF Bases. Firms / Contractors which are not registered with PAF can also participate in tendering process and approach to concerned Base for collection of Tender / Registration documents.

Central Contracts at Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF Peshawar

(a) **Atta Group**

(i) Atta (Including collection of wheat from PASSCO / Other Godowns, Grinding, Packing & Supply (transportation) of Atta at under Command NAC Bases / FOBs / Hospitals / AD Sites.

(ii) Semolina (Suji) of good quality (iii) Vermicelli {(Seviyan) Branded}

(b) **Cooking Oil** Canola (Branded)

(c) **Full Cream Milk Powder:** Branded Full Cream Milk Powder (Locally manufactured) packed in Aluminium foil and Polythene bag (Nitrogen or a mixture of nitrogen and carbon dioxide layers) fortified with vitamins A & D contents. Bidders are to provide Halal Certification, OHSAS-18001 (Occupational Health and Safety) / ISO-14001 (Environmental Management System), Manufacturing License from PSQCA / Province, FSSC 22000 (Food Safety System Certification) / ISO-9001 (Quality Management Certification) / Hazard Critical Control Points (HACCP) Certified, Laboratory Analysis report of latest batch produced from PNAC - accredited Labs, Complete details of Milk Collection Centres, Chiller Vans which can maintain temperature between 0-4 degree centigrade, quantity of Fresh Milk collected through suppliers and **a certificate that the firm's own production plant is operational round-the-year.**

(d) **Rice Group**

(i) Rice Saila {Basmati (Grain length 8 mm or more)}

(ii) Rice Basmati {Super (Grain length 8 mm or more)}

(e) **Tea Group**

(i) Black Tea (Premium quality Tea Leaf Branded)

(ii) Green Tea (Branded)

(f) **Lentil Seeds Group**

(i) Daal Chana, Mong (Split), Masoor (Split), Mash (Split), Channa Kabuli (Channa white) & Red Beans (Lobia) shall be of one variety and of good cooking quality

(ii) Bengal Gram Flour (Besan) of good quality

(g) **Condiments Whole** {Red Chillies (whole), Turmeric (whole), Cumin Seeds (whole), Coriander Seeds (whole), Tamarind (with seeds) & Black Pepper (whole)}

(h) **Sugar** (Good quality)

(j) **Local Contracts at Respective PAF Bases / FOBs / AD Sites / Hospitals of Northern Air Command, PAF**

(i) Meat Group {Mutton, Beef & Beef Boneless for (Dogs)}

(ii) Meat on Hoof (For PAF Base Qadri)

(iii) Poultry Group (Chicken Dressed, Eggs & Fish)

(iv) Chicken Alive (For PAF Base Qadri)

(v) Misc Group {Onion, Potato, Milk Fresh, Squash (Branded), Ice MM, Salt iodized, Ginger (Fresh), Garlic (Fresh) and Fire wood}

(vi) Fruit Group 'Citrus / Non-citrus' (as per seasonal chart provided with guide lines)

(vii) Vegetable Group (as per seasonal chart provided with guide lines)

(viii) Liquid / Packaged Milk for Aero Tech Trainees of PAF Base Kohat

(ix) Hospital Comforts (For PAF Hospitals)

(k) Local Contracts for Horses / Dogs Ration at PAF Bases.

(l) PAF Base Qadri will conclude independent contracts for Fresh Ration and Tinned Foods group for High Altitude sites only.

(m) Criteria for Supply of Meat Items (Mutton, Beef, Chicken & Fish) for PAF Bases / FOBs / AD Sites / Hospitals of Northern Air Command: -

(i) Bidders are to provide certificate regarding availability of Serviceable (Running Condition) Airconditioner / Chiller fitted Meat transport with proper hood. Moreover, it is to be ensured that the vehicle is in good condition.

(ii) Butchery at the supplier's premises must be clean, hygienic, and installed with Serviceable (Running Condition) air conditioner. The butchery should have Marble Flooring and Marble / Tiles fitted on the side walls (tiles fitting till six feet height at least).

(iii) To inspect live animals, slaughter procedure and to ensure safe transportation of meat to the Base, a team of PAF representatives will visit butchery on daily basis.

(n) Detail specifications of all items / Evaluation Criteria and Tender form can also be provided through email.

Tender Forms

2. **Central Contracts.** Tender forms for **Central Contracts** with complete specifications, special Terms & Conditions and other details of Dry Ration items can be collected from the office of **SSO (Support & AD) at Headquarters Northern Air Command, 66- The Mall Road, Peshawar Cantt Tel: 091-9210777 (Ext: 2065)** on submission of application for tender on letter head pad along with photocopies of NTN, GST, professional tax certificate & attested CNIC. Completed tender forms are to be submitted at **1300 Hrs by 20 March, 2025.**

3. **Local Contracts.** Tender Forms for **Local Contracts**, with complete specifications, special terms & conditions and other details of fresh ration items can be collected from respective PAF Base Catering Flights on submission of application for tender on letter head pad along with photocopies of NTN, GST, professional tax certificate & attested CNIC between **0800 Hrs to 1300 Hrs** and soft copy can also be provided through email. Technical Tender will be opened at **1330 Hrs** in the office of **O i/c Catering Flight / O i/c S&T Sqn / O i/c Log Sqn (as applicable)** as per given schedule.

4. **Opening of Tender.** The Tender Forms are to be submitted as per **PPRA Rule-36 (b) single stage - two envelope** procedure {**Technical** (Without Price) and **Financial** (With Price)}. Separate envelope shall be marked as “**Technical Proposal**” and “**Financial Proposal**” in bold and clear letter to avoid confusion. After vetting of Technical bids, qualified bidders will be informed through Letters / Telephone about the venue, date and time for opening of financial proposal.

S No	Base	Date / Time for Collection of Tender Forms	Technical Proposal Opening Date / Time	Contact No
(a)	Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF (Peshawar)	03 Mar to 20 Mar, 2025 (0800-1300 hrs)	20 March, 2025 (1330hrs)	Tel: 091-9210777 Ext: 2061 / 2069 Cell 0323-9410401
(b)	PAF Base, Peshawar	03 Mar to 19 Mar, 2025 (0800-1300 hrs)	19 March, 2025 (1330hrs)	Tel: 091-9210777 Ext: 3843 / 3845, Cell 0306-5726446
	PAF Base, MM Alam (Mianwali)			Tel: 0459-232051 - 56 Ext: 5219 / 5221 Cell 03096235789
	PAF Base, Murid (Chakwal)			Tel: 0543-553994 Ext: 3775 Cell 0323-9412723
(c)	PAF Base Raisalpur	03 Mar to 18 Mar, 2025 (0800-1300 hrs)	18 March, 2025 (1330 hrs)	Tel: 0923-631391-97 EXT: 3843 / 3845 Cell 0316-9396400
	PAF Base, Kohat			Tel: 0922-9260092-97 Ext: 5219 / 5221 Cell 0301-6386204
	PAF Base, Minhas (Kamra) & Islamabad International Air Port			Tel: 0572-9316215 Ext: 3847 / 3849 Cell 0326-8013733
	PAF Base, Kallar Kahar			Tel: 0543-58830809 Ext: 3845 Cell 0323-9419721
	PAF Base Qadri (Skardu) & High Altitude sites			Tel: 05815923078 Ext: 3849 / 3860 Cell 0355-9455701-11

Note:-

- Any Firm / supplier whose contract has been terminated / Blacklisted by PAF / Defence/ Govt Organization, due to poor performance / un-ethical practices will not be eligible for taking part in bidding process for contracts.
- The Contract will have to be signed by the **Owner** of the Firm / Mill.
- If any Firm / Contractor is not registered with PAF, then relevant documents / information for registration can also be collected from the above mentioned PAF offices.
- Any information, if found incomplete / false at any stage, will result in immediate rejection of the application for the Tender, on technical grounds.
- Mill Owners will be preferred in case of Sugar, Rice & Atta contracts.
- In case of **Canola** Cooking Oil Contracts, reputed Mills / manufacturer will be preferred.
- Rates of Vegetables and Fruits are to quoted as per Seasonal Chart / Seasonal Schedule of Fruits and Vegetables which may be collected from Catering Flight.
- No of issues of Mutton, Beef, Chicken, Eggs & Fish can be modified (increase / decrease) in light of Air Headquarters policies.
- Interested Contractors / Firms are to deposit a bank draft of Five Lac / 2% of total Tender value as Earnest Money in favour of **Public Fund Account at respective RACs Base.**
- Firm / supplier will submit (04 bags / Packets each of 1/2 kg of Dry items, 01 Ltr of Canola Cooking Oil and 01 Kg of Full Cream Milk Powder and Tea) to **SSO (Support & AD) at Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF Peshawar till 1300 hrs by 20 March, 2025.** HQ NAC will decide / facilitate / monitor Lab testing process from any renowned laboratory like PCSIR & INTERTECH. Lab testing fee will be deposited by Contractors in advance. **On the parallel, all tests of Dry Ration items will also be carried out through AFIN Lahore by HQ, NAC.**
- SSO (Support & AD) HQs NAC, OsC Support, Admin Wing, Admin & Supp, O i/c S&T Sqn, O i/c Logistics Squadron & O i/c Catering Flight of concerned Bases may ask for any further information and details, if required.
- For further information & queries SSO (Support & AD), HQs NAC, O i/c S&T Squadron & O i/c Catering Flight may be contacted as per abovementioned numbers given in schedule.

SSO (Support & AD)
Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF
66-The Mall, Peshawar Cantt.
Phone 091-9210777 Ext - 2061 & 2069, Cell 0323-9410401

Pir Musavir visits Ghari Chandan Plantation

Suggests declaring Gharri Chandan as a safari park

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Forests, Environment, Wildlife, and Climate Change, Pir Musavir Khan, visited the Ghari Chandan Plantation in Peshawar yesterday. During his visit, he reviewed the plants planted under the Billion Tree Plantation Project. Chairman DDAC Peshawar, Sher Ali Afridi, Conservator forest, other

officers of forest department and local residents were also present at the occasion. While briefing the Special Assistant about the Ghari Chandan Plantation, it was shared that approximately 2,400 hectares of land had been afforested, contributing to a 7% increase in the province's forest area. During the visit, the Special Assistant also met with the landowners of Ghari Chandan, who shared their demands, con-

cerns, and issues.

Pir Musavir Khan informed the landowners that a project for nine solar-powered tube wells in the Ghari Chandan and surrounding areas had been included in the Annual Development Program. Speaking about the trees in Ghari Chandan, SACM said that 30% of the area had been planted with eucalyptus trees, and a survey was being conducted for their harvesting.

The revenue generated from this would be shared, with 80% going to the landowners. Additionally, Pir Musavir Khan proposed declaring Ghari Chandan as a safari park. This would not only ensure the protection of wildlife but also provide employment opportunities to local residents. Regarding the salaries of the Neguhban Force in Ghari Chandan, he assured that the salaries for January and February would be paid soon.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Forests, Environment, Wildlife, and Climate Change, Pir Musavir Khan being briefed about Ghari Chandan Plantation.

PPC Annual Sports Gala to begin After 10th Ramazan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As per tradition, the Peshawar Press Club is once again organizing a grand and vibrant Ramadan Sports Gala for its esteemed members during the holy month of Ramadan. This event, organized with the support of HBK, is set to begin in the second Ashra (ten days) of Ramadan. The event will feature thrilling competitions in badminton, carrom,

table tennis, ludo, and snooker among the club members after Iftar. Regarding the Ramadan Sports Gala, President of Peshawar Press Club, M. Riaz, Sports Committee Chairman, Irfan Musa Zai, and General Secretary, Tayyab Usman, have confirmed that all arrangements have been finalized. They further stated that the sports gala will officially commence in the second Ashra of Ramadan.

According to the organizers, male members of the press club will be allowed to participate in a maximum of two sports, while female members will have separate tournaments for ludo and carrom, which will be held during the daytime. They emphasized that the Peshawar Press Club is committed to the welfare and professional development of journalists and, along with these efforts, is

also organizing positive activities like the Ramadan Sports Gala. This mega sports event is expected to see the participation of more than 200 working journalists in various indoor games. Over the past few years, this tournament has evolved into a festival-like event, providing entertainment and a much-needed break for journalists working under extreme stress and pressure.

Emotions in diplomacy: A dangerous shift in global politics?

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE conduct of diplomatic meetings between heads of state is governed by established norms of foreign relations, ensuring that discussions adhere to a level of decorum that reflects both national dignity and international expectations. These protocols are not just formalities but essential components of diplomacy that help maintain mutual respect, even between adversaries. The recent meeting between the President of the United States Donald Trump and the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensk in the Oval Office of the White House, however, broke many of these conventional barriers. The language, tone, and emotions displayed during the conversation were extraordinary, raising the question: do heads of state really talk like this?

Diplomatic meetings between world leaders, whether in private or public, follow certain specific unwritten rules. These include maintaining a respectful tone, ensuring that grievances or concerns are expressed in a manner that does not undermine either party, and avoiding personal confrontations that could escalate tensions. The essence of diplomacy lies in controlled dialogue, where even the most serious matters are addressed with calculated words. Traditionally, even during high-stakes discussions between rival nations, leaders are expected to engage in a composed and restrained manner. Heated exchanges, emotional outbursts, or open expressions of frustration in front of the media are highly uncommon.

While it is true that heads of state sometimes engage in direct and blunt conversations, such moments are usually reserved for behind closed doors. The public display of strong emotions by the leaders of the United States and Ukraine during their recent meeting challenges the conventional wisdom of diplomatic interactions. In the past, there have been instances where leaders have used strong rhetoric, but these were often strategic rather than impulsive. For example, Soviet and American leaders during the Cold War exchanged harsh words, yet they did so within the framework of controlled diplomacy, ensuring that no side was publicly humiliated in a way that could escalate tensions.

Protocol dictates that such meetings are carefully choreographed. Before any head of state visits another country, a detailed agenda is set, and diplomats ensure that both parties understand the tone and structure of the conversation. Official statements, body language, and gestures are all considered in advance. Even the seating arrangements, the order in which leaders speak, and the level of media access are decided to maintain decorum. When deviations from these protocols occur, they are often the result of deliberate political strategy rather than spontaneous emotions.

However, there have been instances in history where heads of state deviated from traditional diplomatic conduct. One of the most notable examples is the interaction between former U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Their exchanges, at times, involved direct insults and threats, something rarely seen in modern diplomacy. However, despite their verbal clashes, their eventual meetings followed diplomatic protocols. Similarly, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson often displayed a casual and unconventional approach in international forums, sometimes using humor or blunt remarks that were outside the usual diplomatic tone, but even then, he adhered to the basic tenets of statecraft.

In contrast, the conversation between the American and Ukrainian presidents in the Oval Office appeared to break multiple diplomatic norms. The openness of their emotions, the lack of restraint in their words, and the visible display of frustration were unusual. This raises concerns about whether personal sentiments are overtaking strategic considerations in global diplomacy. Leaders are not expected to be emotionless, but their words carry weight beyond personal feelings. Every statement made in such high-level meetings can impact international relations, shape alliances, and even influence conflicts.

The question that arises from this event is whether such behavior sets a new precedent or is merely an exception. If world leaders begin to conduct diplomacy based on emotions rather than calculated words, it could have unpredictable consequences. The balance of power, especially in conflicts where multiple nations are involved, depends on controlled and strategic communication. Public displays of emotions, particularly between allies in a sensitive conflict like the Ukraine-Russia war, can create confusion and signal instability in decision-making.

Diplomacy has survived for centuries because it operates on established principles, regardless of personal relationships between leaders. Even during moments of extreme crisis, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, U.S. President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev maintained careful diplomatic channels to avoid war. Their messages, though firm, were carefully worded to prevent escalation. This highlights the importance of measured language in high-stakes international discussions.

It remains to be seen whether the recent conversation between the American and Ukrainian presidents was an isolated incident or a sign of shifting norms in global diplomacy. While emotional appeals can have political benefits, they should not come at the cost of diplomatic stability. The world watches closely when major leaders speak, and every word they utter carries implications far beyond the room they are in. The rules of diplomacy exist for a reason—to ensure that even in moments of tension, dialogue remains a tool for resolution rather than division.

Nurses playing critical role in healthcare delivery system

PESHAWAR (APP): As population grows unbridled, many sectors including health often face dearth of professionals especially well-qualified and experienced nurses although it is the most respected profession in healthcare globally. Not only in Pakistan but globally, many countries always remain in need of qualified nurses that also provides opportunities to professionals in developing countries to proceed abroad and earn respectable living. Pakistan is also not an exception where ever growing demand of professional nurses, who play a critical role in patients care, disease prevention and healthcare, is seldom met. Since, we also failed to produce well-qualified, we also miss our due share in global nursing market.

“The demand for qualified nurses is ascending globally due to factors like population growth, increased chronic diseases and rapid expansion of healthcare services,” said Farid Khan, a male nurse in Peshawar. “Spread of various diseases including recent COVID-19 pandemic has further enhanced the demand of nursing professionals.” In many countries including developed and progressing nations, there is a significant shortage of nursing professionals due to increased healthcare demands, heavy workloads, migration of healthcare professionals, pandemics, natural disasters and increasing population.

nursing leadership and capacity building course in collaboration with SAME RPS UK, and health department.” According to rough estimates, in Pakistani hospitals, the current nurse-patient ratio is 1:40 while the Pakistan Nursing Council recommends a nurse-patient ratio of 3:10. Deficiency in actual number of nurses is also aggravated by seats remaining vacant due to shortage of skilled nurses that also compels health institutions to compromise on quality of nursing care.

Shortage in nursing strength locally is also due to an urge in professionals to move overseas particularly the Gulf countries for a better living that apprehend that even after producing quality nurses, the shortage would continue to persist. This reality, therefore, demands from the governments and the policy makers to evolve a strategy for not only producing well-qualified nurses but also ensuring for them better employment opportunities locally.

The situation is even worst in private sector particularly in small hospitals that hire less trained or self-trained staff on meager salary and poor employment terms and conditions on the pretext of shortage of qualified nurses. Larger private health setups often resort to make shift arrangements by engaging nurses employed in the public hospital for second shift. Such nurses are required to work for up

to 16 hours a day affecting quality of patient care.

“The demand of nursing is increasing with every passing day that can only be addressed by adopting multi-faceted approach including policy changes, advance education and improved working conditions,” opined Dr. Liaqat Ali, a medical professional. He suggested that increasing nursing education opportunities, establishment of nursing schools and programs, job security, better wages, providing scholarships and financial aid to encourage young nurses can help improve working of this sector.

“Investing in nursing education and improving working conditions would help ensuring a sustainable and well-equipped nursing workforce to meet our demand,” he said. “Nurses are backbone of healthcare systems and we must focus on their training, ensure them due status and job security to improve patient care.” Cognizant of the situation, Director General KP Health Services, Dr. Muhammad Saleem said, the department has introduced some new courses to equip nurses with modern leadership and professional skills.

“This would help KP nurses to seek opportunities in field of health allied sciences worldwide,” Dr Saleem said. “As doctors and nurses lead from the front by providing much needed assistance to victims of different diseases and calamities.”

International Wheelchair Day Ceremony held at PCP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Every year, on March 1st, the world observes International Wheelchair Day to spotlight the needs, rights, and challenges faced by wheelchair users across the globe. This significant day was first introduced in 2012 by Dr. Geoff Adams-Spink, a British engineer and disability rights activist who himself was a wheelchair user. In Pakistan, although this occasion is formally acknowledged, its observance often falls short of fulfilling its core objectives. However, the Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP) stands out as the only national institution that not only take tangible steps for the physical, psychological rehabilitation and welfare of persons with disabilities (PwDs) but also commemorate this day with a sense of renewed commitment each year.

This year, the PCP once again organized a special event that saw an overwhelming turnout of attendees from various walks of life, including graduates from different far-flung regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other parts of the country, as well as international participants. Among them, Abdul Elah from Saudi Arabia and Khalil Jan from Afghanistan were particularly prominent. At the Paraplegic Center Peshawar, individuals who complete their rehabilitation journey are honored with the title of “graduates,” symbolizing their resilience and transition towards self-sufficiency. To further empower them, they are provided with customized wheelchairs and assistive devices free of cost, ensuring their full independence and mobility.

The event was graced by Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, as the chief guest, while the session

was presided over by the CEO of the Paraplegic Center, Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas. A particularly moving moment unfolded when Abdul Elah, the young Saudi graduate, extended a heartfelt welcome to the chief guest by greeting him with a loud salaam and presenting him with a bouquet. The audience resonated with applause, not only as a tribute to Abdul Elah's affection for Barrister Saif but also as a reflection of the profound and time-honored friendship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

During his address, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, whose majestic approach to politics and governance is uniquely unconventional, underscored a fundamental social truth: a wheelchair is not a symbol of disability but a testament to independence. He emphasized the need for a societal paradigm shift—one where wheelchair users are not perceived through the lens of disability but rather as dignified and equal members of society. He further stressed the urgent need for Pakistan to develop its own wheelchair manufacturing capabilities, tailoring production to the specific anatomical and functional needs of local users. Expressing satisfaction, he commended the PCP for suc-

cessfully establishing a wheelchair manufacturing unit despite limited resources. This initiative, he noted, is not only producing high-quality customized wheelchairs that align with international standards but is also paving the way for self-reliance in assistive technology. Highlighting the economic aspect, he pointed out that reducing dependency on imported wheelchairs would conserve valuable foreign exchange and bolster local industry.

