

FC soldier killed
F.P. Report
KALAT: A tragic incident unfolded on the main RCD highway near Kalat when a suicide bomber targeted an escort vehicle, resulting in the martyrdom of a Frontier Corps Balochistan soldier and injuring of four others. The attack occurred near the escort vehicle of the 61 wing commander. As a result one soldier of Frontier Corps Balochistan Naik Attaullah was martyred while 4 others seposy injured.

@thefrontierpost First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXII No. 36 Regd. No. 241 RAMAZAN 03 1446 -- TUESDAY, MARCH 04 2025 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30

PM says GPP empowers local communities

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said Pakistan was investing in a sustainable future for both the people and the planet as the Green Pakistan Program (GPP) was empowering local communities with economic opportunities that deter poaching and habitat destruction.

In his message on World Wildlife Day 2025, the prime minister said World Wildlife Day was a reminder of the intrinsic connection between humanity and nature, urging us to reflect on our responsibility to protect the extraordinary wildlife that enriches our lives and ecosystems. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan was blessed with mesmerizing biodiversity ranging from the elusive snow leopards of the Himalayas to the endangered Indus River dolphins and the magnificent whale sharks of the Arabian Sea.

"These species are not just part of our natural heritage; they play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance and sustaining our environment and economy. This year's theme 'Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet' underscores the critical need for innovative financial mechanism for the conservation of wildlife species while recognizing their indispensable role in maintaining healthy ecosystems, sustainable economies, and human welfare," the prime minister said.

He added that being signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) the country strengthened its legislation against illegal wildlife trade. Additionally, the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB),

under the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, had established the Wildlife Rescue Center to rehabilitate injured, orphaned, and abused animals, aiming for their reintroduction into the wild or placement in sanctuaries that cater to their specific needs, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said.

He noted that the government in collaboration with local communities, conservationist, and international partners continued to strengthen efforts to raise awareness about the critical importance of biodiversity. "Let's join hands to spread love for Pakistan's beautiful wildlife treasures and fulfill our responsibilities as a dutiful member of the global community," the prime minister urged the nation.

High Commissioner of UK calls on Prime Minister: High Commissioner of the United Kingdom Ms. Jane Marriott, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at Prime Minister House.

The Prime Minister conveyed his greetings to His Majesty King Charles III and wished him a quick recovery to full health. He also reiterated his invitation to His Majesty for undertaking a royal visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience. The Prime Minister also expressed satisfaction at the progress made in bilateral ties between the two countries.

While discussing the global situation, the Prime Minister emphasized the need for collective efforts to build lasting peace in Gaza and Ukraine. The High Commissioner said that the U.K. was committed to strengthening its ties with Pakistan and to continue partnering in the country's national progress and development.

UK says 'no deal' on Kyiv partial truce proposal

LONDON: France and Britain have not agreed on a partial truce plan for Ukraine, a UK minister said on Monday, after French President Emmanuel Macron said it had been proposed by the two nations.

Macron told France's Le Figaro newspaper on Sunday that London and Paris are proposing a one-month truce in Ukraine "in the air, at sea and on energy infrastructure." Macron said such a truce would not, initially at least, cover ground fighting.

"No agreement has been made on what a truce looks like," UK armed forces minister Luke Pollard told Times Radio. "But we are working together with France and our European allies to look at what is the path to how... we create a lasting and durable peace in Ukraine," he added.

A UK government official also played down any agreement. Speaking on

condition of anonymity, the person said: "There are various options on the table, subject to further discussions with the US and European partners but a one-month truce has not been agreed."

Macron's comments came after UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer convened crisis talks over Ukraine with European leaders, NATO chief Mark Rutte and Canada in central London on Sunday. "As the PM said in his press conference, we need and want to progress with momentum and are pleased today's summit has enabled discussions to move forward. Those discussions will continue at pace," said a Downing Street spokesperson.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin said on Monday that someone needed to force Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to make peace after a clash

One killed, five injured in Torkham clash

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: One civilian died in a stampede and including three forces troops five people got injured in an arm battle carried out at Torkham border on Sunday night.