Acknowledging the PCP's challenges, he assured the audience that he would personally bring these concerns to the attention of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, a known philanthropist, who is expected to visit the center soon and take decisive steps to address them. Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, often referred to as the second Abdus Sattar Edhi for his relentless service to humanity, delved into the broader weaknesses of Pakistan's healthcare system. He lamented that since the country's inception, medical science and modern medicine have overwhelmingly prioritized curative treatment, while the other four foundational pillars of healthcare have been largely neglected.



ASME EFX held at UET



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) UET Peshawar Chapter hosted ASME EFX UET Peshawar 2025 on February 22-23 at University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar. The two-day event featured competitions, seminars, panel discussions and a vibrant Cultural Night, attracting participants from leading universities across Pakistan including NUST, NDU, University of Peshawar, IIUI, and many others.

The event was sponsored by the Directorate of Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Cheezious Peshawar, Youth Affairs of Irrigation Department, FES and Adam Khan Films. The

event was commenced with an opening ceremony led by Dr. Muhammad Alam Zaib Khan, Advisor ASME and Prof. Dr. Hamid Ullah, Chairman, Department of Mechanical Engineering who delivered inspiring opening remarks. Various competitions including IAM3D, Students Design Competition, Oral Competition Elevator Pitch, British Parliamentary Debate and E-gaming were held during the event.

A seminar on "Engineering & AI" was organized by the CISNR UET Peshawar. A panel discussion on women's entrepreneurial journeys was also organized Code of Pakistan and Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The Cultural Night added a festive touch

showcasing Pakistan's rich heritage. Prof. Qaisar Ali, Vice Chancellor, UET Peshawar visited the event. The Vice Chancellor appreciated the students' dedication and encouraged their efforts.

The event concluded with a closing ceremony attended by Prof. Dr. Hamid Ullah as Chief Guest, Engr. Adnan Rasheed, Dr. Aamir Saeed, Dr. Tufail Habib, Engr. Usman Khan, Dr. Arshad, Prof. Dr. Gul Muhammad Khan, Dr. Taimur Ali Shams, Dr. Muhammad Ayaz Ahmad, Miss Nimra Saddiqi and Engr. Riaz Hussain and others.

At the end, shields and certificates were awarded to judges, speakers, sponsors, organizers and winners of various competitions.

Painting, calligraphy, competition held

PESHAWAR (APP): Former Vice Chancellor of Benazir Bhutto Women University and Member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission, Professor Dr. Razia Sultana, has said that Pak-China friendship is strengthening with every passing moment. A clear reflection of this bond is the growing interest of the younger generation, especially students, in various aspects of life, including literature, culture, and language, of the brotherly neighboring country, China.

She expressed these views while addressing the prize distribution ceremony of the Inter-School Chinese Painting, Calligraphy, and Speech Competition organized at the China Window, the Chinese Cultural Center here in collaboration with Consul Treat Peshawar Model Schools.



In brief

11 hostages rescued Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: As a result of continuous action and targeted pressure operation against crime professionals on the strict orders of Larkana DIG Police Range Larkana Nasir Aftab Pathan, 11 hostages, including a young child, Kamoro, child Insaf Oad, Deedar Malik, Huzoor Bakhsh, Nizam Khan, Imam Bakhsh, Hafeez Malik, Sohail Sheikh, Ramzan, Hazaro and Jumu Chachadar were safely recovered from the clutches of bandits. It should be noted that on January 27, 2025, the father and son of Odd Bradi were kidnapped from the area 10 miles of Faizo last month, while the bandits were cutting wood from the rough area of ??the dam, several laborers were abducted by the bandits.

12 sale points set up

B A H A W A L P U R (APP): On the recommendation of provincial government, 12 sale points have been set up in different areas of the district where sugar will be sold out at Rs 130 per kilogram. Official sources said that the Punjab government had urged sugar mills to provide sugar at sale points at special discount rate during the holy month of Ramadan. "On the recommendations of provincial government and the district management, a local sugar mill of Bahawalpur has set up 12 sale points where sugar will be sold at special discount rate of Rs 130 per kilogram," they said. The sugar sale points have been set up in areas including Model Bazaar, Khairpur Tamewali, Ghalla Mandi, Police Khidmat Markaz, Hasilpur Pur, Filter Point, Purana Bazaar, Old Sabzi Mandi, Kehror Pakka, Municipal Committee, Govt Model School, and others localities where people can buy sugar at discount rate daily from 8 am to 5 pm.

Police conduct Flag March

SUKKUR (APP): The Sukkur Police, led by Superintendent of Police (SSP) Azhar Khan Mughal, conducted a flag march on Sunday to ensure peace and tranquility in the city during the holy month of Ramzan. The march began at the World Globe and concluded at the SSP office, passing through various areas of Sukkur city. Comprehensive security arrangements have been put in place, with enhanced security measures at all entry and exit points. The Madadgar 15 squad is patrolling different areas, while senior police officers have been directed to remain vigilant and monitor duty points from a security perspective. The key security measures included Crackdown on Traffic Violations. A crackdown is underway against vehicles with tinted glasses, pillion riding, and those without number plates. Madadgar-15 squad is patrolling various areas to maintain law and order and the security has been beefed up at all entry and exit points. SSP Sukkur emphasized that the police are taking all necessary steps to maintain peace and are always alert to tackle any untoward incidents. He appealed to citizens to cooperate with the police during checks and report any suspicious activities through Madadgar-15.

Commissioner directs action against absent teaches

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda", paid a detailed visit to the Tribal District Orakzai where he made surprise visits to various schools and hospitals.

Commissioner Kohat during his surprise inspection of the Government High School and Khel and Government High School Atman Khel in Lower

Orakzai Sub Division, both the high schools were found to be closed and the teachers were also found to be absent, on which the Commissioner Kohat expressed his anger and ordered the authorities concerned to take stern action against the absent staff.

Later, Commissioner Kohat also visited the District Headquarters Hospital Mishti Mela where he inspected the emergency, medicine store, laboratory, radiology unit and various wards. He also inquired into the health of

the patients and apprised himself about the services and medical facilities provided by the hospital administration.

The patients and their caregivers expressed their satisfaction on the health facilities being provided as well as the medical staff.

Commissioner Kohat Division appreciated the efforts of the hospital management and directed the Staff concerned to provide better facilities to the people in the same way and try to further improve the hospital.

DC Kohat visits Ramazan Sasta Bazar

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali has under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda", visited the Ramadan Sasta Bazaar today. Chief Officer Muhammad Waqas and other staff of TMA were also present on this occasion. He reviewed the facilities being provided to the people, availability of daily use items and prices of the food items.

Deputy Commissioner,

on this occasion also inspected the official price list at the Price Monitoring Desk and directed the authorities concerned to implement it strictly. He further directed to ensure the availability of all food items to the people at official rates without interruption.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat said that all possible steps are being taken to provide cheap and quality goods to the people during the month of Ramadan and any kind of hoarding or profiteering will not be tolerated. He issued strict

directions to the staff posted at the Price Monitoring Desk to ensure the implementation of the official price list and not allow any shopkeeper to charge more than the fixed prices. He said that the administration will continuously monitor the markets to relieve the public from the burden of inflation and provide them with maximum relief during the holy month of Ramadan.

The efforts of the DC Kohat and the district administration were widely appreciated by the people.

Hoarding, profiteering continue unchecked

MULTAN (INP): As the holy month of Ramadan begins, the prices of essential commodities have skyrocketed across major cities, leaving citizens struggling to afford basic food items.

Despite the government's promises to curb inflation, profiteers and hoarders continue to exploit the situation, causing an artificial shortage and price manipulation. How Punjab's price control magistrates failed to deliver on first Ramadan.

According to media reports, Lahore's model bazaars, set up to provide relief to consumers, have also failed to meet expectations, with buyers complaining about both the quality and high prices of food items. Meanwhile, Islamabad residents report a drastic increase in fruit prices compared to just three days ago, further exacerbating concerns about affordability.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has

ordered an immediate crackdown on hoarders and profiteers, directing all commissioners and deputy commissioners to enforce strict price monitoring. She has emphasized the need for transparent price display, real-time tracking of demand and supply, and legal action against those violating price controls.

Despite these directives, traders and vendors continue to defy official price lists, citing supply chain issues and rising wholesale costs. Consumers lament that while global markets offer Ramadan discounts, local retailers are driving prices higher, making it nearly impossible for low-income families to observe the holy month without financial strain.

With inflation already at record highs, the government's failure to regulate essential commodity prices raises serious concerns about its ability to provide relief during this critical period. If immediate action is not taken, the unchecked profiteering could further burden struggling households.

AJK PM criticizes irrational thinking mindsets



M U Z A F F A R A B A D (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has said that governance is a serious business that cannot be run merely on someone's wishes but in accordance with the law and constitution.

The PM said this while addressing a function after administering oath to newly elected Vice Chairman of the Press Foundation, Sardar Zulfiqar Ali here today. Speaking on the occasion, the PM, while terming self-accountability as key to develop a sense of self integrity and responsibility, said, "We all have to undergo self-accountability."

Referring to a specific

mindset that fails to think rationally, the PM said, "How can I treat those intellectually blind and immature minds who are unable to see the difference between the civil liberties of Azad Kashmir and Occupied Kashmir?"

Highlighting the Pakistan army's significant contribution in defending the territorial sovereignty of the State, he said that those who criticize the presence of the Pak army in the liberated territory must realize the fact that there would be no one to protect or defend them from enemy if armed forces of Pakistan leave the territory.

Stressing on the need to practice fair and objective journalism, the PM said,

"There is a difference between a professional and an accidental journalist".

He said that professional journalists should come forward and give their valuable input and suggestions to the government in order to promote truth and counter falsehood and lies.

Terming journalism as a sacred profession, the PM said that the government would provide all possible resources for the welfare of journalists.

He said that journalists have every right to write on the issue of public interest. He, however, maintained that no one should take undue advantage of the freedom. "If I and my cabinet members are accountable, journalists and writers are no longer exempted from accountability", the PM remarked.

He said the government would not allow anyone whatsoever to misuse public money. He said that every citizen has the right to complain wherever he or she sees a mistake, negligence or corruption.

On the occasion the PM announced an increase in the annual grant for the Press Foundation from Rs 5 million to Rs 10 million.



DISTRICT ORAKZAI: Commissioner Kohat Division Motasim Billah Shah during his visit to District Headquarters Hospital Mishti Meal.

PTI graph decreased in KP: Muqam

SWAT (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON Engr Amir Muqam here Sunday said that the popularity graph of Pakistan Tahrir e Insaf (APP) has decreased in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where its Govt has failed to resolve masses' problems despite its 11 years rule.

Addressing a big public gathering at Islamabad in Swat district, Engr Amir Muqam said that PTI has deceived people in the name of so called change and failed to deliver on all fronts in KP.

He said that terrorism incidents have increased in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as evident of the Haqqania mosque blast at Akora Khattak Nowshera while PTI leadership was concentrating to get relief for their founder who was convicted in AlQadar trust mega corruption scam.

He said that opposition parties has no solid agenda for people welfare and its negative designs would bound to fail.

Engr Amir Muqam said it would have been better if the opposition parties' grand alliance voiced against terrorism, illiteracy, poverty and unemployment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Muqam said that PTI leaders were known for repeating hallow slogans in order to hide poor governance and corruption in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

On the other side, he said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was working tirelessly to take the country out of existing challenges.

Engr Amir Muqam said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has launched Rs20 billion Ramadan relief Package for poor and underprivileged families of Pakistan including KP.

He said the economy that was put in the verge of economic collapse by the PTI Government, has been stabilized by the PMLN Govt after taking tough decisions, and that investment started coming back to the country after a long time.

The country's exports and revenue has been significantly increased and price hike as well as current accounts deficit reduced manifolds due to Shahbaz Sharif's Govt effective economic and fiscal policies. He said that overseas Pakistanis have rejected the call of PTI leader and has sent record remittances.

Engr Amir Muqam that opposition parties through so called grand alliance were trying to halt economic progress and development but would fail in its negative objectives.

Engr Amir Muqam said that poor governance in KP has increased problems of common man where people were left in the mercy of hoarders and price hikers.

The Federal Minister said that development projected halted by PTI in Swat were restarted to provide relief to masses.

He said that PMLN Govt policies revolves around masses and Pakistan.

Earlier, Engr Amir Muqam inaugurated NADRA center that would benefit thousands of people. He also announced several uplift projects for Swat.

The people raised full throated slogans in favour of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, PMLN President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Engr Amir Muqam.

Hoteliers protest admin raids on hotels, restaurants

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Malakand Division Hotels Association has strongly protested against frequent raids, harassment, and heavy fines imposed by the district administration, terming them obstacles to economic progress and tourism development. The association emphasized that the hotel industry provides employment to thousands and that the deteriorating condition of roads in Malakand Division is adversely affecting tourism. They urged authorities to prioritize road construction and maintenance to promote the sector.

Addressing a convention of hoteliers and traders at Timergara here on Sunday, Haji Zahid Khan, President of the Malakand Division Hotels and Restaurant Association, along with Haji Anwaruddin, President of the Timergara Trade Union, and Abdul Rahman Khan, President of the Timergara Hotels Association, raised concerns over the alleged misuse of power by authorities.

The association other office bearers, including vice president Hayat Khan, general secretary Subhanullah AkhundKhel,

and Ishaq Khan, were also present.

Haji Zahid Khan stated that multiple departments, including the Halal Food Authority, Consumer Court, Labour Court, Food Department, Health Department, Civil Defence, and the district administration, conducted unnecessary and unlawful raids on hotels.

He pointed out that according to Peshawar High Court ruling, only the Halal Food Authority has the jurisdiction to inspect hotels for cleanliness and hygiene, while other departments are not authorized to impose fines or conduct inspections.

"If the harassment of hotel and restaurant owners continues, we will resist such actions and seek legal recourse," he warned, adding that Malakand Division is a tax-free zone, exempt from the Customs Act, and any attempt to introduce taxes in the region would be strongly opposed.

The association urged the government to improve the poor road conditions in parts of Malakand division, emphasizing that better infrastructure was crucial for the growth of tourism and hotel industry.

PROGRESS REPORT: According to the monthly

report issued by the Rescue 1122 Lower Dir, emergency services were provided in 465 incidents last month, assisting accident victims and patients.

A total of 41 road accidents were recorded, along with 167 medical emergencies and 26 fire incidents during the last month.

Under the ambulance referral service, trained Rescue 1122 staff transported 204 critically ill patients referred by doctors to hospitals within and outside the district for specialized treatment.

The Rescue 1122 control room received 4,123 calls in February; however, a significant number of these were unnecessary or fake calls, diverting resources from genuine emergencies.

Meanwhile four persons were injured when a car met with an accident at Garrah, in the jurisdiction of Munda police station here on Sunday.

The Rescue 1122's medical team reached the scene and provided first aid before shifting the injured to Timergara Hospital for further treatment.

The injured were identified as Sajjad (25), Ameer (18), Waqas (20), and Saeed Yaseen (40), all residents of Kambat, Samarbagh.

Promotion of cultural heritage priorit: Bugti

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti on Sunday said that the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage is among the top priorities of the government.

Congratulating Baloch nation on celebration of Baloch Culture Day in his message, the Chief

Minister said that Baloch Culture is a manifestation of our cultural identity saying that the culture of Balochistan is a symbol of traditions, hospitality and bravery.

"Connecting the younger generation with our culture and traditions is the need of the hour", he said adding that the civi-

lization and culture of Balochistan gives a message of peace and love to the world.

He said that the demonstration of unity and solidarity of all tribes on Baloch Culture Day is welcome, the Balochistan government is taking all possible steps to promote cultural activities.

Sahulat bazaar attracts buyers on first Ramadan

MULTAN (APP): On the first day of the holy month, an extraordinary rush was observed at the Sahulat Ramadan bazaar, where essential food items are being offered at subsidized rates.

Special counters for discounted sugar and flour were fully operational to provide relief to the public.

Commissioner Amir Kareem Khan visited the Sahulat bazaar to inspect the quality of food items and interacted with citizens. People expressed satisfaction over the availability of affordable essential goods compared to regular market prices.

To further facilitate the public, Commissioner Amir Kareem Khan directed the authorities to increase the number of service counters and double the supply of essential commodities.

He highlighted that the Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has introduced a historic relief package for Ramadan, and a mega crackdown is underway to curb inflation during the holy month.

He condemned the artificial price hikes during Ramadan, stating that strict action would be taken against hoarders and profiteers.

He urged the business community to refrain from stockpiling and overpricing essential goods. The district administration has been tasked with ensuring strict compliance with official price lists.

The commissioner assured that he would personally inspect affordable markets across the division.

He also appreciated the local administration for effective arrangements, including parking, washrooms, and a complaints cell at the Sahulat Bazaar.

Additional Deputy Commissioners Muhammad Abu Bakar and Muhammad Saif, along with Assistant Commissioner City Abdul Sami, briefed the commissioner on the facilities. Earlier, Commissioner Amir Kareem Khan had also received a detailed briefing from the deputy commissioners regarding the Ramadan relief package and Sahulat Bazaars.





Starmer calls on Europe to step up to secure Ukraine peace

LONDON (Reuters): British Prime Minister Keir Starmer urged European leaders on Sunday to step up their defence efforts to not only help secure peace in Ukraine but stability across the continent at a summit staged as a show of support for President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Just two days after Zelenskyy clashed with U.S. President Donald Trump and cut his Washington visit short, the Ukrainian leader was welcomed in London by world leaders, who hugged him in turn, and pledged their backing.

Starmer said Europe needed to meet a once-in-a-generation challenge.

"Getting a good outcome for Ukraine is not just a matter of right and wrong, it is vital for the security of every nation here and many others, too," Starmer said at the beginning of the meeting flanked by Zelenskyy and French President Emmanuel Macron.

"Today's meeting is to unite to discuss how to deliver a just and enduring peace together and to make sure Ukraine can defend and protect against any

future Russian attack."

Trying to revive hope for peace in Ukraine, Starmer said urgent talks with Trump, Zelenskyy and Macron over the weekend had cemented the idea that a "coalition of the willing" in Europe would need to move quickly to come up with a peace plan to be presented to the United States.

Lacking the weaponry and depth of ammunition stocks of the U.S., Starmer and Macron are trying to convince Trump that Europe can increase military spending and defend itself, but that Russia will only adhere to a peace deal that comes with the backing of the United States.

Talks with the U.S. have centred on Washington providing a so-called backstop for a European peacekeeping role, possibly in the form of air cover, intelligence and surveillance and a greater as yet unspecified threat if Russian President Vladimir Putin again sought to take more territory.

But crucial to getting any agreement from Trump is for European nations to increase defence spending and signal they would take

part in any peacekeeping role - something Starmer acknowledged was difficult to get unanimity on.

"The UK and France are the most advanced on the thinking of this and that is why President Macron and I are working on this plan, which we will then discuss with the U.S.," he said, adding he did not think Zelenskyy had done anything wrong on Friday.

"I do think we've got to probably get to a coalition of the willing now and move this forward."

Trump has upended U.S. policy on the three-year-old war since he returned to the White House in January, casting doubt on its military and political support for Ukraine - and Europe - and ending the isolation of Moscow.

Starmer described watching the spat between Zelenskyy and Trump in the Oval Office as uncomfortable viewing, but was keen to push the conversation forward by offering himself as a go-between for Europe and the United States.

In contrast, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov praised Trump's "common sense" approach

and accused European countries of seeking to prolong the conflict by propping up Zelenskyy "with their bayonets in the form of peacekeeping units".

In a sign of the still-fractious relations between Washington and Kyiv, White House national security adviser Mike Waltz told CNN on Sunday that the U.S. needs a Ukrainian leader who is willing to secure a lasting peace with Russia, but that it is not clear Zelenskyy is prepared to do so.

Starmer will ask leaders on Sunday what more they can provide in aid. After he announced an increase in Britain's defence budget, he will commit to providing further capacity, training and support to Kyiv.

European leaders reacted to the extraordinary bust-up in the White House by expressing support for Ukraine, and some leaders - such as NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte - will try to encourage Zelenskyy to return to talks with Trump.

Zelenskyy's row with Trump on Friday ended a week when Europe had appeared to be in a better



position in its drive to encourage Trump to continue to offer support to Ukraine after cordial visits to Washington by Macron and Starmer.

Both had pressed the U.S. leader to offer "a back-stop" to a potential European peacekeeping

force in the event of a deal between Kyiv and Moscow. While they had failed to secure a promise from Trump, they were relieved that he had not rejected the idea.

But the rest of Europe is a long way from falling in behind the French and

British leaders' plans to safeguard a peace deal and Starmer, Macron and Rutte will hope Sunday's summit will go some way to rallying other nations to make firm commitments.

European leaders are also expected again to press for peace talks to include

Ukraine, to strengthen Kyiv's position and to secure the necessary security guarantees to ensure a long-lasting peace and to deter any future Russian attack.

For now, most leaders will want to take down the temperature.

Pope gets visit from Vatican secretary of state



ROME (AP): A stable Pope Francis had a visit Sunday from the Vatican secretary of state as he continued his recovery from double pneumonia, but again skipped his weekly noon blessing to avoid even a brief public appearance from the hospital.

Instead, the Vatican distributed a message from the pope in which he thanked his doctors for their care and well-wishers for their prayers, and prayed again for peace in Ukraine and elsewhere.

"From here, war appears even more absurd," Francis said in the message, which he drafted in recent days from the Gemelli hospital, the Vatican said. Francis said he was living his hospitalization as an experience of profound solidarity with people who are sick and suffering everywhere.

"I feel in my heart the 'blessing' that is hidden within frailty, because it is precisely in these moments that we learn even more to trust in the Lord," Francis said in the text. "At the same time, I thank God for giving me the opportunity to share in body and spirit the condition of so many sick and suffering people."

It marked the third weekend in a row that Francis has canceled the Sunday appointment delivering the Angelus prayer in person. He could have done so from his 10th floor

hospital suite at the Gemelli hospital if he were well enough.

But many signs indicated he was improving, especially after a respiratory crisis on Friday afternoon that resulted in him inhaling vomit during a coughing fit and raising the possibility of new infection.

"The night was quiet, the pope is still resting," the Vatican said in its Sunday update. Francis was up, read the Sunday papers and had coffee and breakfast while continuing with his therapy.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin and his chief of staff, Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, also called on the pope Sunday morning, their second visit since Francis' Feb. 14 hospitalization, according to the Vatican spokesman, Matteo Bruni. There were no details of what was discussed, but the mere visit suggested Francis' condition was stabilizing.

Doctors on Saturday reported that Francis was in stable condition, with no mention of him being critical, and managed to take "long periods" of time off the noninvasive mechanical ventilation he needed to recover after Friday's respiratory crisis.

The 88-year-old pope had a "good response" in his gas exchange levels even while off the ventilator mask Saturday and only using high-flow supplemental oxy-

gen, the Vatican said.

He had no fever or signs of elevated white blood cells, which would signal his body was fighting a new infection.

The fact that Francis was able to use just high-flow oxygen for long periods, without any significant effect on the levels of oxygen in his blood, was a sign his respiratory function was improving.

Doctors were cautious however and kept his prognosis as guarded, meaning he wasn't out of danger. He was eating and drinking and continued his respiratory physiotherapy, and spent 20 minutes in his private chapel round the hall on Saturday, the Vatican said.

The pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has lung disease and was admitted to Gemelli on Feb. 14 after a bout of bronchitis worsened and turned into a complex pneumonia in both lungs.

Francis' hospitalization has come as the Vatican is marking its Holy Year, drawing pilgrims to Rome from all over. Many have added a pilgrimage destination to their itineraries so they can pray for Francis at the Gemelli hospital, which is around a 20-minute drive from the Vatican, longer in rush hour or on public transport.

The Rev. Riccardo Fumagalli had accompanied a group of young people from Milan to Rome for the Jubilee and would have attended Francis' Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square on Sunday if he had delivered it as usual. Instead, they went to Gemelli.

"It seemed good to us to come here to express our closeness, especially of these teenagers, to be close to the Holy Father to pray for him, to pray for this moment of illness," he said. Cancer patient Antonino Cacace was also arriving Sunday at Gemelli from Milan for his own treatment, saying he has to undergo surgery in the coming days and was counting on Francis' prayers.

"I am glad the pope is giving me help," he said. "I am on the ninth (floor) and he is on the 10th (floor). I hope to meet him and see him," he said.

Egypt rejects attempts to form parallel Sudanese government

CAIRO (AFP): Egypt rejected on Sunday attempts aimed at establishing a rival government in Sudan, warning that such moves jeopardized the "unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity" of the war-torn country.

Sudan has been locked in a war between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for nearly two years, plunging the country into what the United Nations describes as one of the worst humanitarian disasters in recent memory.

A week ago, the RSF and its allies signed a charter in Kenya declaring the formation of a "government of peace and unity" in areas under their control.

"Egypt expresses its rejection of any attempts that threaten the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of brotherly Sudan, including the pursuit of forming a parallel Sudanese government," a statement from Cairo's foreign ministry said Sunday.

It added that such actions "complicate the situation in Sudan, hinder

ongoing efforts to unify political visions and exacerbate the humanitarian crisis." Egypt also called on "all Sudanese forces to prioritize the country's supreme national interest and to engage positively in launching a comprehensive political (peace) process without exclusion or external interference."

Last week, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty voiced the same stance in a press conference alongside his Sudanese counterpart Ali Youssef.

"Sudan's territorial integrity is a red line for

Egypt," he said, adding that his country "rejects any calls to establish alternative structures outside the current framework."

The paramilitaries' move to form a rival government has drawn sharp criticism, including from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who warned it would "further deepen Sudan's fragmentation."

Saudi Arabia, which previously mediated ceasefire talks between the warring sides, also rejected the RSF's move.

In a statement carried by the official Saudi Press

Agency on Friday, Riyadh's foreign ministry warned against "any step or illegal measure taken outside the framework of official institutions."

Kuwait echoed that position on Friday, saying it rejected "any unlawful actions taken outside the framework of legitimate state institutions" in Sudan, calling them "a threat to its territorial unity." At a UN Human Rights Council dialogue on Friday, Saudi Arabia's Gulf neighbor Qatar also expressed its support for "Sudan's unity and territorial integrity."

Iran lawmakers sack minister over economic woes

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran's parliament sacked the country's finance minister on Sunday after impeaching him over soaring inflation and a plunging currency, state television reported.

Economy and Finance Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati lost a vote of confidence, with 182 of 273 parliamentarians present backing his removal.

On the black market on Sunday, the Iranian rial was trading at more than 920,000 to the US dollar, compared with less than 600,000 in mid-2024.

Earlier, President Masoud Pezeshkian defended Hemmati, a former central bank governor, telling lawmakers: "We are in a full-scale (economic) war with the enemy... we must take a war formation." "The economic problems of today's society are not related to one person and we cannot blame it all on one person."

Lawmakers took turns angrily censuring

Hemmati, blaming him for Iran's economic woes.

"People cannot tolerate the new wave of inflation; the rise in the price of foreign currency and other goods must be controlled," said one parliamentarian, Ruhollah Motefakker-Azad.

"People cannot afford to buy medicine and medical equipment," said another, Fatemeh Mohammadbeigi.

Pezeshkian took office in July with the ambition of reviving the economy and ending some Western-imposed sanctions.

But the depreciation of the rial has only intensified, especially since the fall in December of Iran ally Bashar al-Assad of Syria. The day before his government was toppled in Damascus, the US dollar was trading for around 717,000 rials on Iran's black market.

"The rate of the foreign exchange is not real; the price is due to inflationary expectations," Hemmati said in his defence.

'Chronic inflation'

"The most important problem of the country's economy is inflation, and that is chronic inflation, which has plagued our economy for years," the economy minister added.

Decades of US-led sanctions have battered Iran's economy, with double-digit inflation causing an increase in consumer prices since Washington pulled out of a landmark 2015 nuclear deal in 2018.

The deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, provided for an easing of sanctions and the return of Western investment to Iran in return for increased limits on the country's nuclear activities. US President Donald Trump, who returned to the White House in January, has revived his policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran, further tightening restrictions on the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian economy has since 2018 been under

pressure from high inflation, serious unemployment and the depreciation of its currency, which weighs heavily on everyday Iranians.

In that year, then Economy Minister Masoud Karbasian lost a vote of confidence during an impeachment session over the dire economic conditions.

Since 2019, inflation in Iran has been above 30 percent annually, according to figures from the World Bank.

In 2023, it reached a whopping 44 percent, according to the Washington-based institution's last report.

According to the Iranian constitution, a dismissal of the minister would be effective immediately, with a caretaker appointed until the government chooses a replacement. In April 2023, MPs voted to dismiss then-minister of industry Reza Fatemi Amin due to a surge in prices linked to international sanctions.

NGO asks Americans for donations after Trump's drastic aid cuts

WASHINGTON (Reuters): An international non-governmental organization has placed a full-page advertisement in Sunday's New York Times calling on Americans to provide donations to support hundreds of millions of people in need after drastic cuts in U.S. foreign aid.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) said the advertisement was sponsored by a private donor and it urged the American public to "meet the moment" following the announcement of a 90% cut in U.S. foreign and humanitarian aid.

"The IRC aims to highlight the severe conse-

quences of these cuts," it said in a statement.

It said that in the past week, 46 of the IRC's government grants had received notices of termination, which meant at least 2 million people would not have access to critical services across multiple crisis zones, including Sudan, Nigeria and Afghanistan.

"The IRC is calling on the American public to support our efforts to mitigate the impact of these cuts for people in critical need around the world," the advertisement said. It requested donations via donor-advised funds, stock accounts, foundations,

checks or credit cards.

U.S.-funded health projects around the world, including those providing lifesaving care, received termination notices from Washington on Thursday as President Donald Trump's administration neared completion of a review to ensure grants are aligned with its "America First" policy.

A U.S. State Department spokesperson said last week that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) had evaluated 6,200 multi-year awards and had decided to eliminate nearly 5,800 of them, worth \$54 billion in value, a 92%

reduction.

The administration also cut nearly 30% of the State Department foreign aid-related grants totaling \$4.4 billion. "Children will suffer, as food from hardworking American farmers sits idle in warehouses," the IRC advertisement said. "Preventable tragedies, like deaths from treatable diseases, will occur daily. This is a humanitarian catastrophe - a matter of life and death for people already in crisis." U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has dismissed concerns that Washington is ending foreign aid, saying waivers had been provided to life-saving aid.

Grammy-nominated R&B singer Angie Stone dies in car crash

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP): Grammy-nominated R&B singer Angie Stone, a member of the all-female hip-hop trio The Sequence and known for the hit song "Wish I Didn't Miss You," was killed early Saturday in a car crash. She was 63.

About 4 a.m., the vehicle she was riding in back to Atlanta from Alabama "flipped over and was subsequently hit by a big rig," music producer and Stone's longtime manager Walter Millsap III told The Associated Press in an email.

Everyone else in the cargo van survived except Stone, he said.

The Alabama Highway Patrol said in a news release that the 2021 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van turned over on Interstate 65 about 4:25 a.m. Saturday before being hit by a 2021 Freightliner Cascadia truck driven by a 33-year-old man from

Texas.

Angie Stone was pronounced dead at the scene, the highway patrol said. The crash was about 5 miles (8 kilometers) south of the Montgomery city limits.

The Sprinter driver and seven others in the van were taken to Baptist Medical Center for treatment. Officials continue to investigate the cause.

Millsap said he learned the news from Angie Stone's daughter, Diamond, and longtime The Sequence member Blondy.

"Never in a million years did we ever expect to get this horrible news," Angie Stone's children, Diamond and Michael Archer, said in a statement shared by the SRG Group. "We are still trying to process and are completely heartbroken."

Millsap added: "We are truly devastated by this unexpected and unfortunate

tragedy and there are simply no words to express how we feel."

Stone was scheduled to perform at the halftime show of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association men's Championship basketball game on Saturday. CIAA Chaplain Pastor Jerome Barber called for a moment of silence at the game.

CIAA Commissioner Jackie McWilliams-Parker said they were heartbroken by the loss.

"She used her incredible talent, passion, and presence to inspire and touch us with strength and hope," Parker said.

The singer-songwriter created hits like "No More Rain (In This Cloud)" which reached No. 1 for 10 weeks on Billboard's Adult R&B airplay chart, "Baby" with legendary soul singer Betty Wright, another No. 1 hit, and "Wish I Didn't Miss You" and "Brotha."

Stone found a sweet spot in the early 2000s as neo-soul begin to dominate the R&B landscape with the emergence of singers like Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, Maxwell and D'Angelo.

Her 2001 album "Mahogany Soul" reached No. 22 on the Billboard 200, while 2007's "The Art Of Love & War" peaked at No. 11.

The church-grown singer was born in Columbia, South Carolina. She helped form The Sequence, the first all-female group on the hip-hop trailblazing imprint Sugar Hill Records, becoming one of the first female groups to record a rap song.

The group recorded "Funk You Up," which has been sampled by numerous artists, including Dr. Dre.

After finding success in the early 1980s, Stone later joined the trio Vertical Hold before launching her solo career.

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Kurdish leader calls for laying down of arms

IT was something that was in the making for some months now. First came the appeal by Nationalist Movement Party leader Devlet Bahçeli in October last for a terror-free Turkey, and his invitation to the Kurdish rebel leader of the banned Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) Abdullah Ocalan, serving a life-term in the Imrali prison, to come to parliament and renounce terrorism.

The overture was supported by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a historic window of opportunity. This was followed by meetings with Ocalan by members of the People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM) in December last and again in January.

It was at their third meeting on Thursday that Ocalan issued the statement asking the PKK to lay down arms and dissolve itself. He has given his own reasoning why this needs to be done. He said that it is time to return to democratic norms.

The question remains whether the PKK rebels would heed his call. The armed rebellion has been on since 1984. The Turkish Kurds have not been able to achieve their goal of an independent Kurdistan in south-east Turkey. Ocalan said in his statement, which was read out in Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic and English, "As in the case with any modern community or party whose existence has not been abolished by force, would voluntarily do, convene your congress and make a decision: all groups must lay their arms and the PKK must dissolve itself." Ocalan is justifying the call by implying that the Kurds have not lost the war, and therefore they can join the democratic process in a politically dignified way.

And he had argued in detail the background of the emergence of the armed rebellion of PKK in the last century, and why it has to end now. He said that PKK rose in the context of "intense violence, two world wars, the rise and fall of real socialism, the Cold War and the denial of Kurdish identity", but now it has to end because "the collapse of real socialism in the 1990s due to internal reasons, the erosion of identity denial in the country, and advancements in freedom of expression, have led to the PKK's loss of meaning and excessive repetition. Therefore, like its counterparts, it has reached the end of its lifespan, making its dissolution necessary."

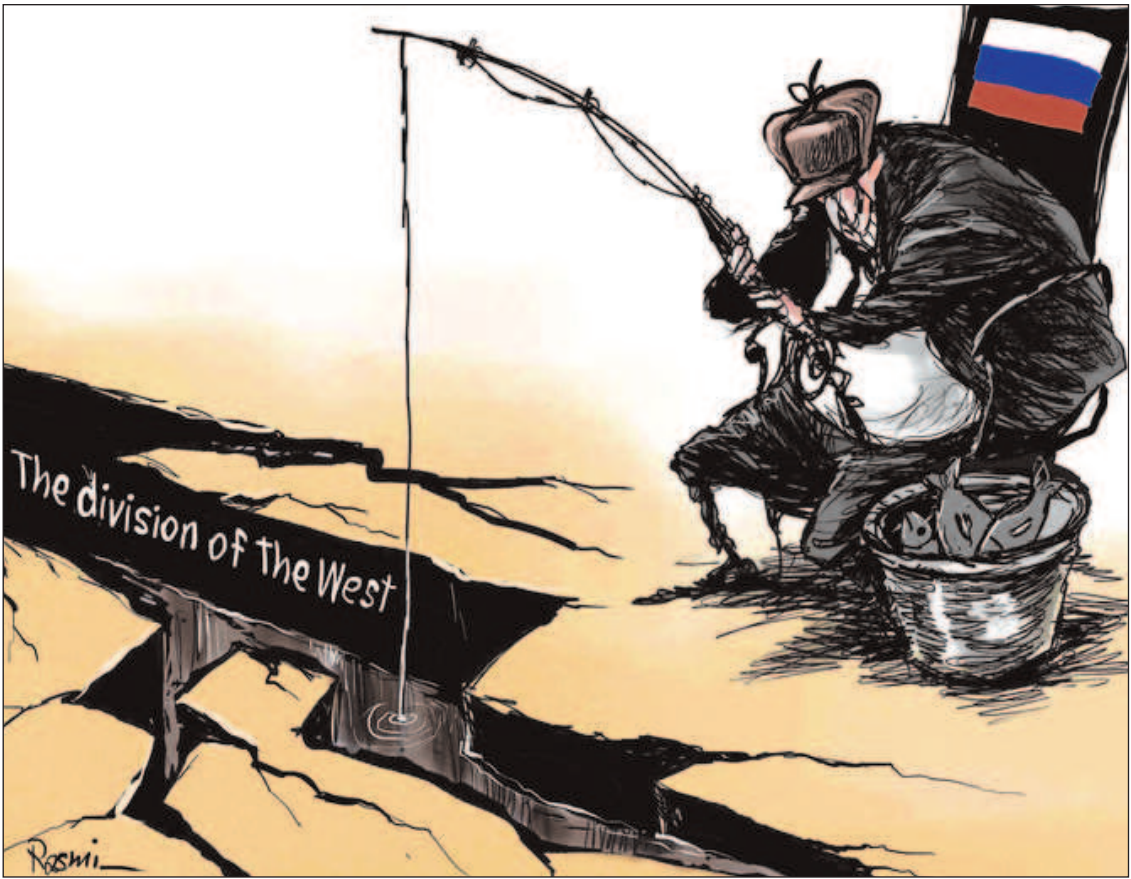
It is a well-reasoned argument. Even if the hotheads in the PKK refuse to accept Ocalan's call, this will send out a message of reconciliation to the Kurds in general in Turkey. This also means that Turkey's hard stance over the Kurds has softened, and that it is possible for the Kurds to express their demands and be heard as well.

Ocalan has clearly expressed the demand of the Kurds for democratic freedom. He urged Turkey to respect ethnic minorities, the freedom of self-expression and the right of democratic self-organisation. He said, "The language of the epoch of peace and democratic society needs to be developed in accordance with this reality." Ocalan is making reasonable demands even as he gives up the path of violence as no more relevant.

The peace will not happen overnight, and the negotiations will be long drawn. The PKK can seize the opportunity and end its war which is harming the ordinary Kurds in Turkey more than helping them get their rights. This will bring to a close a long-fought war of terrorism, where neither the PKK nor Turkey can declare victory. So, Ocalan has rightly seen the peace offer as a solution which retains the dignity of the Kurd rebels intact. It is not an ignominious capitulation. It is not defeat. Ocalan has given them enough reasons to make them feel that their fight has not been futile, but that circumstances have changed.

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German elections are a final warning to democratic parties

Yossi Mekelberg

IN December, when the German government, led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz, lost the confidence of the Bundestag, not only did it spark a general election, it also provoked the fear of a deepening international crisis on top of the domestic one.

Between Vladimir Putin's Russia growing more emboldened in its aggression toward Ukraine, and the twilight of one US administration and the imminent dawn of a new and more volatile one with a precarious attitude toward Europe, the news of another divisive German election was greeted with deep concern.

By the time the election results were announced last Sunday, trans-Atlantic tensions had heightened as it became increasingly apparent that the view of a united front between the US and Europe on halting Putin's aggression was not shared by the new American president, Donald Trump, who started to inflict tariffs on European goods, thereby threatening the recovery of an already underperforming economy.

The results of the German election should be greeted with a mixture of relief and grave concern. The relief is because despite the rise of the far-right in the form of the AfD (Alternative for Germany) party, it is still not in a position to win elections or make it impossible for the largest parties to form a governing coalition without it.

On the other hand, the AfD, some of whose members have been associated with neo-Nazis, and which has normalized and legitimized extreme anti-immigration and nationalchauvinistic rhetoric, received more than 10 million votes, representing just over 20 percent of the total vote. In light of the country's history, this is an uncomfortable development.

For now, this party, along with some of its more repulsive policies, will remain in opposition. Germany is likely to be governed, once again, by a grand coalition of the center-right CDU/CSU and the Social Democratic Party, along with the support of a number of smaller parties. The CDU/CSU, led by the presumed next German chancellor, Friedrich Merz, won the most seats, with 28.5 percent of the vote. The SPD, led by the current chancellor, Olaf Scholz, came in third with just 16.4 percent of the vote.

Nevertheless, the sight of the AfD being held at arm's length from a position of power should not lull anyone into a false sense of security. The symbolism, let alone the tangible threat, of the rise of a party with such an overt anti-minority stance — its co-leader, Alexander Gauland, has vowed, for example, to fight against "an invasion of foreigners" into Germany — should not escape us.

It is hardly a consolation that nearly 80 percent of Germans rejected the AfD's policies, because the party's share of the vote continues to increase

from election to election, legitimizing its vile ideas. The fact that it is disproportionately supported by young, very angry, men (mainly from the former East Germany) could ensure its longevity in politics, unless the reasons for its emerging strength are addressed.

Hence, a failure to heed Merz's warnings that domestically, the rise of

establishment, are addressed. To some extent, this is a matter of "it's the economy, stupid." Nevertheless, the ability of the nationalist-reductionist-nativist right wing to lay almost the entire blame for their country's stagnating economy on migrants, and more specifically on Muslim migrants, has to be challenged.