Forces and local sources informed that an arm fight erupted between forces of the two countries when the Afghan border security opened indiscriminate firing on Pakistan Ayub post, located at the crossing.

As a result, in retaliation, the Pak targeted across the border posts of Afghanistan. Both the forces utilized heavy weapons to target one another positions, sources said.

In the stampede one local, residing in Bacha Mena village identified as Hayat Sher son of Faqir Muhammad died of heart attack, local said. The dead body and two civilians were shifted to headquarter hospital Landi Kotal while the three wounded soldiers were referred to military health center for medical care, hospital sources said.

Due to an arm clash at the border, hundreds of residents of bordering village Bacha Mena left their houses and took refuge in Landi Kotal whereas scores of Afghan nationals, stranded at the crossing, were shifted to safe locations, official said. Tension prevailed at the border and forces of the two countries held their positions.

On the other hand, to tackle the recent issue, the number of meetings of Pak-Afghan officials conducted at the border ended result less. It is to be mentioned here that the Torkham border remained suspended for consecutive 10th days for all kinds of movement.

Tribesmen construct Barani Dam on self-help basis: The tribesmen of Neki Khel locality of Landikotal tehsil of Khyber district in a good initiative constructed a Barani, rain-fed dam on self-help basis to address the problem of the shortage of water in the area.

According to local elites including Maulana Aqib Darwaish and others, the dam built at the foot of the mountains will prove to be very beneficial because a lot of water was being wasted due to the flow of water from the mountains and no benefit was derived of it.

They said that there was already a shortage of water in area, saying after the construction of rainwater dam, the water will no longer be wasted and will be stored in the ground, which will raise the level of water table.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of United Kingdom to Pakistan, Ms Jane Marriott called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Pakistan's inflation falls to 1.5% in February

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate has maintained its sliding trend on Monday, beating more than a 9-year low at 1.51 percent year-on-year (YoY) in February.

According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), CPI inflation stood at 1.5pc on year-on-year basis in February 2025 as compared to 2.4pc in the previous month and 23.1pc in February 2024. The Food item prices that increased included: Pulse moong (32.65pc), besan (28.97pc), pulse gram (25.40pc), potatoes (22.88pc), fresh fruits (21.55pc), butter (21.12pc), honey (20.77pc), milk powder (20.58pc), and meat (18.59pc).

Experts noted that the current scenario is one of disinflation, which depicts a downward tendency in the pace of the inflation rate, while deflation (the opposite of inflation) occurs when general price levels fall. "Pakistan CPI for month of Feb-2025 has clocked in at 1.5pc, lowest reading

in 113 months," Topline Securities, a brokerage firm in Karachi, noted. The experts noted the number to be the "lowest since September 2015".

Pakistan, currently bolstered by a \$7 billion facility from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted in September, is navigating an economic recovery. Authorities have credited inflation's downward trend to economic stabilisation under the IMF programme. In its monthly economic outlook report released last week, the finance ministry figured that inflation in February would hover between 2.0-3.0%, continuing its downward trend from the previous year. The ministry also forecast a slight increase to 3.0-4.0% by March 2025.

"A favourable base effect from last year's high inflation contributed to this result. We anticipate an uptick in food inflation during Ramadan," said Waqas Ghani, head of research at JS Global. He added that the data was primarily driven by a decline in food inflation, with significant price drops in staples.

Prime Minister Muhammad

Shehbaz Sharif Monday expressed satisfaction at the continuous decrease in inflation related to consumer price index. In a statement, he said the present government was completing its one year and on this occasion it was a very good news. He said it was matter of great satisfaction that the rate of inflation dropped to 1.5 percent in February, 2025 which was the lowest rate of inflation since September 2015. The rate of inflation from July 2024 to February 2025 was 5.9 percent while in the last financial year during the same period inflation was at 28 percent, and this showed a remarkable decrease, he added.