Germany's economy

industrial base as a result of relocations to other countries, and an aging population (much of it due to the low birth-rate) as the underlying reasons for the weak economy.

None of that is linked to immigration; indeed, in some instances it suggests there is a need to allow more foreign workers into the country.

The divide between Germany's east and west also indicates that more than 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and huge investments in efforts to bring about a more cohesive and equal society across the country, old divisions continue to run deep and the new government will have to concentrate not only on improving the economy but equally on improving democratic discourse.

If ensuring the cohesiveness of Germany is a massive job, keeping Europe together, with a common foreign and security policy, is a mega one. For obvious historical reasons, but increasingly as a matter of German convenience, when it comes to foreign and security policies, Germany has punched below its weight. Its defense expenditure is lower than that of most other NATO and EU countries, standing at just 1.6 percent of gross domestic product.

If Merz wishes to be true to his commitment that his "absolute priority" is to strengthen European security, he will have to find the money to do that. This, by itself, will be a tough task in an economy that is not growing and where there is the need to work within the country's budgetary straitjacket, which limits new borrowing to 0.35 percent of GDP.

The state of the world dictates that "tough times call for tough measures," and Merz has made it clear he has two massive battles on his hands. One is to lead the fightback in his country, and to a large extent across Europe, against the rise of the far right and the disturbing echoes of inter-war Germany.

The second, equally challenging task is to take the lead on European security in the face of a US administration that seems prepared to put the continent at risk in its overtures to Putin's Russia.

Merz did not wait for the final election results to be announced, or until he officially became chancellor, before he began to question whether NATO, in its current form, has a future. He declared that the Trump administration "does not care much for Europe," and therefore Europe should take immediate steps to become independent of Washington.

How his new government manages to cope with these twin challenges will define Germany, its prosperity, and European security for many decades to come, while also redefining Europe as an entity quite distinct from its alliance with the US and at the forefront of efforts to fortify liberal democracies.

Trump did on live TV what other US presidents would just do in private

Andrew Mitrovica

THE bulk of journalists who cover the so-called "halls of power" in Washington, Ottawa, Canberra, London, Paris and beyond prefer routine over spontaneity.

You see, predictability is easy. It's comforting because most capital cities are mundane places where boring is not only an agreeable fact on the ground, but also a prevailing state of mind.

That is why the overwrought reaction to the lively dressing-down US President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance gave Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was so in keeping with the White House press corps' stubborn fondness for the venerate of practised civility over the impulsive truth.

Unlike so many other pundits and columnists who rushed instantly and almost universally onto the familiar cable news networks to express their disbelief and shock over the "embarrassing spectacle"

phers.

A lot of the hyperbolic outrage being directed at Trump is the product not so much of what he said to Zelenskyy — since his antipathy towards Ukraine and its president has been plain — but how and where he said it: in the Oval Office before TV cameras.

That's what America's genteel chattering class considers so rank and appalling — Trump did his berating and bullying openly, when more discreet and "diplomatic" presidents do their berating and bullying behind closed doors.

The glaring irony is that American networks and the personalities who populate them leverage broadcasting "live" to draw audiences tempted by the urgency of now and the prospect that, at any moment, real, not manufactured, drama and conflict might erupt.

Newsworthy drama and conflict did erupt in the Oval Office on Friday, but instead of embracing it, those same networks and

A lot of the hyperbolic outrage being directed at Trump is the product not so much of what he said to Zelenskyy — since his antipathy towards Ukraine and its president has been plain — but how and where he said it: in the Oval Office before TV cameras. That's what America's genteel chattering class considers so rank and appalling — Trump did his berating and bullying openly, when more discreet and "diplomatic" presidents do their berating and bullying behind closed doors.

of America's tactless commander-in-chief "humiliating" his "wartime hero" guest, I was mesmerised by the remarkable scenes unfolding live on my computer screen.

Rather than watching an orchestrated, forgettable set piece featuring smiling foreign dignitaries and heads of state visiting an ever-sopite president in the Oval Office, it was refreshing to witness a blatant exhibition of the crudeness, rudeness, and brutishness of power politics that usually occurs far, far away from the cameras and, hence, reporters and the public.

They will be loath to admit it, but the sea of scribes who stood like mute mannequins while Trump, Vance, and Zelenskyy traded rhetorical blows for several bruising rounds, expected another tame, pedestrian day at work like so many other tame, pedestrian days at work.

They know the predictable role they play during these choreographed pantomimes.

Step 1: Go to the Oval Office.

Step 2: Record the foreign head of state saying nice and sweet stuff about the US president.

Step 3: Record the US president saying nice and sweet stuff about the foreign head of state.

Step 4: Report that the US president and the foreign head of state said nice and sweet stuff about each other.

Step 5: Later, call sources who say that, in private, the US president and the foreign head of state did not say nice and sweet stuff about each other.

Step 6: Report, quoting anonymous sources, that despite having said nice and sweet stuff about each other publicly, privately, truth be told, the US president and his grinning guest cannot stand one another.

That was, in effect, the formulaic arc of much of the reporting after French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer made their pilgrimages to Washington last week to massage and mollify Trump.

True to his unorthodox nature — to put it charitably — Trump and his clawing vice president — upended that traditional script, either by design or instinctively, with Zelenskyy.

Reporters and pundits came away confused and disoriented. This is not supposed to happen the way it has happened, they moaned — disappointed, apparently, at having to act as journalists rather than stenogra-

personalities recoiled from it and labelled it as unseemly and unbecoming of the office of the presidency and the United States itself.

Here's a bit of news for the yapping ostriches:

Aside from lying with a pathological ease and ordering others to kill without a scintilla of regret or remorse, being rude, crude, and a brute is a job prerequisite of any US president — Democrat or Republican.

Trump is not the exception. He is the rule.

The administration of pretty boy, Harvard-trained President John F Kennedy enlisted the Mafia to try to murder Cuba's young and charismatic leader, Fidel Castro, and gave its tacit approval to a coup in early November 1963 that saw the overthrow of South Vietnam's government and the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, was a six-foot, four-inch boor who physically assaulted much smaller public servants who angered him.

In 1965, a livid Johnson summoned Canada's diminutive prime minister, Lester Pearson, to Camp David for a stiff talking to after the Noble Peace Prize winner denounced the US bombing of North Vietnam.

Johnson reportedly grabbed Pearson by the shirt collar, twisted it, and lifted the prime minister by the neck, shouting: "You pissed on my rug."

That same year, an enraged Johnson shoved then-Chairman of the Federal Reserve William Martin against a wall for having raised interest rates against the president's wishes.

"Boys are dying in Vietnam, and Bill Martin doesn't care," Johnson thundered.

That avatar of presidential probity, Richard Nixon, ordered the CIA to block, thwart, undermine, and destabilise Chile's democratically elected Socialist president, Salvador Allende.

And Nixon's obscene anti-Semitism makes Trump's fiery remarks to Zelenskyy seem rather temperate, in comparison. He complained on tape that Washington "is full of Jews" and that "most Jews are disloyal".

Whether the waiting pundits and TV personalities are prepared to acknowledge it or not, Trump was right. The sensational Oval Office fireworks made for great television.

This time we were privy to the astonishing, history-making words and deeds of another "gangster" president in real-time, as it happened.

Ramadan in Gaza: Ruins and unshakable faith

Ramadan has come to devastated Gaza. While the rest of the world embarks with a festive mood on a month of fasting and prayer, we do so with grief and sorrow.

The echoes of war still ring loud. There is no certainty that this ceasefire will last. People are anxious about what happens next. They fear the war may come back.

The memory and trauma of what we have witnessed and experienced over the past year hang heavy in our minds.

Last year was not the first time for us to observe Ramadan during a war. In 2014, I was only nine years old, but I remember very well how our Ramadan nights were filled with air strikes and destruction and how we had to rush out of our home in the dark, fleeing the bombing in our neighbourhood.

But Ramadan last year was different. It was unimaginably worse. Hunger was everywhere. We fasted the entire day, only to break our fast with a can of hummus or beans shared between six people. With no electricity, we would chew the tasteless canned food in the dark. We would barely see each other's faces across the table.

We were away from most of our extended family. My grandmother, aunts and cousins who I used to spend Ramadan with were all scattered in different places, some displaced in tents and others stuck in the north. The month of togetherness became a month of separation and isolation.

Ramadan was stripped of its joyous spirit. We

longed to hear the adhan (call to prayer) at Maghrib before breaking our fast or at Fajr before starting it. But those sounds never came. Every mosque was destroyed. There were people who wanted to do the adhan, but they were afraid – afraid that the sound of their voices would bring air strikes, that it would make them targets.

Instead of breaking our fast to the familiar sound of the muezzin on the loudspeakers of the nearby mosque, we broke it to the terrifying echoes of missiles and gunfire.

Before the war, I used to go with my family to the

Esraa Abo Qamar

the final 10 nights of Ramadan, listening to the Quran recited in the most beautiful voices – was gone, bombed into ruins, shattered beyond recognition. The place that once echoed with prayers and peace was turned into dust and rubble.

This year's Ramadan begins during a ceasefire. There are no air strikes shaking the earth as we break our fast. No explosions reverberating in the silence of Fajr. No fear of decorating our homes, of hanging colourful lights that might make us a target.

Even the big supermarket in Nuseirat, Hyper Mall, has opened its doors once again. Before Ramadan, my father took me and my sister there. We could barely contain our excitement as we stepped into the brightly lit mall. For a moment, it felt like we had gone back in time. The shelves were stocked again, filled with everything we had longed for – different types of chocolates, biscuits and chips. There were Ramadan decorations, lanterns of all shapes and sizes, boxes of dates, colourful dried fruits and Qamar al-Din.

mosque after iftar to pray and see our loved ones. Afterwards, we would stroll through the streets of Gaza, enjoying the lively Ramadan atmosphere before heading home to have freshly made qatayef.

But last year, there was nowhere we could go to pray tarawih amid the genocide.

Even the Great Omari Mosque – one of Gaza's most beautiful and historic mosques, where my father and brothers used to spend

Amid the pain and devastation, life – which had been on pause for so long – is trying to come back to Gaza's streets.

Shops and markets that have not been destroyed have reopened, and street vendors have come back.

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into the brightly lit mall. For a moment, it felt like we had gone back in time. The shelves were stocked again, filled with everything we had longed for – different types of chocolates, biscuits and chips. There were Ramadan decorations, lanterns of all shapes and sizes, boxes of dates, colourful dried fruits and Qamar al-Din.

But this abundance is deceptive. Much of what fills the shelves comes on commercial trucks, which make up a large portion of the trucks allowed into Gaza at the expense of humanitarian aid. At the same time, these products

I too have lost people I love. My aunt's husband who used to invite us for iftar each year was brutally killed. My friends Shaima, Lina and Roaa who I used to meet at the mosque after the tarawih prayer were all martyred.

The festive spirit is gone, but the core of Ramadan is here. This month is a chance to step away from distractions and concerns of ordinary life and reconnect with our faith. It is a time of forgiveness. It is a time to seek closeness to God and spiritual resilience.

Our mosques may have been destroyed, but our faith has not been broken. We will still be doing tarawih in half-destroyed homes and tents, whispering all our wishes in dua'a and seeking comfort in reciting the Quran, knowing that Allah will reward us for all the suffering we have endured.

have become unaffordable to most people who have lost their livelihoods and homes.

So what will most families break their fast with this year? It will be a bit more than canned beans: A simple meal of rice, molokhia or whatever vegetables they can afford.

For the first iftar, my family will have musakhan, a Palestinian dish that is made from chicken, saj bread and lots of onion. We know we are among the

lucky ones. The vast majority of people in Gaza cannot afford the fresh chicken that has reappeared in markets at double the pre-war price.

But a rich, traditional iftar is not the only thing that will be missing from Ramadan tables in Gaza.

More than 48,000 people have been killed during the war. Entire families have been wiped from the civil registry and will not observe Ramadan this year. At so many iftar tables, there will be an empty seat: a father whose voice calling his children to the table will never be heard again, a son whose impatience to break his fast will never be seen again or a mother whose skilled hands will never prepare delicious food again.

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What will sub-Saharan Africa's 'elephant economies' look like in 2040-50?

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Sub-Saharan Africa's economic future defies simplistic narratives. Today, the region is a theater of paradoxes: Dynamic growth sectors coexist with systemic vulnerabilities, and demographic promise is tempered by governance deficits. The region's current growth engines – Kenya's tech-driven services, Ethiopia's industrial parks, and Rwanda's governance reforms – are the more notable illustrations of how pockets of modernization clash with systemic frailties, tempering growth and undermining prosperity. Despite GDP growth rates exceeding 5 percent, such gains risk irreversible erosion if energy deficits, youth unemployment, and reliance on volatile commodity exports go undressed.

Clearly, the path forward is neither linear nor guaranteed: Nations prioritizing institutional transparency, regional trade integration, and skill-based education could potentially unlock \$1.5 trillion in annual GDP by 2040. Conversely, complacency risks entrenching cycles of informality and political fragility, crippling the region with self-imposed restraints from the refusal to make strategic choices today.

One of those choices involves weaning sub-Saharan Africa's economies off its reliance on raw material exports – a double-edged sword. Nigeria's struggle to reduce oil dependence reveals progress tempered by vulnerability, as non-oil sectors such as agriculture and tech struggle to fill the gap. Angola and Zambia face similar risks, with copper and crude oil prices dictating fiscal health despite efforts to expand mining processing and tourism.

Furthermore, gross infrastructure deficits complicate these challenges. With just 43 percent of the region's population connected to reliable power, industries from textiles in Ghana to automotive assembly lines in Kenya grapple with productivity losses. Meanwhile, urban centers such as Lagos and Kinshasa, projected to swell by 5 percent annually, strain under housing shortages and inadequate transport networks, stifling potential gains from a consumer class expected to reach more than 1 billion by 2040.

Worst of all, governance remains a wildcard: While Botswana's diamond revenue management offers a model for leveraging resource endowments to secure key reforms, endemic graft in similar resource-rich states deters foreign capital. Beyond man-made deficits, climate pressures amplify risks too. Erratic rainfall in Ethiopia's highlands and cyclones in Mozambique threaten nearly two-thirds of the workforce which is reliant on agriculture.

On the other hand, a marked rise in green energy investments, such as Kenya's geothermal expansion and Nigeria's solar mini-grid initiatives, signal

adaptive potential. For the region's economies to shed the "commodity curse," scaling value-added industries, modernizing infrastructure, and embedding climate resilience into policy could unlock some \$3 trillion by 2040.

Besides untapped potential, there is palpable optimism in this part of the world.

Sub-Saharan Africa's youth bulge – with a median age of 19 – positions it to outpace aging economies, provided education and job creation align. With a labor force set to exceed China's by 2040, the region could channel this into manufacturing or tech-driven sectors, mirroring India's IT boom. For instance, mobile money, led by Kenya's M-Pesa, has already democratized finance, enabling 40 million small businesses to transact digitally, creating new opportunities and previously unimaginable pathways to prosperity.

By 2040, Africa's elephant economies could very well eclipse Asia's historic growth trajectories if only they manage to consolidate institutional reforms, industrial ecosystems, human capital, and climate resilience. For instance, Rwanda's tech-driven governance – built on digitized land registries and anti-corruption courts – offers a replicable model for stabilizing institutions, but systemic enforcement remains a problem.

Secondly, Ethiopia's Hawassa Industrial Park, despite debt and labor disputes, shows how state-backed zones can anchor textile and agro-processing exports. Integrating such hubs with major logistics corridors and significant infrastructure investments requires synchronized energy grids and port upgrades to reduce intra-African shipping costs, still 50 percent higher than global averages.

Meanwhile, Nigeria's tech sector, fueled by ventures such as Flutterwave, taps into a youth bulge and huge diaspora, but 60 million secondary school-aged children remain excluded from education. Closing this gap demands hybrid models:

Kenya's M-Pesa-backed vocational micro-academies, for instance, merge fintech with skills training. Health systems also need parallel overhauls; reducing under-five mortality rates – still double the global average – would preserve a workforce pivotal to sustaining GDP growth rates above 5 percent.

Finally, while Kenya's geothermal plants now supply 40 percent of its electricity, scaling climate adaptation requires de-risking investments in projects such as Zambia's drought-resistant cassava farms through blended finance. Without tripling green bond issuances by 2030, climate shocks could erase 15 percent of regional GDP, jeopardizing the very foundations of these emerging giants. Success will depend on how well leaders can align fragment-

ed policies with cross-border pragmatism.

Gulf and North African nations are uniquely positioned to help reshape and transform sub-Saharan Africa's economic transitions via targeted investments that blend strategic necessity with opportunity. Saudi Arabia's \$1 billion pledge to African agribusiness, part of its Vision 2030 diversification push, so far targets Senegal and Sudan to guarantee food security at home. Elsewhere, the UAE's port expansions in Mozambique and Angola signal Abu Dhabi's ambitions to have sizable stakes in key logistics nodes, which ultimately enhance Africa's export corridors while securing Gulf supply chains.

Meanwhile, Morocco, leveraging its strategic location as a bridge between Arab, European, and African blocs, is pursuing policies that display a curious fusion of regionalism and resource pragmatism. Its rapidly developing solar sector offers replicable models for the continent's other sun-rich zones, especially where energy deficits hinder industrialization.

However, there is also some geopolitical calculus at play here.

As Chinese lending wanes amid debt fears and Western aid stalls, Gulf states are deploying cultural affinity and project funding as soft power tools. Saudi and Emirati sovereign funds, eyeing cobalt and lithium reserves, are currently structuring deals with DRC and Zimbabwe to lock in critical minerals for their own energy transitions and the future green industries that will power post-oil economies. Concurrently, North Africa's technical prowess – Morocco's phosphate-based fertilizers, Egypt's Nile Delta drip irrigation systems – is being exported to drought-prone regions, blending commercial and developmental gains.

Yet rival actors continue to complicate this calculus. Foreign mercenary networks exploit existing governance, while drones and construction firms entrench external actors in fragile states teetering on collapse. To counter harmful perceptions of gross opportunism and extractivism, Arab investors must localize ventures, combining capital with skills and technology transfers to create export-ready industries.

In sum, sub-Saharan Africa's 2040 horizon demands hybrid growth strategies – pairing mobile finance with green hydrogen hubs, regional rail grids with AI-driven agritech, for instance. For Arab partners, success hinges on equity: Structuring deals that prioritize value-added processing over raw exports, aligning with Africa's shift from mere supplier to stakeholder.

This rebalanced dynamic could redefine enduring South-South collaboration in a deeply fragmented world that is seeing more countries look inward, eschewing risky overseas "adventures."

Why Riyadh is building bridges between the US and Russia

The initial contacts with the new US administration inspired certain hope, Russian President Vladimir Putin told a meeting of the Russian Federal Security Service board on Feb. 27. He emphasized that "Russia and the US are ready to resume cooperation," adding that "the current US partners demonstrate pragmatism and a realistic view of things, moving beyond stereotypes."

Putin's positive stance would not have occurred without a meeting held between the Russian and US delegations earlier the same month in Riyadh.

The meeting was overseen by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who entrusted the task to two key figures in the Saudi government: Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan and National Security Adviser Minister Musaad Al-Aiban. Both officials have extensive diplomatic experience and a significant ability to build bridges between different parties – important skills that led to Putin and US leader Donald Trump praising the initial results of the dialogue in the Saudi capital.

Despite the strong strategic relations between Saudi Arabia and the US, Riyadh has adopted a flexible diplomacy in recent years, during which it diversified

its foreign choices. For instance, it built partnerships with influential countries, such as China, Russia, and India; strengthened its relations with the EU; and became more open to regional neighbors, specifically Iran, restoring diplomatic relations with the latter following the agreement in Beijing in March 2023.

Saudi Arabia recognizes the importance of the US as a significant economic, political, technological, and military force. There are also mutual commercial interests, and diplomatic relations spanning nearly a century. Moreover, Washington considers Riyadh a fundamental partner in combating terrorism and, therefore, both countries have been keen to strengthen relations and manage any differing views without clashing or causing rupture. This was especially true during the tenures of Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden, when points of disagreement emerged between both countries, whether regarding the Iranian nuclear agreement, the Yemen war, or the Israeli aggression against Gaza, as well as other energy and human rights issues.

The Kingdom worked to address this policy divergence calmly, communicating with different institutions in the US. Riyadh also strengthened its relations with Beijing and Moscow, increasing volumes of

Hassan Al-Mustafa

trade. Furthermore, there was a clear Saudi-Russian coordination at OPEC+ to maintain energy prices at reasonable levels, benefiting both producing and consuming countries.

This political and economic balance – coupled with patience and Riyadh's efforts to develop state institutions, diversify its economy and modernize society, along with its active diplomacy in reducing tensions with Iran and the Houthis in Yemen, supporting the central state in Iraq, dealing realistically with the new government in the Syrian Arab Republic, and playing active roles during the Israeli war against Gaza and Lebanon – has elevated its international position and reputation as a central state capable of promoting peace and reducing conflicts.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia worked on condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine, launching a relief air bridge to the Ukrainian people. It also received President Volodymyr Zelensky, held a peace conference aiming to stop the war, and brokered the release of a group of prisoners in both countries, without adopting a hostile stance toward Moscow or siding with NATO's escalatory policies against Russia. This earned Saudi Arabia special

respect from Putin.

At the American level, the Saudi government worked to smooth things over with the administration of former President Biden, who visited Riyadh and was received by King Salman and the crown prince. At the same time, Riyadh avoided cutting ties with Trump after he left the White House. Instead, both sides maintained relations of mutual respect. As a result, when Trump returned to the presidency, Riyadh was among the first to congratulate him, prompting the new president to choose Saudi Arabia as a friendly and trusted country in which to hold the first meetings between the US and Russian delegations.

During the opening session of the Saudi Future Investment Initiative in its third edition in Miami, Trump said: "Saudi Arabia is a great country with great leadership." He thanked the Kingdom for hosting talks between Russian and US officials, adding that "Riyadh did a great job by hosting these talks."

For his part, Putin called the crown prince and thanked Saudi Arabia "for hosting the fruitful talks between Moscow and Washington." The crown prince affirmed his country's commitment to "exerting all possible efforts to enhance global security and peace, believing that dia-

logue is the only way to resolve all international crises."

In this context, the official visit of Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman to the US can be highlighted, as he met with his US counterpart Peter Hegseth and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, to discuss "regional and international developments, and the efforts exerted to achieve security and stability." According to the US Department of State, both sides explored "ways to strengthen peace in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza."

Prince Khalid wrote on X: "Pleased to meet my friend (US National Security Adviser) Michael Waltz. We reviewed the Saudi-US strategic relationship and explored opportunities to strengthen our bilateral cooperation."

All these cumulative diplomatic efforts over the years have qualified Saudi Arabia to be a major player in restoring relationships between the US and Russia, earning the respect and trust of both sides.

Through this mission, Riyadh is seeking an end to the war in Ukraine, to strengthen mutual understanding and solve the crises in the Middle East, and to encourage Russia and the US to actively participate in the process of achieving permanent and comprehensive peace in the region.

The Gulf region's philanthropic renaissance: A call for strategic giving

Philanthropy across Asia is undergoing a profound transformation, as high-growth economies take on a more strategic role in addressing social and environmental challenges.

While traditional giving, rooted in religious and cultural values, has long been a pillar of our societies, a new wave of philanthropists is adopting an approach that prioritizes long-term, systemic change over short-term relief.

At the heart of this shift is the recognition that wealth alone does not create sustainable impact. Increasingly, business leaders-turned-philanthropists are applying the same principles that drive their corporate successes to their giving.

Setting clear objectives, measuring outcomes, and fostering collaboration have become hallmarks of a more strategic philanthropic model. This is essential in tackling complex global issues such as inequality, climate change, and public health, which demand coor-

ordinated, data-driven solutions rather than sporadic acts of generosity.

A crucial component of this transformation is collaboration. Asian societies, deeply rooted in trust and relationship-building, provide a strong foundation for multi-stakeholder partnerships. Whether through family foundations, corporate-giving programs, or regional alliances such as the Philanthropy Asia Alliance, cooperation is enhancing effectiveness and ensuring that philanthropy is more responsive to the communities it serves.

However, a key challenge remains: the lack of enabling infrastructure to facilitate large-scale, coordinated giving. While some Asian nations have well-established philanthropic institutions, many are still developing regulatory frameworks and incentive structures.

Within this broader Asian landscape, the Middle East has long stood out for its deep philanthropic traditions. Islamic giving

practices, such as Zakat and Sadaqah, generate between \$400 billion and \$1 trillion annually, making Islamic philanthropy one of the world's largest sources of charitable funding.

Giving from within the Gulf Cooperation Council area alone contributes an estimated \$210 billion each year. Much of this giving has historically been ad hoc and reactive, focused on immediate relief rather than long-term solutions.

A new generation of Gulf philanthropists is reshaping this landscape by adopting structured, strategic giving models. This shift is driven not only by the accumulation of wealth but also by a growing recognition that philanthropy must address root causes rather than symptoms. Increasingly, Gulf-based initiatives are investing in education, healthcare, technology, and climate solutions, marking a transition from traditional charity to high-impact social investment.

Technology is playing a

crucial role in this evolution. Digital platforms are making philanthropy more transparent and efficient, enabling donors to track the real-time impact of their contributions. Crowdfunding, mobile giving and blockchain-based transparency tools are reshaping how funds are distributed and managed.

As Princess Lamia bint Majed of Alwaleed Philanthropies noted: "Technology makes philanthropy much easier. Helping people, reaching out and creating awareness – it's not what we used to do before. And it gives you a wider perspective."

Saudi Arabia is emerging as a leader in strategic philanthropy. As the Kingdom undergoes a bold transformation under Vision 2030, philanthropy is increasingly being recognized as a driver of social and economic progress. Saudi philanthropists are leveraging their resources to support education, scientific research, and innova-

Badr Jafar

tion, sectors that promise long-term societal benefits.

Structured philanthropy is also gaining traction, with a growing emphasis on data-driven decision-making. Fady Jameel, vice chairman of Community Jameel, has underscored the importance of evidence-based philanthropy: "Our philosophy is supporting a culture of evidence-based policy and building a research ecosystem. Everything we do is based on that philosophy of evidence." This approach ensures that philanthropic investments yield measurable, lasting impact.

Moreover, there is a growing recognition that philanthropy can serve as risk capital by funding experimental, high-impact solutions that governments or businesses might be unable to take on. This mindset shift is fostering a new entrepreneurial approach to giving, in which philanthropy is seen as a tool for driving innovation and systemic change.

These themes are central to my recently published book, "The Business of Philanthropy," which explores how present-day philanthropists, in the Gulf region and beyond, are evolving their approaches to maximize impact. Drawing from in-depth conversations with more than 50 global leaders in business, philanthropy, and social enterprise, the book provides insights into the diverse ways in which capital is being leveraged to tackle urgent social challenges.

At its core, "The Business of Philanthropy" is an invitation to think bigger about the role of giving. It highlights how a strategic, collaborative approach – one that blends business acumen with social purpose – can drive transformative change.

The book examines case studies from the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia, showcasing the ways in which philanthropists are moving beyond charity to build sustainable, scalable solutions. It also under-

scores the importance of integrating technology, innovative financing models, and cross-sector partnerships to ensure that resources generate lasting impact.

With an estimated \$70-90 trillion in global wealth set to be transferred to millennials and Gen X in the coming decades, including \$26 trillion across Asia and Africa alone, the Gulf region has a unique opportunity to shape the future of philanthropy.

The next generation of philanthropists is expected to be more proactive, strategic and impact-focused than ever before. Bill Gates observed this shift in mindset, noting: "Many of these young people feel they don't need to wait until they retire to start giving. They see today's challenges and want to start tackling them immediately. They also are very collaborative, and we need more of that in philanthropy."

My own journey in philanthropy has been guided by this principle of investing for long-term social

impact, and building systems that advance strategic giving. From fostering entrepreneurship, education, and the arts to championing corporate governance, I have seen firsthand how strategic philanthropy can transform lives and communities.

Throughout this journey, I've had the privilege of working alongside visionary leaders across the humanitarian and development sectors, learning from them, collaborating with them and continually refining my approach to giving.

For those interested in learning more about these powerful stories and the strategies shaping modern philanthropy, "The Business of Philanthropy" offers a road map for action. The Gulf region is at an inflection point, with an unprecedented opportunity to drive meaningful, sustainable change on a global scale.

Now is the time to build a legacy of impact, one that extends beyond generosity to create enduring solutions for future generations.



Trade and investment: Govt committed to conducive environment

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmad Shaikh has emphasized the importance of promoting regional trade for sustainable economic growth.

While talking to the delegation of Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF), he said that concrete measures are being taken to develop the maritime sector, which plays a crucial role in the country's economic progress.

The delegation of the Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front held a meeting with the Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmad Shaikh. The delegation included Patron-in-Chief Mian Anjum Nisar and Chairman Fahim Rehman Saigol.

The minister said political stability and peace are necessary for achieving

sustainable development. The Minister expressed government's commitment to create a conducive environment for trade and investment for long-term economic prosperity.

Qaiser Ahmad Shaikh has said that the maritime sector in Pakistan is of key importance for economic development and the maritime policy will be announced soon after the approval of the cabinet.

He said that promoting maritime trade was indispensable for sustainable economic development. He said that last year the maritime sector had lost billions of rupees, but this year a profit target of Rs100 billion has been set. There is a plan to increase exports from \$32 billion to \$60 billion in four years.

He pointed out that Pakistani ports were working 50 percent less than their capacity. "If the vol-

ume of imports and exports is 90 billion dollars, it is expected to double in the next four years," he added.

Qaiser Sheikh said that the trade opportunities in Central Asian countries were increasing rapidly, but they do not have their own ports, so they are depending on Pakistani ports. "Pakistan's fisheries exports are 400 million dollars while our neighboring countries are far ahead of us in this sector."

The minister announced that the government of Pakistan had decided that 60pc of government imports and exports would be through the Gwadar port. "The Gwadar port will be equipped with world class facilities so that it can be transformed into a modern and complete port," he maintained.

On this occasion, Mian Anjum Nisar emphasized that in order to achieve the target of 60 billion dollars in exports the government

should formulate favorable policies and ensure that this year's budget is drafted according to the recommendations of stakeholders.

Fahimur Rehman Saigol, during the meeting, urged Minister Qaiser Ahmad Shaikh to address the issues of the business community at the earliest so that traders and industrialists can continue their contributions to the country's economic growth without any hindrance.

He also provided proposals regarding the improvement of shipping companies' operations related to imports and exports for the upcoming budget and discussed significant national issues in detail.

Fahimur Rehman pointed out that the rising taxes and the increase in gas and electricity prices, compared to other regional countries, are continually raising production costs, which indirectly impacts the public.

Digital launch ceremony of Pakistan Pavilion F.P. Report

LAHORE: The digital launch ceremony of the Pakistan Pavilion for World Expo 2025 Osaka, Japan held at Lahore. The Chief Executive TDAP inaugurated the Pavilion's official website and social media platforms, marking a significant step in Pakistan's participation in the World Expo under the theme "Universe in a Grain of Salt". The digital platforms will serve as an interactive portal for global audiences to explore the depth and diversity of Pakistan's culture, innovations, and trade opportunities.

In his remarks, Mr. Faiz Ahmad, the Chief Executive of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) stated, "the theme 'Universe in a Grain of Salt' beautifully depicts our vision of exploring the infinite possibilities within our cultural and economic landscape. Pakistan's participation at World Expo 2025 Osaka reflects a commitment to collaboration and mutual understanding, illustrating how even the simplest resources can build relationships. These digital platforms reinforces our mission to promote Pakistan's image and will enable us to connect with the world in innovative ways."

Pakistan's participation in the World Expo 2025 is led by Honourable Federal Minister for Commerce, Mr. Jam Kamal Khan. In his message, honourable minister emphasized "The Pakistan Pavilion is more than just a physical space; it is a reflection of our nation's resilience, creativity and aspirations, and the World Expo 2025 in Japan is a unique opportunity for Pakistan to share its narrative. We aim to demonstrate how Pakistan's rich heritage and innovative spirit can contribute to a sustainable and interconnected world. I invite everyone to join us on this journey and witness the incredible story of Pakistan unfold, at Expo 2025 Osaka."

World Expo 2025 Osaka, Japan will take place from 13th April to 13th October 2025, under the theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives".



KARACHI: MD and CEO PPL Imran Abbasy giving certificate to a student during closing ceremony at X-Loop Training Centre.

PPL empowers poor youth with digital literacy

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) has launched first-of-its-kind Employment-Based Digital Literacy Programme, transforming the lives of underprivileged youth by equipping them with cutting-edge digital skills and securing online jobs with international organizations.

Conducted in collaboration with Dawood Global Foundation (DGF) and X-Loop Digital, the 16-week program trained 15 students from Sui, Dera Bugti, Matiari, Kashmore, Kandhkot, Daultala in Full Stack Engineering and Data Sciences at the X-Loop Training Centre in Karachi. The programme's hallmark achievement was its direct employment linkage

with an international organization, ensuring that the students were not only trained but also placed in online jobs upon completion. The programme was fully funded by PPL at a cost of Rs. 12 million, including travel and four-month boarding and lodging of students.

MD and CEO PPL Imran Abbasy distributed the certificates amongst the students in the closing ceremony held at X-Loop Training Centre, Karachi. GM Shared Services PPL Mahmood ul Hasan, CEO DGF Tara Uzra Dawood and CEO X-Loop Digital Mir Nasir also congratulated the students and appreciated PPL for taking this initiative as these initiatives set precedence for others.

Speaking at the event, MD PPL emphasized the

company's commitment to bridging the digital divide and creating economic opportunities for youth in underserved areas. "This initiative is a testament to our dedication to sustainable community transformation. By providing internationally recognized training and securing employment for these students, we are fostering real change in their lives and communities," he stated.

A key success story is a female student from Daultala, near Adhi Field, who secured first position and transitioned from a remote area to global employment. The initiative reinforces PPL's commitment to bridging the digital divide and fostering economic empowerment in Pakistan's underserved regions.

Dun & Bradstreet deepens synergy with business community



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Dun & Bradstreet Pakistan organized an interactive discussion with business leaders from across the country. The event was aimed at knowledge sharing and identifying gaps in Pakistan's business ecosystem.

Held at Dun & Bradstreet Pakistan's head office in Karachi, the event was graced by Dun & Bradstreet Pakistan Chairman Tajuddin Ahmad.

The gathering brought together key industry leaders to discuss strategic business insights, marketing intelligence, and potential synergies for growth.

During the session, participants were apprised about Dun & Bradstreet's services including sales, marketing, risk management, finance and compliance solutions. The business leaders shared positive feedback about Dun & Bradstreet's products utilized by their companies.

The session played a pivotal role in enhancing Dun & Bradstreet's brand image and disseminating information about the products and services offered by the entity.

Dun & Bradstreet Pakistan, Chief Business Officer, Zubair Qureshi said "Business Round Table events act as an important step towards potential collaborations between Dun & Bradstreet and companies of Pakistan. Additionally, it also facilitates businesses

in discovering Dun & Bradstreet's products targeted towards specific business functions."

Among notable attendees of the event were Ehtasham Shahid, Director General, NADRA, Anis Younus, Managing Director, EMBA Corporation, Shahid Imam, Chief Executive, Executive Networks International, Anwar Khan, Founder & President, Pak Angels, Osama Waqar, Wealth Create Manager, JS Investments, Intesar Uddin, Group Chief Executive, Deekjae Group of Companies, Khalid Zaman Khan, Group Head Human Resource, Meezan Bank, Farrukh Junaiddi, Senior Partner, Junaiddi Shoaib Asad Chartered Accountants, Kaiser Ashraf, Principal Architect, Kaiser Ashraf & Associates - Architects and Consultants, Muhammad Luqman, CEO, Software Export House, Farrukh Junaiddi, EC Member, MAP, Muhammad Intesar, EC Member, MAP, and Syed Hasan Ali Naqvi, Executive Director, MAP.

WCCI established in Mirpurkhas Division

HYDERABAD (APP): Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been established in Mirpur Khas Division to promote the entrepreneurial skills of women and empower them economically.

The President Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sadaf Raza Waraich addressing to a Press Conference here on Sunday said that his chamber is the first of its kind in the region whose founder is President Ms. Sadaf Raza Waraich while Dr Farzana is Senior Vice President, Iram Afshan

will be its Vice President Secretary General Aqila Abuzar.

The event was attended by distinguished guests, business personalities and social leaders.

Sadaf Raza said that the aim of the chamber is to provide a platform for women entrepreneurs where they can advance their business journey, gain skills and take advantage of

networking opportunities.

She announced that the chamber will soon establish vocational training centers in Mirpur Khas and Umerkot, where various skill-teaching programs will be started.

Through these centers, women will be trained in modern business trends, digital marketing, handicrafts and other economic activities.

New batch of Air Traffic Controllers completes training



F.P. Report

KARACHI: A batch of newly recruited Air Traffic Controllers has successfully completed the 44th Basic ATCO Course at the Civil Aviation Training Institute (CATI). This group consisted of 29 officers who underwent an intensive 40-week ab-initio training program, a prerequisite before their formal induction as Assistant Directors Air Traffic Services.

Upon passing out from CATI, these young officers have now been assigned to Karachi and Lahore for On-the-Job Training (OJT), which is essential before they take on independent responsibilities as Air Traffic Controllers.

The training was conducted by a team of experienced former ATC officers, including Rashid Muhammad Hussain, Mr. Shabbir Ahmed, Javed Hameed, and Mr. Naveed Ahmed Khan. Their expertise played a vital role in shaping the new generation of ATCOs.

BMP for measures to curb capital flight, retain financial resources in country

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has emphasized the need for curbing capital flight and brain drain, calling for measures to retain Pakistan's financial and human resources within the country.

BMP Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar underscored the need for urgent reforms to restore investor confidence, address economic hurdles, and prevent further capital outflows.

Expressing concern over the growing number of Pakistani businesses relocating abroad, he pointed out that thousands of individuals have transferred their businesses overseas to secure citizenship through investment programs.

He expressed optimism that Pakistan could become a trillion-dollar economy within the next six to seven

years if the right economic policies were implemented. He also highlighted the progress in the agriculture sector, noting that rice exports had reached \$3.8 billion and total agricultural exports had climbed to \$9 billion, shifting Pakistan from an import-driven to an export-driven economy.

BMP Chairman urged the government to focus on enhancing economic competitiveness rather than relying on trade concessions such as the European Union's GSP+ scheme. He pointed to artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and software as key sectors for economic advancement.

He acknowledged improvements in economic indicators, stock market performance, and rising IT exports but noted that a significant trust deficit still hindered business confidence. He urged the government to address corruption and bureaucratic harassment, which he said were forcing people to

leave the country.

He emphasized the untapped potential of Pakistan's IT sector, which he estimated could reach \$30 billion in exports. However, he warned that excessive regulatory pressure was stifling growth, particularly through changes in tax policies such as the replacement of the Final Tax Regime (FTR) with a standard taxation system.

He highlighted a deteriorating business climate, with many multinational companies exiting Pakistan. Referring to the report, he said that the International Monetary Fund has revised Pakistan's economic outlook, downgrading its projected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for 2025 to 3%, down from 3.2% forecasted just three months ago.

The adjustment comes amid a broader global economic assessment presented in the IMF's "World Economic Outlook Update: Global Growth – Divergent

and Uncertain."

The IMF's revised projections also indicate that Pakistan's GDP growth will remain at 4% in 2026. However, the latest downgrade reflects ongoing economic challenges in the country, although the IMF did not provide specific reasons for the revision.

This latest revision mirrors the forecast made by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) last month, which also adjusted Pakistan's growth forecast to 3% for the fiscal year 2024-25, up from a previously projected 2.8%. Both institutions have cited challenges faced by Pakistan's economy but have maintained a cautiously optimistic outlook for the medium-term.

Globally, the IMF forecasts a global growth rate of 3.3% for both 2025 and 2026, slightly below the historical average of 3.7%.

He highlighted that the global economy continues to face diverging growth patterns, with stronger-

than-expected performance in the United States partially offsetting weaker results in other major economies.

Inflationary trends are expected to ease in the coming years, with the projecting global inflation to decline to 4.2% in 2025 and 3.5% in 2026. However, he cautioned that inflation remains stubbornly high in some regions, despite a global trend of disinflation.

He also noted a significant decrease in energy commodity prices, with a forecasted 2.6% decline in 2025, while non-fuel commodity prices are expected to rise by 2.5%, largely due to adverse weather conditions affecting key producers.

The global outlook includes more optimistic projections for some major economies. In the United States, GDP growth is expected to reach 2.7% in 2025, revised upward by 0.5 percentage points due to stronger domestic demand. However, US growth is forecast to slow

to 2.1% in 2026. In contrast, the euro area is facing a weaker economic trajectory, with growth projected at 1% for 2025, down from an earlier estimate of 1.2%.

According to reports, this downward revision reflects slower-than-expected momentum, particularly in manufacturing, and ongoing political and policy uncertainties. The IMF anticipates a recovery in 2026, with growth expected to rise to 1.4%.

The United Kingdom is projected to see modest growth, with an estimated 1.6% increase in 2025 and 1.5% in 2026. Meanwhile, China's GDP is expected to grow at 4.6% in 2025 and 4.5% in 2026, with the IMF urging China to boost domestic demand to support its economic expansion. India, on the other hand, continues to show robust growth, with the IMF projecting a solid 6.5% GDP increase in both 2025 and 2026, in line with its potential.

Ten research papers in Lancet equal to ten in zero-impact journal

Dr.Waseem Hassan

In Pakistan, the promotion criteria for university faculty have long emphasized the number of publications rather than their quality. According to the current regulations, publishing ten articles—regardless of their quality or impact—is sufficient for promotion (from assistant to associate professor). Surprisingly, this rule equates ten papers in The Lancet or Nature with ten papers published in any journal, even those with zero impact factor, as long as the journal is indexed in the Web of Science (or recognized by the HEC).