The prime minister said due to the magnificent government's economic team efforts, the economic indicators were improving with every passing day. The continuous improvement in the economy was the result of diligent teamwork, he continued. The prime minister said all the institutions were working together for the betterment of economy and for promoting business and investment.

Those who sought economic default reel under internal discord: Tarar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Monday said those who once sought the country to be bankrupt have been struggling with serious internal strife.

Addressing a news conference, the minister said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) did politics of chaos and anarchy while trying to push the country into economic quagmire. On the other hand, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had steered the country out of economic crises, restored Pakistan's reputation at international level and brought prosperity and development to the country within one year of his government.

He said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led coalition government would complete its one year in the power tomorrow as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sworn in as the chief executive of the country on 4th March, 2024. He said the prime minister would take a cabinet review and brought before the public overall performance of every ministry. Journalists would be invited to share the facts and figures in this regard, he added.

The minister attributed the remarkable economic turnaround within one year to the Almighty's support, the prime minister's vision, the spirit of team work and relentless efforts of the cabinet and institutions. "What seemed an insurmountable challenge just twelve months ago has yielded to a remarkable turnaround. We have not simply stabilized the economy but also charted the economy of path of growth," he remarked. While pointing out to the speculations made about economy and



Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar for their diplomacy. Pakistan gets the United Nations Security Council membership with a record votes, he said while highlighting diplomatic efforts of the government.

He said the UAE Crown Prince paid a visit to Pakistan and praised the government of Pakistan. Uzbekistan President during the recent visit of the prime minister acknowledged relevance and role of Pakistan in global politics, he added. Giving credit to the Special Investment Facilitation Council for achieving these milestones, he lauded the role of the Army Chief in the country's development.

He said the PM had announced Ramadan Package and it was the first time that the announcement was made to privatize the utility stores that plagued with corruption. The prime minister had allocated Rs 20 billion for Ramadan Package which is three times greater than the previous year, he said, adding around two crore people would be benefited from the funds which were being distributed through digital vault among those who are not member of any scheme.

Tarar said the prime minister had ordered his team to keep up the work and bring more improvement in the lives of common man. The national economy showed positive indicators, he said while noting the current account surplus and substantial increase in the exports. "There is a feel-good factor of Pakistan within the country and abroad", he said while criticizing the PTI regime which only made shallow slogans and failed to provide the masses proper infrastructure, health and education system, lap-tops and other facilities.

CHAMPIONS

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WEDNESDAY, 5 MAR, 2:00 PM (LOCAL TIME)

GADDAFI STADIUM, LAHORE



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WATCH ON



COMMERCIAL PARTNERS



Sharjeel leads meeting to accelerate Sindh's Information Department projects



F.P. Report

KARACHI: An important meeting of the Information Department was held at the office of Sindh's Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, under his chairmanship in Karachi.

During the meeting, Sindh's Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon issued directives for the timely completion of the projects approved by the Content and Production Board.

The meeting was attended by the spokesperson of the Sindh government, Sumeta Afzal Syed, Secretary of Information Nadeem Ur Rehman Memon, Saleem Khan, Director P&D(Information) Moiz Pirzada, Director of Electronic Media Aziz

Hakro, and Director of Films Hizbullah Memon. The meeting discussed the approved projects of the Content and Production Board, the promotion of important initiatives of the Sindh government, and other key matters.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon reviewed the approved projects of the Content and Production Review Board and the preparation of content for these projects.

Speaking at the meeting, Sindh's Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the purpose of the Sindh government's initiatives is to promote the cinema industry and ensure opportunities for new talent in acting, singing, directing, and all other sectors related to the film industry, which will create new employment opportunities.

He instructed that all projects should be completed within the given time-frame and that any unnecessary delays should be avoided.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized that the Sindh government is launching these projects to raise public awareness and highlight its initiatives. All relevant authorities must ensure that these projects are completed with high standards and transparency within the stipulated time.