The Lancet, Nature, and The New England Journal

of Medicine etc.... are universally acknowledged as the gold standard in academic publishing. Their articles often introduce revolutionary findings, innovative methodologies, and paradigm-shifting theories.

During a conversation with colleagues, someone asked, "What kind of research do journals like The Lancet or Nature publish?" One individual casually told them, "They publish zero literature papers," while another quipped that they mostly publish zero-literature research on cancer treatment. These journals do not accept mediocrity; they prioritize research that contributes significantly to scientific progress, setting a benchmark for

quality that many aspire to achieve but few manage.

In stark contrast, the academic promotion system in Pakistan fails to recognize or reward this pursuit of excellence. Instead, it operates on a metric that counts the number of publications without considering the impact or significance of the research. Under the current rules, publishing ten papers in high-impact journals like The Lancet or Nature holds no more weight than publishing ten papers in journals with zero impact factor. This practice is not only unfair but also discouraging

for researchers who invest immense effort, time, and resources to meet the high standards of globally recog-

nized journals.

Publishing in world class journals requires innovation, novelty, and years of dedication to producing results that can withstand the scrutiny of world-class experts. On the other hand, some journals, particularly those with zero impact factor, accept articles with minimal scrutiny, provided they meet basic formatting and submission requirements.

Equating the two is a disservice to both researchers and the broader academic community. It reduces the motivation to aim for excellence, as the rewards for extraordinary effort are indistinguishable from those for minimal effort.

Another issue with the current system is its disregard for non-traditional contributions. High-impact journals often publish reviews, perspectives, editorials, short surveys, and other formats that play a crucial role in advancing scientific dialogue. These contributions, while not original research articles, are often authored by leading experts and provide critical insights, syntheses, and commentaries that shape the direction of future research.

However, in Pakistan, such contributions are not recognized as valid for promotion. A researcher publishing a detailed and widely cited review in The Lancet or Nature may find

that their work holds no value in the eyes of promotion committees. Meanwhile, a 2,500-word so-called "research article" in a newly indexed journal with zero impact factor is counted as a valid publication, regardless of its actual scientific merit.

The policies governing academic promotions in Pakistan have drawn criticism from the international academic community. Universities worldwide value quality over quantity, often using metrics such as impact factor, citation counts, and h-index etc... to assess the significance of a researcher's work. By contrast, the Pakistani system's focus on numbers without regard for quality

undermines the credibility of its academic institutions on a global scale.

Locally, these policies have created frustration and disillusionment among researchers who strive for excellence. Many young academics question why they should aim for high-impact journals when their efforts will not be recognized or rewarded. This sentiment discourages innovation and fosters a culture of mediocrity, where the focus shifts to meeting the minimum requirements rather than excelling in one's field.

By prioritizing numerical metrics, universities risk fostering a generation of researchers who prioritize speed over substance,

ultimately stifling innovation and reducing the overall impact of their work.

In conclusion, the current academic promotion criteria in Pakistan, which equates ten papers in The Lancet with ten papers in zero-impact journals, is deeply flawed and counterproductive.

To address these issues, a paradigm shift is needed—one that emphasizes quality over quantity, recognizes diverse forms of academic contributions, and aligns promotion criteria with global standards.

Only then can Pakistan's academic institutions foster a culture of excellence and reclaim their place in the international academic community.



In brief

Machac downs Davidovich

ACAPULCO (AFP): Tomas Machac captured his first ATP title on Saturday, beating Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 7-6 (8/6), 6-2 to win the Mexico Open in Acapulco. Machac, the eighth seed who was ranked just 65th in the world a year ago and came into the week ranked 25th, is projected to make his top 20 debut when the new rankings are released on Monday. The 24-year-old delivered a formidable display on serve, winning 37 of 39 first-serve points and saving a set point at 5/6 in the first-set tiebreaker with a thundering serve that drew an error from Davidovich. He was also impressive from the baseline, using his forehand to dictate rallies as he posted his second win in two matches against Davidovich, the world number 48. Machac is the second Czech player to win the Mexico Open, after Jiri Novak in 1998. He's also the third first-time winner this season, following Alexandre Muller in Hong Kong in January and 18-year-old Brazilian Joao Fonseca in Buenos Aires in February. It was a second straight ATP runner-up finish for Davidovich, who wasted two match points in a loss to Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic in the Delray Beach final on February 16.

Marc outduels brother Alex

BURIRAM (AFP): Six-time world champion Marc Marquez used all his experience to fight back from a mid-race wobble to outduel his brother Alex Marquez for a "dream" win in Sunday's season-opening Thai MotoGP. It completed a dominant debut for his new factory Ducati team, with pole-sitter Marquez having romped to victory in Saturday's sprint at the Buriram Circuit for a maximum 37 championship points. The Spanish great took his 63rd MotoGP victory by 1.732sec from younger sibling Alex, who is still seeking a first chequered flag, with Italian two-time world champion Francesco Bagnaia third. Marc Marquez had opened a 1.5 second gap at the front in searing heat, when on lap seven he suddenly slowed on turn three with a tyre pressure problem to relinquish the lead to his brother. Marc tucked into second spot, lurking ominously on Alex's back wheel for another 15 laps as he managed his tyres expertly and kept the pressure issue under control. His strategy paid off as he made a decisive move with less than laps of the 26 to dive under Alex on turn 12 before stretching away to complete a second family one-two, after Saturday's sprint. "I cannot ask for more" "Yesterday I was happy, today I am super happy," said Marc Marquez. "I mean it's a dream. I cannot ask for more. "We started this new journey in the perfect way, with pole position and a double victory, sprint and main race. I want to say thanks to the team. "And to share this weekend with my brother is something unreal for our family. "There are no words to describe how you feel when you are on the podium with your brother." Another Italian, Franco Morbidelli, was fourth on a VR46 Ducati and Japanese rookie Ai Ogura fifth on his MotoGP debut for Trackhouse Aprilia. "For one moment I thought I might hold on to win," said Alex Marquez. "Leading was not easy. I just tried to ride, not to override and not make mistakes.



DUBAI: Varun Chakravarthy picked up five wickets against New Zealand.

PCB chairman meets domestic perfomers

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi held a meeting with emerging domestic cricketers on Sunday as the board deliberates over squad changes ahead of the national team's upcoming tour of New Zealand. According to sources, the meeting took place just days after Pakistan's disappointing exit from the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, where they failed to progress beyond the group stage. The sources claimed the PCB is considering resting senior players for the New Zealand tour and allowing young talent to prove their mettle. Amid growing speculation regarding a possible overhaul of the white-ball squad, Naqvi met with several promising domestic cricketers. Among those present were Khawaja

Nafay, Abdul Samad, Haider Ali, Muhammad Ali, Ali Raza, Ahmed Daniyal, Nisar Ahmed, Mohammad Ibtisam, and Mohammad Salman. Additionally, young prospects Afaq Afridi, Saad Masood, Muaz Sadaqat, Arafat Minhas, Mubasir Khan, Hassan Nawaz, Faisal Akram, Tahir Baig, and Qasim Akram also attended the session. Pakistan's early elimination from the Champions Trophy 2025 has intensified calls for changes in the squad, with former cricketers and fans heavily criticizing senior players, including Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, and Shaheen Afridi, for their underwhelming performances. Calls were made to the Pakistan Cricket Board to drop senior players and give chances to domestic

performers in the national side's future tours. The Pakistan team is set to depart for New Zealand for a white-ball tour which will run from March 16 to April 5, featuring five T20Is and three ODIs. The T20I series will commence with the first game in Christchurch on March 16, followed by the second match in Dunedin on March 18. The third match will be played in Auckland on March 21, while the fourth and fifth games are scheduled on March 23 and 26, respectively. Following the conclusion of the T20I series, the teams will travel to Napier for the first ODI, scheduled for March 29. The two sides will face off in the second ODI on April 2 in Hamilton, while the third and final ODI will be played in Mount Maunganui on April 5.

Davis retains WBA lightweight title with majority draw against Roach

NEW YORK (AFP): Unbeaten American Gervonta Davis retained his World Boxing Association lightweight world title with a majority draw against battling challenger Lamont Roach in Brooklyn on Saturday. Davis, who had won 28 of his prior 30 fights by knockout, was taken to the limit by WBA super-featherweight world champ Roach in an action-packed all-American bout at the Barclays Center. Two judges scored it 114-114 while a third gave it to Davis 115-113 -- but controversy erupted over the referee's failure to call it a knockdown when the champion took a knee in the ninth round. Davis, who then stuck his head through the ropes to have his face towelled off, said he stopped because oil from his hair got in his eye. He chided fans for booing when he offered that explanation in the ring after the bout. "They love you and then they hate you," he said. Roach, one of the few fighters who



has tested Davis, took the fight to the champion, weathering a stream of punishing blows and responding in kind. "I'm one of the best fighters in the world, man, and it showed tonight," Roach said in the ring. "He probably wasn't wailing when he said grease got in his eye, but if you voluntarily take a knee and the ref's not counting that's a knockdown. "If that's a knockdown, I win the fight," he added, calling for a rematch. "I want to run it back," said Roach, who fell to 25-1 with 2 drawn and 10 knockouts. On the undercard, Dominican Alberto Puello

beat Spain's Sandor Martin by split decision to retain his World Boxing Council super lightweight world title. After 12 rounds of relentless action, two judges gave it to Puello by scores of 115-113 and 116-112 while the third saw it 113-115 for Martin. Puello remained unbeaten with 24 victories, 10 by knockout. Martin fell to 42-3 with 15 knockouts, but he gave Puello all he could handle in the early rounds, landing damaging punches to the body. Puello began to claw back in the second half of the bout, landing two big lefts in the eighth and dominating in the last two rounds.

Archer 'pretty keen' to play Test cricket: McCullum

LONDON (Agencies): England seamer Jofra Archer is "pretty keen" to play Test cricket this summer, says head coach Brendon McCullum. The 29-year-old has suffered a recurring stress fracture in his elbow and a back stress fracture since he last played Test cricket in 2021. The fast bowler, who has 42 Test wickets since his debut in the 2019 Ashes, returned to international cricket in March 2023 in England's ODI series against Bangladesh but suffered elbow discomfort and then did not play international cricket until May 2024. "We've got to make sure we're always doing the right thing by Jof and understanding the risks involved but I'm pretty sure he's pretty keen to play Test cricket," said McCullum. "If you can add him to the battery of fast bowlers you're trying to build then it only strengthens the squad. "Overall, I'm really pleased to see where Jof's at and it's great to see him back playing and injury-free at the moment." Asked if Archer could play Test cricket this summer, McCullum said: "I guess so, we'll find out. I'll sit down with some of the players after this [the Champions Trophy] and work out what their ambitions are. I would imagine Jof would be keen to play Test cricket this summer." Since his return, Archer has taken part in the 2024 T20 World Cup, the home series against Australia and tours of the West Indies, India and most recently the Champions Trophy in Pakistan. Archer took seven wickets as he played in six of the eight games in India, before claiming six wickets in England's three Champions Trophy matches. "Jofra's been out of competitive cricket for a couple of years, it's taken a little bit of time to get that rhythm of gameplay back but I think he's been really good," said McCullum. "He's bowled high pace, he's played a lot of cricket, he's been able to get a significant workload under his belt throughout this tournament [the Champions Trophy]. "We've seen moments of how great Jof is, even tonight [on Saturday] a couple of wickets he took and the other night against Afghanistan, three with the new ball."

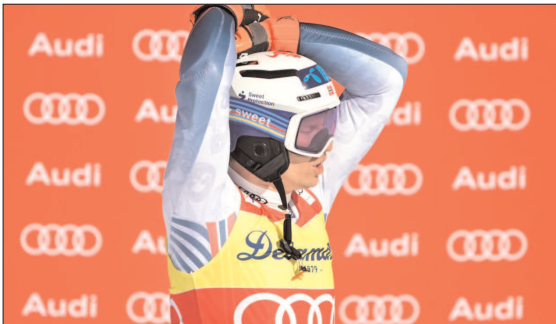
India beat NZ to set up semi-final v Australia

DUBAI (Agencies): India beat New Zealand by 44 runs in the final group match of the Champions Trophy to set up a semi-final against Australia. Having been set 250 to win on a slow surface in Dubai, the Black Caps were bowled out for 205 after a masterful performance from India's spinners with Varun Chakravarthy taking 5-42. Kane Williamson's 81 kept New Zealand in contention, but the run-rate mounted through the middle overs and the last seven wickets fell for 72 runs. India are playing all of their matches in Dubai having chosen not to travel to Pakistan, and will face Steve Smith's Australia in the first knockout match on Tuesday. New Zealand, who had also already qualified before this match, will play South Africa in Lahore on Wednesday. India's batters also struggled for fluency as they slipped to 30-3, including another sensational catch from Glenn Phillips at point to remove Virat Kohli for 11. A patient stand of 98 between Axar Patel and

Shreyas Iyer, who top-scored with 79, led India's recovery before Hardik Pandya's run-a-ball 45 helped post a competitive total. New Zealand were exceptional in the field while seamer Matt Henry starred with 5-42, but it was an ominously brilliant display from the India spinners on a favourable Dubai surface where the final will also be played if they qualify. In-form India overcome spirited NZ. Both teams were unbeaten in the group coming into this encounter, which presented a fascinating opportunity how they would fare under significant pressure for the first time. India were immediately on the back foot with Shubman Gill pinned lbw by Henry for two, skipper Rohit Sharma fell to Kyle Jamieson for 15 and the crowd was silenced by another of Phillips' one-handed acrobatic efforts. But Axar and Shreyase, whose partnership came from 136 balls, expertly rotated the strike calmly and adjusted to the tricky surface which enabled Hardik to play more expansively in the closing overs.

While it was not explosive, it was the significant partnership that New Zealand's innings lacked as nobody was able to support Williamson, with the stand of 44 between himself and Daryl Mitchell the highest contribution. They did not collapse or lose wickets in clusters but Rohit utilised his four spinners cannily, with each offering a different challenge and none of the batters were able to settle. At 133-3 with 18 overs remaining, the match was intriguingly poised but when Tom Latham was trapped in front by Ravindra Jadeja, India had their opening and Chakravarthy burst through. Having earlier removed opener Will Young for 22, he had Phillips and Michael Bracewell lbw, Mitchell Santner was bowled for 28 and Henry was caught at mid-off for two. New Zealand will still be confident as they head back to the batter-friendly surface of Lahore, but India's spin quartet looks like it will be the biggest challenge for any team to overcome.

Kristoffersen completes weekend double



KRANJSKA GORA (AFP): Henrik Kristoffersen swept over the ruts to take the World Cup slalom in Kranjska Gora on Sunday, a day after winning the giant slalom at the same venue. Kristoffersen led a Norwegian one-two with Timon Haugen second while Austria's Manuel Feller was third on a course set by his coach. Kristoffersen was tied for sixth fastest in the first run, but coped best as the ruts deepened for the late starters in the second run. The early starters had a marked advantage, with veteran Frenchman Victor Muffat-Jeandet, who had finished

26th on the first run, recording comfortably the fastest time - the 35-year-old went on to finish sixth. Even though he had some bumpy moments, Kristoffersen was the best of the late starters to total 1min 39.26sec and edge Haugen by 0.17sec. Feller was 0.23sec back, nudging Loic Meillard, the halfway leader, off the podium by 0.01sec. "I still messed up the top and second part a little bit," said Kristoffersen. "Very tight today. Lucky to be on the right side of the hundreds." Kristoffersen started the day three points ahead of Clement Noel in the slalom standings. The Frenchman

began his second descent with a 0.22sec edge over the Norwegian, but was the slowest of the 24 skiers who finished and dropped to 10th, 0.99sec behind the winner. That allowed Kristoffersen to increase his points total in the discipline standings to 567, 77 ahead of Noel. In the overall standings, the Norwegian tightened his grip on second place with 946 points but is still 360 behind Swiss speed specialist Marco Odermatt. For Kristoffersen, a World Champion in giant slalom in 2019 and in slalom in 2023 this was a 33rd World Cup victory, yet it was still marked a first. He noted that he had scored "double weekends" before, but always when both races were in the same even - either slalom or giant slalom - and had several times just missed a slalom/giant slalom sweep, finishing first in one and second in the other. "This was a big goal for me," the 30-year-old said. "So I'm very happy with my day."

Takele wins Tokyo Marathon as Cheptegei finishes ninth

TOKYO (AFP): Ethiopia's Tadesse Takele won the Tokyo Marathon in a time of 2hr 3min 23sec on Sunday as Uganda's double Olympic track champion Joshua Cheptegei finished ninth. Takele broke clear of the pack with around 4km to go in warm conditions to claim his first major marathon title, shaving a second off his previous personal best. Ethiopia's Deressa Geleta was second in 2:03:51, with Kenya's Vincent Kipkemai Ngetich third in 2:04:00. "The weather wasn't a problem, it wasn't too hot and for me it was comfortable," said Takele. "The course was good and this was a great day for me. In the future, I hope to run even better than I did today." Ethiopia's Suturem Asefa Kebede defended her title in the women's race, finishing in 2:16:31. Kenya's Winfridah Moraa Moseti was second in 2:16:56, with Ethiopia's Hawi Feysa third in 2:17:00. Cheptegei, who won gold in both the Tokyo Olympics 5,000m in 2021 and the 10,000m in Paris last year, was running his second marathon after making his debut at the distance in Valencia two years ago. The 28-year-old finished in a time of 2:05:59. "I'm so grateful today that I came to Tokyo," said Cheptegei. "There are some good positives to take home and prepare for another step forward." Cheptegei said he struggled with the unseasonably warm Tokyo weather, with temperatures reaching 20 Celsius (68 Fahrenheit) by the end of the race. "Regardless, I'm not complaining," said Cheptegei. "I'm really satisfied with the result and it can be a build-up for next season."

Sixers shock Warriors to snap nine-game losing streak

LOS ANGELES (AFP): Quentin Grimes scored a career-high 44 points as the Philadelphia 76ers shocked the Golden State Warriors 126-119 to snap their nine-game NBA skid on Saturday -- a day after confirming superstar center Joel Embiid would miss the rest of the season. The Sixers brought Stephen Curry and the Warriors back to earth with a thud two days after Curry drilled a dozen three-pointers on the way to 56 points in a win at Orlando. Curry finished with 29 points and a season-high 13 assists but the Warriors missed the offensive spark of Jimmy Butler, who was a late scratch with back spasms. Philadelphia seized control with a 37-point second quarter that propelled them

to a 67-55 halftime lead. Golden State pulled level at 116-116 with 2:01 remaining, but Grimes drove for a layup and Guerschon Yabusele drilled a three-pointer and the 76ers held on for the win. Despite the loss of Embiid to a lingering knee injury -- the most notable of a string of injury setbacks for the Sixers -- Grimes was bullish on their chances of making the post-season. "We've still got a lot of games and a chance to make the play-in," he said. Milwaukee star Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 29 points with nine rebounds and nine assists and Damian Lillard added 28 points for the Bucks in a 132-117 victory over the Mavericks in Dallas. Milwaukee closed the

first half on a 15-4 scoring run to take a 71-63 lead at halftime and Kyrie Irving, who led Dallas with 31 points, was limited to four points in the third quarter as the Bucks pulled away in the second half. One day after Detroit's eight-game winning streak -- their longest in 17 years -- ended with a loss to Denver the Pistons bounced back with a 115-94 victory over the Brooklyn Nets. Tobias Harris, Jalen Duren and Malik Beasley scored 18 points apiece to lead six Pistons players to score in double figures -- Beasley making six of his 10 shot attempts before he was ejected midway through the fourth quarter after receiving his second technical foul. Duren added 11 rebounds and six of the Pistons' 15 blocked shots.

Cade Cunningham scored nine of his 15 points in the fourth quarter and handed out nine assists for the Pistons, whose sloppy third quarter had seen their 23-point halftime lead sliced to six going into the final period. Spurs edge Grizzlies San Antonio's De'Aaron Fox drained the game-winning basket with 2.6 seconds remaining as the Spurs snapped a four-game skid with a 130-128 victory over the Grizzlies in Memphis. The Spurs led by as many as 22 against a Grizzlies team missing injured stars Ja Morant and Desmond Bane. But the Grizzlies tied it up twice in the final minute -- first on Jaren Jackson Jr.'s driving basket with 49.8 seconds left and again on Jackson's step-back three-



pointer that made it 128-128 with 23.4 seconds to play. Jackson led all scorers with 42 points. Fox and Devin Vassell scored 20 points each to lead the Spurs starters and the Spurs reserves -- led by 24 points from rookie

Stephon Castle -- out-scored the Memphis bench 71-41. It was a morale-boosting win for San Antonio, who announced last month that second-year star Victor Wembanyama would miss the rest of the regular sea-

son with a blood clot in his shoulder and confirmed on Thursday that iconic coach Gregg Popovich wouldn't return this season as he continues to recover from a stroke suffered in November.



In brief

DIG holds orderly room

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Islamabad, Muhammad Jawad Tariq, held an orderly room meeting on Sunday at his office to address the professional and personal concerns of police officers, ensuring their timely resolution. A public relations officer told APP that the session was attended by police officers who raised issues related to transfers, postings, and other official and personal matters. DIG Tariq issued immediate directives for the resolution of certain concerns, while instructions were given to relevant officers to address the remaining issues. DIG Tariq said the police department is committed to maintaining a system of reward and accountability to enhance institutional performance. Officers demonstrating exceptional service will be recognized with commendation certificates and prizes, whereas those showing negligence will face departmental action. DIG further stated that multiple welfare initiatives have been introduced for police personnel, including improved housing, quality healthcare, and enhanced education facilities. "If you face any difficulties, my office door is always open for you. We all must work together for the betterment of this city," he added. DIG Tariq emphasized that the objective of the orderly room was to prioritize the welfare of police officers, resolve their issues on a priority basis, and boost their morale.

Police bust dacoits gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Sadiqabad Police on Sunday busted a two-member gang of dacoits with looted items. According to a Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the arrested accused were identified as Hassan Abbas and Naeem. Stolen gold ornaments worth more than Rs 1 million and Rs 170,000 in cash, besides three mobile phones snatched from citizens at gunpoint and weapons were also recovered from the accused. The accused were wanted to the police in many robbery cases, the spokesman said.

5 drug peddlers held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Sunday continued operations against drug peddlers and held four accused with more than 5.5 kilograms of charas from different areas. According to the police spokesman, the Saddar Baroni Police recovered 1.57 kg charas from accused Waris while the Civil Lines Police nabbed accused Shafiq with 1.5 kg of the contraband item. Similarly, the Morgah and Sadiqabad Police netted accused Abrar and Mudassar with 1.32 kg and 1.3 kg charas respectively.

Nasir Kazmi remembered

ISLAMABAD (INP): Death anniversary of renowned Urdu poet known as founder of modern Urdu ghazal Nasir Kazmi was observed on Sunday. Born in Ambala in 1925, passed his matriculation examination from Muslim High School Ambala and got admission in Government College Lahore for bachelor degree but he had to leave education due to the unrest witnessed during the partition of the sub-continent. Nasir Kazmi worked in Welfare Department for some time and then in the Agriculture Department. While associated with Radio Pakistan, Nasir Kazmi wrote sketches of classical Urdu poets Mir Taqi Mir, Nazir, Wali, Insha and so on, which became very popular. His first poetry collection was 'Barg-e-Nay'. Afterwards, his two more collections 'Dewaan' and 'Pahli Barish' were published.

Mushaal urges world to take practical steps

ISLAMABAD (INP): Mushaal Hussein Mullick, Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organization, has urged the international community to take practical steps for an end to the ongoing human rights violations by Indian troops in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Palestine. Mushaal, speaking alongside the Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan after viewing a photo exhibition depicting atrocities faced by Palestine people, expressed deep anguish over the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Palestine and highlighted the shared struggles of

Kashmiris and Palestinians. She said, "Our hearts bleed as we witness the slaughter, destruction, and humiliation of innocent civilians in Palestine, as a slaughterhouse has been opened, and human dignity is being trampled upon."

Mushaal, who is wife of unlawfully incarcerated senior Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, stated that Israel and India were the world's largest land-grabbing entities, implementing settler-colonial tactics both in Palestine and Kashmir.

Drawing parallels to the suffering of Kashmiris under Indian occupation, she described the situa-

tion as a "slaughterhouse," where innocent lives were being extinguished, and human dignity was being trampled.

She urged the world to move beyond mere condemnations and lip service and take concrete actions to implement international laws that protect human rights and democratic principles.

The plight of Kashmiris and Palestinians, she noted, represented the oldest and most legally justified causes on the UN agenda, whose people continued to suffer under brutal occupation, subjecting to extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

Motorway Police vehicle attacked

ISLAMABAD (APP): The unidentified assailants on Sunday opened fire on a Motorway Police vehicle near the Sanghani Interchange on M-1 Motorway.

Despite heavy gunfire, both officers inside the vehicle escaped without injuries. The attackers remain at large as Motorway Police intensify search efforts, said the spokesperson of Motorway Police.

The incident occurred,

when unknown suspects targeted a Motorway Police vehicle near the Sanghani Interchange. The vehicle, carrying Sub-Inspector Ijaz and Head Constable Ibrahim, came under intense gunfire. Miraculously, both officers survived the attack unharmed.

Following the shooting, the police vehicle caught fire, causing significant damage. Authorities from both the Motorway Police and local district police

quickly arrived at the scene with additional personnel to secure the area and initiate an investigation.

No arrests have been made so far, and a manhunt is underway to locate the suspects. Officials have assured that further legal action will be taken as the investigation progresses.

The Motorway Police spokesperson emphasized that efforts are ongoing to ensure the safety of law enforcement personnel and the public.

Nationwide heavy rainfall alert issued

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Pakistan enters the holy month of Ramadan, the National Weather Forecasting Center Sunday issued a warning for heavy rainfall and intense precipitation where citizens are advised to take precautionary measures to ensure their safety, including avoiding travel to flood-prone areas, staying indoors during heavy rainfall, and following evacuation orders from local authorities.

According to the forecast, a low-pressure system will bring vigorous rainfall and snowfall to the northern regions on Sunday (today)

and tomorrow, private news channels reported.

Punjab is expected to experience torrential downpours, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will witness rain and snowfall in both its plains and mountainous areas until March 4. Local authorities have also been placed on high alert.

Hilly areas, including Murree and Galiyat are also predicted to receive significant rainfall and snowfall.

The Meteorological Office further announced that a potent western weather system is anticipated to enter Balochistan today, generating thunder-

storms, heavy rain and snowfall in mountainous regions.

As a precautionary measure, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has advised travelers and tourists to refrain from non-essential travel during snowfall, storms and potential flooding.

PDMA official said, "We urge citizens to exercise extreme caution and avoid traveling to areas prone to flooding and landslides, especially during the holy month of Ramadan to ensure their safety and well-being."

Health experts warn against deep-fried foods items

ISLAMABAD (APP): As millions of Muslims worldwide observed their first fast of the holy month, health experts issued a timely warning about the dangers of deep-fried foods, a traditional staple of many Ramadan meals.

According to nutritionists, deep-fried foods such as samosas, spring rolls, and fried doughnuts were high in calories, fat, and sodium, making them a recipe for disaster, particularly during Ramadan when Muslims fast from dawn to dusk.

Health experts recommend opting for healthier alternatives such as grilled meats, steamed vegetables, and fresh

fruits.

They also advise Muslims to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and limiting their intake of sugary drinks.

A leading nutritionist Dr Saima Khan said fasting during Ramadan can be challenging, and consuming deep-fried foods can exacerbate dehydration, digestive issues, and other health problems.

She said that Ramadan is a time for spiritual reflection and renewal, and taking care of our physical health is an important part of it, adding that by making informed food choices, Muslims can ensure a healthy and blessed Ramadan.

Another Nutritionist Dr Talha Imad warns that "Fried foods, oily snacks, and rich desserts are a recipe for disaster, especially during Ramadan and these foods can lead to digestive issues, bloating, and discomfort, making it difficult to focus on your prayers and daily activities."

He advised to break your fast with dates and water to replenish energy and hydration, adding that to opt for lean proteins, whole grains, and steamed vegetables.

He recommended to choose fresh fruits and nuts as healthy snacks and limiting your intake of sugary drinks and desserts.



RAWALPINDI: People offering prayer before break their fast on the first day of holy month of Ramadan arranged by volunteers at roadside. —INP Photo

Pakistani nation welcomes holy month of Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first day of Ramadan was observed with great fervor and enthusiasm, with people of all ages participating in congregational prayers and Sehri gatherings.

According to a report aired on PTV News, children were also seen eagerly helping their parents with the preparations and mosques were filled with the sounds of recitation and prayer, said a citizen.

"The atmosphere is filled with spirituality and tranquility, it is a beautiful time of the year," he added.

Another worshiper at a local mosque commented, "Ramadan is a time for self-reflection and spiritual growth and being in the mosque with fellow Muslims adds to the sense of community and togetherness."

A mosque in Islamabad administration official noted, "We have made special arrangements for the holy

month, including additional prayer halls and facilities for the devotees. It is our duty to provide a comfortable and peaceful environment for the worshippers." A local resident expressed, "the mosques are the heart of our community and during Ramadan, they come alive with the sounds of prayer, recitation and charity. It is a truly uplifting experience."

Some people still revived the traditional practice of waking others for Sehri by reciting Naats, adding to the spiritual ambiance of the holy month.

"It is a beautiful tradition that brings us closer to Allah and to each other," said a resident who appreciated the effort. Shopkeepers in the local markets also shared in the festivity, decorating their stalls with colorful lights and banners. "Ramadan is a blessed month, and we try to add to the joy and spirit of the season," said

a shopkeeper selling traditional sweets and dates.

"It's a time of increased sales, but more importantly, it is a time to connect with our customers and community." Another shopkeeper, selling prayer mats and Islamic literature, added, "We stay open late into the night to cater to the needs of the worshippers. It's a privilege to serve the community during this sacred month."

Furthermore, citizens were also seen actively engaging in charitable activities, distributing food and clothing to the needy and donating to various welfare organizations.

"Ramadan is a time for giving and sharing, and we try to do our part in helping those less fortunate," said a local resident who was volunteering at a food distribution camp. "It is a small act, but it brings us closer to our community and to Allah," he added.

IESCO assures uninterrupted power supply

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Sunday confirmed the uninterrupted electricity supply across its region during Ramadan.

With demand at 1,206 megawatts (MW), officials report sufficient power allocation from the national grid and round-the-clock monitoring to address outages, said the IESCO spokesman here.

He stated that the company is fully prepared to meet Ramadan's energy needs. Over 126 complaint centers are operational, with staff on high alert to resolve issues immediately. A central control room is tracking real-time supply, demand, and distribution to prevent disruptions.

Consumers can report outages at local complaint offices or via helpline 118. The spokesman urged residents to contact these channels for swift resolution, emphasizing that teams are prioritizing critical areas during Sehri and Iftar.

IESCO's proactive measures aim to ensure consistent power supply during Ramadan. With real-time monitoring and expanded complaint services, the company seeks to minimize disruptions for consumers. "Our teams are committed to resolving issues swiftly," the spokesman added.

DC outlines challenges, updates of Ramadan bazaars

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Sunday outlined the challenges and updates as the city's Ramadan bazaars face overwhelming crowds and dwindling stocks.

Talking to media persons at the H-9 Ramadan Bazaar, he said that the five Ramadan bazaars are operational, but high demand and logistical hurdles have led to supply gaps and parking chaos.

On the occasion, the DC said the five Ramadan bazaars are currently active across Islamabad.

However, the G-6 bazaars remain closed due to unresolved security concerns.

He noted that 80% of essential items have already been sold. The surge in vis-

itors, described as "unprecedented," has strained supplies, particularly fresh fruits.

Long queues and packed stalls highlight the high turnout, with residents rushing to buy subsidized goods. Memon acknowledged that fruit shortages are directly linked to the massive influx of shoppers.

He claimed that the strict quality checks are in place, though no specific metrics were shared. Vendors have also been instructed to avoid polythene bags, aligning with environmental policies.

Talking about parking crises, he said that limited space and overcrowding have caused parking gridlock near markets. Memon stated efforts are underway to secure additional parking

areas but did not provide timelines.

Meanwhile, a 24/7 helpline has been activated to address public grievances, including pricing violations or supply issues.

Furthermore, to ease pressure, 17 designated points now sell fruits and vegetables at wholesale rates, though these locations are reportedly less crowded than main markets, the DC added.

Residents complain of long waits and inconsistent stock, with some criticizing the administration for "poor planning." Memon urged patience, emphasizing that teams are working to replenish supplies and manage crowds. The closure of the G-6 market, a key hub, has further intensified demand at other sites.

IIUI organizes seminar on Kashmir Solidarity

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) organized a seminar on Kashmir Solidarity at its Faisal Masjid campus, where speakers urged the international community to play its role in the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

The participants emphasized the significant contribution of academia in furthering the Kashmir cause through dedicated research and intellectual discourse.

The event was attended by prominent intellectuals, policymakers, and academicians, including former minister and seasoned analyst Mushahid Hussain Syed, Special Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Rector IIUI Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, President IIUI Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed, Shahim Shawi, Zahid Safi and Dr. Nazir Hussain.

The seminar attracted a diverse audience, including students, faculty members, and researchers who engaged in discussions on the pressing need for global intervention in the Kashmir crisis. Addressing the seminar, renowned intellectual and Former Minister Mushahid Hussain Syed paid rich tribute to the brave freedom fighters of Kashmir.

He particularly high-

lighted the role of Kashmiri women in the resistance movement, stating that their resilience and sacrifices have set an exemplary precedent. Criticizing the global double standards and apathy towards the Kashmir issue, he asserted that India is sponsoring state terrorism not only in Kashmir but across multiple regions of the world.

He called for raising this matter at international platforms such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Mushahid Hussain Syed also urged the youth to utilize social media to raise awareness and advocate for the Kashmiri cause.

In his address, Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Special Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, spoke passionately about his personal connection to the Kashmir issue, proudly stating that he is the son of a father from Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

He stressed the transformative power of technology as a great equalizer, underscoring its potential in educating the world about the atrocities faced by Kashmiris. He further remarked that the strength and stability of Pakistan are directly linked to the freedom of Kashmir.

Chairman HEC and Rector IIUI Dr. Mukhtar

Ahmed elaborated on the pivotal role played by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in promoting the Kashmir cause through research and academic initiatives. He announced that HEC has established Kashmir research centers in six universities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) to produce impactful scholarly work.

He also revealed that the National Assembly Committee on Kashmir has recommended the establishment of a dedicated Kashmir Studies Center, and IIUI is keen to set up such a center to further research on the Kashmir issue.

President IIUI, Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed, paid tribute to the courageous people of IIOJK, acknowledging their unwavering resolve despite facing lockdowns, curfews, and communication blackouts since August 2019. He emphasized that the Kashmiri struggle for freedom has spanned centuries and urged the global community to recognize the deteriorating situation.

He reiterated Pakistan's firm stance on Kashmir, asserting that the nation will not compromise on its principled position regarding the issue.

The seminar, he stated, serves as a reminder of Pakistan's unwavering commitment to advocating for Kashmir's right to self-determination.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people purchasing vegetables at Sasta Ramadan bazaar Aabpara in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

KUNDUZ (Amu TV): A young man was shot and killed in Kunduz on late Saturday night. The victim, identified as Bakhtiar, worked at Kunduz Regional Hospital. He was killed by his cousin, Usman, following a dispute. The incident occurred during a social gathering, when Usman repeatedly called Bakhtiar's name, but the victim, preoccupied with his mobile phone, did not respond. In reaction, Usman opened fire, shooting Bakhtiar in the head and killing him instantly.

NANGARHAR (BNA): The Nangarhar Provincial Public Health Department has announced the opening of 10 Maternal and Child Health Centers across six districts. This initiative, supported by UNFPA, represents an investment of \$460,000. Provincial Public Health Director Maulvi Aminullah Sharif stated that the centers have been established in the Lower Kunar, Nazian, Durbaba, Achin, Khogyani, and Haska Mina districts.

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

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock announced that the process of transferring land to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce for the establishment of industrial parks in 16 Afghan provinces is currently underway.

According to the ministry's spokesperson, Misbahuddin Mustacen, the leader of the Islamic Emirate has decreed that 1,000 acres of land in each province be allocated for industrial parks.

He said: "So far, this process is ongoing in 16 provinces, but it has not been completed yet because legal procedures take time. In the near future, this process will start in other provinces as well."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce has announced that a total of 160,000 acres of land has been allocated nationwide for industrial parks.

Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, the ministry's spokesperson, stated: "About 160,000 acres of land will be distributed to industrialists as per the leadership's decree. These lands are located within industrial parks, providing a valuable opportunity for investment by our fellow citizens. Anyone interested can apply for land and invest."

According to officials, 10,000 acres of land have been allocated for industrial parks in Kunduz, 20,000 acres in Kandahar, Nangarhar and Balkh, 8,000 acres across four zones in Kabul, and 1,000

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acres for other provinces.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines stressed that land distribution and energy supply are crucial for industrial growth and must be prioritized.

Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, the chamber's first deputy, said: "For Afghanistan's development and investment attraction, two key factors are land distribution and energy supply. If investors have access to these two, both industry and investment will grow, particularly in Kabul."

Previously, the leader of the Islamic Emirate approved the Industrial Areas Law, which aims to boost Afghanistan's economy, regulate industrial zones, attract private investment, and manage and preserve these areas.

KABUL (TOLNews): The Ministry of Information and Culture has reported that since the Islamic Emirate's return to power, more than 40 historical monuments across the country have been renovated and restored.

Mohammad Haseeb Nasimi, head of the Historical Monuments Preservation and Restoration Department at the Ministry of Information and Culture, stated that restoration work on eight additional historical monuments is currently underway in three provinces.

Speaking to TOLNews, Nasimi said: "The Directorate of Historical Monuments has always been committed to the preservation and restoration of historical sites. In line with its strategic objectives, it has carried out extensive restoration work on more than 40 historical monuments across eight

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KABUL. (TOLONews): Several shopkeepers told TOLONews that grocery sales in the capital saw a surge on the first day of Ramadan.

According to shopkeepers, markets have become more active compared to the past two days, and food prices have also decreased.

Idris, a shopkeeper in the capital, stated: "Today is the first day of Ramadan. The market was good yesterday and the day before, but today it is even better. People have come to the market to shop."

Another shopkeeper, Abdul Ghani, said: "Prices are reasonable. The price list provided by the Emirate is balanced with the system, but people are struggling and cannot afford to buy much."

Meanwhile, some residents of the capital who visited the market for essential goods urged the interim government to take serious measures to prevent food price hikes during Ramadan.

Momin, a Kabul resident, expressed his concern: "Our request of the Islamic Emirate is to strictly control market prices and reduce them."

Kabul Municipality has assured efforts to stabilize the prices of essential

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Kabul Municipality has assured efforts to stabilize the prices of essential

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Head of Engineering for the Iranian Armed Forces has announced that approximately 1,000 kilometers of Iran's border with Afghanistan will be closed. This decision was made to address security concerns and combat various illicit activities along the border.

Hossein Mousavi, the head of the Iranian Armed Forces Engineering Department, has announced that approximately 1,000 kilometers of the border between Iran and Afghanistan must be closed to prevent the entry of "terrorists" and drug trafficking.

During a ceremony honoring engineers and specialists of the Iranian Army's Ground Forces, Hossein Mousavi highlighted the importance of border security. He stated that engineering teams were brought in to address the issue and had achieved significant successes in this area.

Mousavi explained that the project to close the border will span an 8-year period, aiming to block smuggling and mitigate terrorist threats.

The plan is designed to enhance national security by preventing illegal activities across the borders with Afghanistan.

He added that several kilometers of the Iran-Afghanistan border have already been reinforced with barriers. To date, over 30 kilometers of border wall have been installed, and another 50 kilometers are expected to be completed soon.

The project was launched last year under the directive of then-President Ebrahim Raisi, with a funding allocation of 3 billion. The goal is to fortify the borders with countries that have been hotspots for

significant successes in this area.

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KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of cooling oil and sugar decreased while the rate of Russian gold surged during the outgoing week in Kabul, market sources said on Sunday.

Haji Mohammad Hussain, owner of Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said one US dollar traded at 73.30afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 260 afis — compared to previous week's rates of 74.20 afis, and 260 afis.

Food items

Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders' Association, said the price of a 49-kilogram bag of Indian sugar fell from 2,680afis to 2,500afis and a 16-litre can of Malaysian cooking

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oil from 1,800afs to 1,700afs. The price of a 49-sack of kilogram Kazakh flour cost 1,370afs, a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice stayed stable at 2,600afs., a kilogram of African black tea at 400afs and the same amount of Indonesian green tea at 350afs.

Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh Market, put the retail price of a 49-kg bag of Kazakh flour at 1,420afs, a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice at 2,650afs and a 49-kg sack of Indian sugar at 2,550afs. A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil accounted for 1,750afs, one kilogram of black tea for 400afs and the same quantity of green tea for 450afs, he added.

Fuel prices unchanged

A worker at the Ahmadyar pump station told Pajhwok the price of one litre of petrol stayed stable at 63afs and diesel at 61afs.

Gold prices
 Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold decreased from 5,600afs to 5,500afs, but the same amount of the Russian variety rose from 4,450afs to 4,500afs.

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban have publicly flogged at least 72 people, including 14 women, across 10 provinces in the past 11 days, according to data compiled by Amu from the Taliban Supreme Court statements.

The punishments, carried out for alleged offenses such as theft and "running away from home," mark a continuation of the Taliban's escalating use of corporal punishment.

Human rights activists and Afghan citizens have condemned the floggings as cruel and inhumane, likening them to the Taliban's harsh policies of the 1990s.

"The Taliban are using religion as a tool of oppression," said Roqia Saei, a human rights activist. "Public floggings violate Islamic principles and fundamental human rights."

Eyewitnesses report that

sports stadiums have been turned into sites for public punishment, with men and women lashed before crowds. "The Taliban's brutality increases by the day," said a Kabul resident. "They whip men and women for unknown reasons, just like they did in the past. Their world must not stay silent."

Another Kabul resident added, "They have turned sports fields into places of punishment. Every day, people are flogged in front of the public for various so-

The floggings have taken place in Kabul, Khost, Nangarhar, Zabul, Faryab, Kapisa, Parwan, Herat, Ghazni, and Bamiyan, underscoring the Taliban's widespread enforcement of corporal punishment. Despite repeated calls from the United Nations and human rights organizations to end the practice, the Taliban have intensified public punishments since reclaiming power in 2021.

Over the past three years, the group has also carried out stonings, executions, and amputations, reviving punishments reminiscent of its first regime.

KABUL (BNA): A business meeting was held at the commercial complex of Termez, attended by Nooruddin Azizi, Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce of Afghanistan, and Liziz Qudratov, Minister of Investment, Industry, and Commerce of Uzbekistan.

The meeting aimed to further economic collaboration between the two countries, in line with previous agreements established during the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar's visit to Uzbekistan.

The discussions centered on Uzbekistan's investment in various sectors within Afghanistan, focusing on the establishment of an economic-commercial complex in Hairatan, as well as initiatives in food production, poultry farming, pharmaceutical industries,

cement production, and horticulture, particularly pistachio orchards.

The initial investment is estimated to exceed \$200 million, targeting projects in Balkh, Samangan, and Kunduz provinces.

In addition to investment discussions, the meeting addressed plans to host a regional exhibition in Termez, promoting trade among neighboring countries. Key topics included

GHAZNI (TOLOnews): A number of residents in Ghazni province have expressed their frustration over the sharp increase in medicine prices, stating that many people can no longer afford the medications they need.

They believe that due to the lack of a standardized pricing system, some pharmacy owners sell medicine at arbitrary prices.

Ahmad Malang, a resident of Ghazni, said: "They just take a Muslim's money and put it in their pockets without considering how hard poor people work to earn it. We are drivers, we have sick family members, and we make only 300 afghani a day. But when we

visit a doctor, they charge us 600 afghanis. If we go to another doctor, they demand 1,000 afghani."

Mujahid, another resident of Ghazni, also expressed dissatisfaction, saying: "The economic situation of the people is terrible. We urge the government and doctors to be fair with the people."

Jumagul Hamdard, another resident, also criticized the unfair pricing of medicines: "A medicine that should cost 100 afghani is sold for 180 or even 200 afghani. I have personally seen medicine being bought for 150 afghani and then sold for 250 afghani at pharmacies, with a profit of 100 afghani

On the other hand, some medicine sellers in Ghazni attribute the rising prices to global supply issues, high customs fees, and heavy taxation.

Naeem Zadran, a pharmacy owner in Ghazni, stated: "The taxes here are high. I urge the Islamic Emirate leaders to reduce medicine taxes. This is why medicine prices have gone up."

Mohammad Wais, another medicine seller, said: "Some medicine is imported from India, and their transportation costs are high. Additionally, there are issues in Pakistan, and raw materials are becoming harder to find."

KABUL (TOLONews): In anticipation of the holy month of Ramadan, Ketab-e-Baihaqi and the Ministry of Information and Culture have organized a week-long book exhibition in Kabul.

Over 10,000 books from more than 100 publishers are on display at the event.

Several publishers consider the exhibition beneficial for boosting book sales.

Ghausuddin Kamal, the exhibition organizer, told TOLONews: "The Ministry of Information and Culture, Baihaqi Publishing Directorate, and a group of publishers have organized this exhibition for one week to welcome the holy month of Ramadan."

Kamaluiddin, a publisher, noted: "In the past few days, a large number of our books have been sold."

Idris, another publisher, said: "During Ramadan, people tend to focus more on religious books. Sales are good, but they were higher in previous years."

Ahmad Favaz, who vis-

ited the exhibition to find his favorite books, sees such events as a positive step toward promoting a reading culture.

He told TOLONews: "If such exhibitions were held

KUNAR (TOLOnews): A number of residents in Kunar province of Afghanistan are calling on local authorities to expand the city of Asadabad and address traffic congestion problems.

They argue that while the city's area is limited, its population is increasing rapidly, leading to severe congestion and disruptions in daily life.

Tahzibullah Mahbaz, a resident of Asadabad, said: "Markets are being built in a disorganized manner, and they lack basic facilities like parking. Such constructions should be prevented."

Another resident, Tawakkul Khan, emphasized that the growing population has increased the need for infrastructure development: "In the past, there were fewer people, but now the population has grown significantly. Therefore, bridges should be built, and roads should be widened."

Wahidullah Karimzai, another local, criticized the blockage of sidewalks and the impact of congestion on people's lives: "Shopkeepers place their goods outside their stores, blocking pedestrian paths.

This must be fixed. Also, the excessive congestion prevents people from taking their sick family members to the hospital on time.”

Local officials have assured residents that they will take action to address these challenges.

Nazar Mohammad Atiq, the mayor of Asadabad, stated: “We have proposed the construction of four bridges within the municipality’s jurisdiction. One bridge will connect Salar Bagh to Lahore Dag, another will be built in the Mandla Kok area, one will link the Tahlghi Center to

the establishment of trade houses, customs cooperation, product standardization, agricultural collaboration, and enhancing capacity building.

Following the meeting, Azizi and Qudratos, along with their delegations, toured the dedicated economic-commercial complex in Temez, further solidifying their commitment to enhancing bilateral trade relations.

Meanwhile, local officials in Ghazni pledge that they will monitor medicine prices and take necessary measures to prevent price manipulation.

Zarq Zirk, the head of Ghazni's Public Health Department, stated: "Thirty new health inspectors have been hired, and this process will continue. A special management unit called 'Inspection' has been established to regulate medicine prices according to the Ministry of Public Health's guidelines."

Although some pharmaceutical factories operate in Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat, Afghanistan still imports most of its required medicines from abroad.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur talking to Afghanistan's Consul-General in Peshawar, Mohibullah Shakir.

US aircraft carrier arrives in South Korea

SEOUL (AP): A US aircraft carrier arrived in South Korea on Sunday in a show of force, days after North Korea test-launched cruise missiles to demonstrate its counterattack capabilities. The arrival of the USS Carl Vinson and its strike group at the South Korean port of Busan was meant to display a solid U.S.-South Korean military alliance in the face of persistent North Korean threats, and boost interoperability of the allies' combined assets, the South Korean navy said in a statement. It said it was the first US aircraft carrier to travel to South Korea since June. The deployment of the carrier is expected to infuriate North Korea, which views temporary deployments of such powerful US military assets as major

security threats. North Korea has responded to some of the past deployments of US aircraft carriers, long-range bombers and nuclear-powered submarines with missile tests. Since his Jan. 20 inauguration, President Donald Trump has said he will reach out to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un again to revive diplomacy. North Korea hasn't directly responded to Trump's overture but alleged US-led hostilities against North Korea have intensified since Trump's inauguration. North Korea said Friday it test-fired strategic cruise missiles earlier last week to inform its adversaries of its military's counterattack capability and the readiness of its nuclear operations. After watching the launch-

es, the North's fourth missile testing event this year, Kim ordered his military to be fully ready to use its nuclear weapons. Experts say Kim won't likely accept Trump's overture anytime soon as he is now focusing on his support of Russia's war against Ukraine with provision of weapons and troops. They say Kim could consider resuming diplomacy with Trump when he thinks he cannot maintain his country's current booming cooperation with Russia. Kim and Trump met three times from 2018-19 during Trump's first term to discuss the future of North Korea's nuclear program. Their high-stakes diplomacy eventually collapsed due to wrangling over US-led economic sanctions on North Korea.

Russia praises Trump

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Sunday praised U.S. President Donald Trump's "common sense" aim to end the war in Ukraine, but accused the European powers which have rallied around Kyiv of seeking to prolong the conflict. Lavrov said the United States still wanted to be the world's most powerful country and that Washington and Moscow would never see eye to eye on everything, but that they had agreed to be pragmatic when interests coincided. "Donald Trump is a pragmatist," Lavrov told the Russian military newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda, according to a transcript released by the Foreign Ministry. "His slogan is common sense. It means, as everyone can see, a shift to a different way of doing things."

"But the goal is still MAGA (Make America Great Again)," Lavrov said, referring to Trump's political slogan. "This gives a lively, human character to politics. That's why it's interesting to work with him."

Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 with thousands of troops, triggering the biggest confrontation between Russia and the West since the depths of the Cold War.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine began in 2014 after a pro-Russian president was toppled in Ukraine's Maidan Revolution and Russia annexed Crimea, with Russian-backed separatist forces fighting Ukraine's armed forces.

The West and Ukraine describe the 2022 invasion as an imperial-style land grab by President Vladimir Putin and Kyiv has vowed to defeat Russia on the battlefield, though Russian forces control nearly one-fifth of Ukraine.

Putin casts the conflict in Ukraine as part of an existential battle with a declining and decadent West which he says humiliated Russia after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 by enlarging the NATO military alliance and encroaching on what he considers Moscow's sphere of influence, including Ukraine.

CRUCIBLE OF WAR Trump has upended U.S. policy on the Ukraine war.

On Friday, he and Vice President JD Vance clashed with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office. Trump accused Zelenskyy of disrespecting the United States, said he was losing the war and had no cards left.

Gandapur, Shakir discuss closure of Torkham border

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur was called on by Afghan Consul General in Peshawar, Hafiz Mohibullah Shakir, at his office on Sunday.

The meeting focused on matters of mutual interest, including the promotion of bilateral trade, regional peace and stability, and addressing issues faced by Afghan citizens residing in the province.

During the discussion, the temporary closure of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border at Torkham and its impact on traders and the general public on both

sides was highlighted.

Both sides agreed to make efforts to reopen the border as soon as possible, especially in view of the holy month of Ramadan and upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Gandapur emphasized that the closure of the border was causing hardships for traders and transporters, particularly during Ramadan.

He stressed that closure of the boarder was not in the best interest of the people on either side, as it affected not only businesses but also ordinary citizens, therefore, he underscored the urgent need to reopen the border at the

earliest.

He assured that the provincial government was making every possible effort in this regard and urged the Afghan Consulate to play its role as well.

The Chief Minister further stated that ongoing instability in the region had caused difficulties for people on both sides of the border, and dialogue remained an effective means to achieve lasting peace.

He said that the provincial government had formed a jirga to initiate negotiations with the Afghan government. However, the jirga was awaiting approval of its

Terms of Reference (ToRs) from the federal government, after which jirga would visit Afghanistan to initiate dialogue.

He made a mention that efforts were underway to establish special facilitation desks at the border for individuals traveling for trade, education, and medical treatment.

Afghan citizens with valid travel documents would be welcomed. Gandapur also noted that discussions were ongoing with relevant international organizations to issue health and education cards for Afghan nationals seeking medical treatment and education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Asad Qaiser vows PTI to launch massive protest after Eid

SWABI (INP): Former Speaker Asad Qaiser has strongly criticized the current parliament, calling it "fake" and demanding transparent elections.

Speaking to the media, Qaiser expressed his deep concerns regarding the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, referring to the province as being "at war."

He emphasized that the people of the province are desperate for peace and stability.

Qaiser also condemned the federal government's continued efforts to suppress the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), asserting that the federal authorities are not addressing the pressing issues of peace and security that the country faces.

He further urged the government to revisit its

Afghan policy, stressing the need for comprehensive and effective strategies for peace.

In a separate statement, Qaiser expressed sorrow over the recent bomb blast incident, noting that it was the result of flawed policies.

He reiterated that the focus should be on creating a safe environment for all citizens and emphasized that transparent elections must take place to resolve the ongoing political crisis.

Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Withdraw Illegal Cases

In a related development, the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced its decision to withdraw all illegal cases, including those involving PTI members. Muhammad Inam Yousafzai, the Additional

Advocate General of the province, confirmed that anyone facing unlawful FIRs in the region will have their cases revoked.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has instructed authorities to ensure that illegal and politically motivated cases be withdrawn. The aim, according to Gandapur, is to relieve the burden on the courts while ensuring that cases are assessed on their merits. The move has been hailed as a step towards reducing the backlog of cases in the judicial system.

Yousafzai further stressed that prosecutors are expected to act independently and without external pressure when reviewing cases, ensuring that only legitimate charges are pursued.

In a related legal devel-

opment, Syed Kausar Ali Shah, the Additional Advocate General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, recently resigned from his post, citing discrimination in the judicial appointments process. In his resignation letter, Shah claimed he was discriminated against due to his affiliation with PTI, despite his qualifications and previous service.

Shah had been nominated for a position as an Additional Judge in the Peshawar High Court, but his nomination was not advanced, reportedly due to his continued membership in PTI. He expressed his gratitude to PTI founder Imran Khan and lawyer Qazi Anwar for their support in his legal career, but announced his intention to return to private practice as a lawyer.

US firm Firefly scores its first moon landing

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Firefly Aerospace succeeded in its first attempt to land on the moon with its uncrewed Blue Ghost spacecraft on Sunday, kicking off a two-week research mission as a handful of private firms compete to reach the frontlines of a global moon race.

The size of a compact car, the four-legged Blue Ghost carried 10 scientific payloads as it touched down at around 3:35am ET (0835 GMT) near an ancient volcanic vent on Mare Crisium, a large basin in the northeast corner of the moon's Earth-facing side. Suspend and silence fell over a mission control room full of company staff inside Firefly's Austin, Texas headquarters as Blue Ghost descended toward the moon's surface at a gentle two miles per hour. Will Coogan, Firefly's Blue Ghost Chief Engineer, confirmed on a mission control live feed the spacecraft had entered lunar gravity.

"We're on the moon," Coogan declared moments later, prompting cheers in mission control.

Firefly becomes the second private firm to score a moon landing, though it declared itself the first company to make a "fully successful" soft landing. Houston-based Intuitive Machines' (LUNR.O), opens new tab Odyssey lander made a lopsided touchdown last year, landing mostly intact but dooming many of its onboard instruments.

Five nations have made successful soft landings in the past - the then-Soviet Union, the U.S., China, India and, last year, Japan.

The U.S. and China are both rushing to put their astronauts on the moon later this decade, each courting allies and giving their private sectors a key role in spacecraft development.

Blue Ghost flew on a winding path over three times around Earth, totaling roughly 2.8 million miles, to get to the moon some 238,000 miles (383,000 km) from Earth, reaching the surface a month and a half after launching atop a SpaceX rocket from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

The moonshot by Firefly, an upstart primarily building rockets, is one of three lunar missions actively in progress. Japan's ispace launched its second lander on the same rocket as Firefly's in January, before Intuitive Machines embarked on its second lunar mission on Wednesday.

Blue Ghost's three solar panels will power the lander's research instruments for a 14-day mission on the moon, before the frigid lunar night brings temperatures as low as minus 280 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 173 degrees Celsius).

Missions like Firefly's Blue Ghost represent low-budget precursor missions that will enable research into the lunar environment before the U.S. sends its astronauts there in a series of crewed missions beginning in 2027.

China, meanwhile, is making swift progress in its own moon efforts, with its robotic Chang'e lunar program and plans to put Chinese astronauts on the moon's surface by 2030.

Also eyeing the moon are U.S.-aligned Japan and India, which made its first soft lunar landing in 2023.

Firefly has a \$101 million contract for the Blue Ghost mission from NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) program, which hopes to stimulate a private lunar market and make such treks lower-cost and routine.

Other countries eyeing the moon and deep space exploration have followed NASA's model for commercial spaceflight, with India investing in its private space sector while Europe funds multiple rocket launch startups.

"We're hoping to get lower-cost missions at a faster pace, and we just have proof it works," said NASA's CLPS chief Chris Culbert said. "We landed on the moon, almost perfectly." The successful touchdown comes at a time of unease and uncertainty across the U.S. space industry, after President Donald Trump's looming shift of the U.S. space program's focus to Mars - a destination favored by SpaceX CEO and influential Trump ally Elon Musk.

Acting NASA administrator Janet Petro said at Firefly's landing event that the moon remains part of America's goal to "dominate" space. On Blue Ghost, two onboard instruments will study the lunar soil and its subsurface temperatures in experiments by Honeybee Robotics, a firm owned by Blue Origin, which is developing its own lunar lander to send humans to the moon for NASA's Artemis program later this decade.



DHAKA: Muslims attend afternoon prayers at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in Dhaka on Sunday, during the first day of Ramazan. — Reuters

Breakaway Abkhazia's acting leader wins election

TBILISI (Reuters): The acting leader of Abkhazia has won a presidential election in the breakaway Georgian region, state media said on Sunday, months after his predecessor was driven from office following protests over an investment deal with Russia.

Acting President Badra Gunba took almost 55% of the vote in Saturday's election in the Russia-backed territory, ahead of opposition leader Adgur Ardzinba on just under 42%, Abkhazian state news agency Apsynpress reported, citing preliminary results from the electoral commission.

Georgia, of which Abkhazia is recognised as being part of by all but a handful of countries, called the election "another flagrant violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity".

In footage published by state media, Gunba thanked voters and said he would work to make Abkhazia "independent, free and prosperous".

Abkhazia has in recent months been plagued by an electricity crisis, with blackouts blamed on low water levels at a key hydro-electric plant and large-scale cryptocurrency mining, which requires large amounts of energy.

Gunba, Abkhazia's vice president since 2020, took over as acting leader in November after his ally Aslan Bzhanias resigned days after protesters seized government buildings and forced him to scrap an unpopular deal with Russia.

It was the third time since 2014 that an Abkhazian leader had been driven from office by mass protests.

Russia gambles to keep military bases in Syria

LATAKIA, Syria (Reuters): For years, soldiers from Russia's Hmeimim Air Base in Syria roamed freely through coastal cities. War planes flew from the complex to bombard Islamist rebels fighting Bashar al-Assad's repressive regime.

No longer. With Assad gone, at both Hmeimim and at Russia's Soviet-era Tartous Naval Base 60 km (37 miles) south, small groups of former rebels guard the entrances, their Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) Islamist force now in control of the country.

The khaki-uniformed guards escort any Russian convoys that venture out, they told Reuters reporters visiting the area last week.

"They have to notify us before they leave," one of the guards said, declining to speak on record.

The future of the bases, which are integral to Russia's military reach in the Middle East and Africa, is in the hands of Syria's interim President Ahmed Sharaa.

He wants to renegotiate the generous Assad-era 49-year lease for Tartous and an indefinite lease for Hmeimim to secure better terms, but doesn't appear to want Moscow shut out altogether.

Instead, it appears the bases may stay in exchange for diplomatic backing and financial compensation from Russia, deeply involved in Syria's economy and defence for seven decades before it joined the civil war in 2015 and wrought devastation that helped keep Assad in power for years.

Assad fell in December, fleeing to Russia through Hmeimim. The Islamist Syrian leadership - once the target of relentless Russian airstrikes - is now engaged with Moscow at the negoti-

ating table.

For this story, Reuters spoke to eight Syrian, Russian and diplomatic sources who gave previously unreported details from the first high-level meeting between Sharaa and an envoy sent by President Vladimir Putin, including demands related to billions of dollars of debt, the future of Assad, and the repatriation of Syrian money alleged to be in Russia.

Like others in the story, the sources requested anonymity to speak about sensitive matters.

Putting enmity aside has benefits for both parties. Despite the EU and the U.S. easing some sanctions on Syria, the remaining restrictions make it hard to do business with the war-shattered and impoverished country of 23 million.

A restoration of Russia's traditional supplies of weapons, fuel and wheat could be a life-line. As such, the country's leaders are willing "to make peace, even with their former enemies," one Damascus-based diplomat told Reuters.

"Moscow still has something to offer for Syria," and is too powerful, too entrenched to ignore, said Anna Borshevsckaya at The Washington Institute.

"Russia simply needs a government in Damascus that would ensure its interests, and it would be willing to make a deal with that government," she said. One U.N. aid source said that Russia has not exported grain to Syria under the new administration.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said little about Syria since taking office, but he has sought to repair U.S. relations with Moscow. A U.S. State Department spokesperson said with Assad gone there

was an opportunity for Syria "to no longer be dominated and destabilized by Iranian or Russian influence."

U.S. ally Israel, however, wants Russia to stay as a bulwark against the Turkish influence, Reuters reported on Friday.

At the January 29 meeting in Damascus, Sharaa sought the cancellation of loans contracted with Russia under Assad, two of the sources told Reuters. Syria, which was largely free of foreign debt before the war, currently has \$20 billion-\$23 billion in external obligations, Finance Minister Mohammad Abazid said last month, without specifying how much was owed to Russia.

During the three-hour encounter with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, Syrian officials raised another key issue, the return of Assad to Syria, but only in broad terms, suggesting it was not a major obstacle to rebuilding ties, one of the sources said. Russia will not agree to extradite Assad, and had not been asked to do so, a senior Russian source said. Sharaa also urged the repatriation of Syrian funds his government believes were deposited by Assad in Moscow, but the Russian delegation, led Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, denied such funds existed, according to a Syria-based diplomat familiar with the talks.

Sharaa's office and the White House's National Security Council did not respond to requests for comment. In a statement issued after the meeting, Syria's government said Sharaa stressed that new relations need to address past mistakes and demanded compensation for the destruction Russia caused.