He further stated that a comprehensive strategy should be implemented for the promotion of government initiatives and public awareness so that the people remain well-informed about the efforts of the Sindh government.

LDA seals another 90 properties

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on Monday sealed another 90 properties during its ongoing daily operation against illegal commercial buildings across the city.

As part of the crackdown, 90 properties were sealed in different areas, including Gulberg, Faisal Town, Shadman, Shah Jamal, Gulshan Ravi, Shadbagh, and Sabzazar.

In Gulberg and Faisal Town, LDA teams sealed 27 properties due to illegal commercial use and non-payment of commercial fees. During the recovery operation in Sabzazar, 33 properties were sealed while in Shadman, Shah Jamal, Gulshan Ravi, and Shadbagh, another 30 properties were sealed.

The sealed properties include private schools, restaurants, workshops, food points, shops, and offices. The operation was conducted under the supervision of Chief Town Planner Asad Uz Zaman.

According to DG LDA, the crackdown on illegal commercial properties and defaulters of commercial fees will continue without any discrimination.

Profiteers booked, fined

LAHORE (APP): The district administration has registered four cases and imposed a fine of Rs 100,000 to the violators of price related regulations.

According to a spokesperson on Monday, price control magistrates issued 21 warnings and found violations at 27 points in various areas of the provincial capital.

The price control magistrates remained active in the field on the first day of Ramadan on the directives of DC Lahore Syed Musa Raza. To implement the provided relief measures, inspections were carried out.

The DC emphasized that artificial inflation during Ramadan would be dealt with an iron hand and that no one would be allowed to exploit citizens.

Strict measures to prevent accidents on highways: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a high-level review meeting of the National Highway Authority (NHA) chaired by Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization and Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan further stringent measures were decided to prevent accidents on Motorways and National Highways.

He emphasized that efforts must be made to curb accidents caused by the negligence of the drivers on Motorways, said a press release issued here on Monday.

He stressed that Emergency Services Centers should be established every 30 kilometers and that measures would also be taken for helicopter and air ambulance services along Motorways and Highways. Abdul Aleem Khan stated that the

Government is ready to pay any price to save human lives and every step will be taken in this regard.

He instructed that Rescue Services 1122 stations be connected to Motorways to ensure the swift provision of emergency medical aid in the shortest time possible.

During the meeting, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan was also presented with a report on the recent bus accident on M-2 in which the bus driver acknowledged his negligence and error. Based on this report, it was decided to enforce stricter inspections of commercial buses.

In the high-level meeting, Abdul Aleem Khan was briefed on various NHA projects. He directed the NHA to bring transparency to the Annual

Maintenance Plan and establish a cohesive approach for which the Secretary of Communications was given specific instructions.

The meeting also reviewed reports on safety barriers and fence on Motorways and complaints about potholes at various locations. Federal Minister instructed the IG of Motorways to increase patrolling and ensure strict action against those damaging or stealing the fence.

The meeting was attended by the Federal Secretary of Communications, Chairman of NHA, IG Motorways and the Director-General of Rescue Services 1122 who briefed the Federal Minister. Necessary decisions were also made on key departmental matters.

Development projects continue across all districts: Mayor

KARACHI (PPI): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab today stated that development projects are ongoing across all districts of Karachi without any discrimination.

According to a statement by KMC, he expressed these views on Monday during a meeting with various Union Council (UC) chairpersons at his office. City Council Parliamentary Leader Karamullah Waqasi, Deputy Parliamentary Leader Dil Muhammad, and other local leaders were also present. Wahab emphasized that the Pakistan People's Party's politics revolve around the public, and addressing municipal issues is considered a responsibility.

According to Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab, UC chairpersons from different areas apprised him of the issues in their respective regions. He issued immediate directives to resolve some of the problems. He highlighted that his top priorities during Ramadan

include ensuring a continuous water supply, proper drainage, and effective traffic management. City Wardens have been instructed to assist traffic police in maintaining traffic flow during iftar, as they have done in previous years.

He directed City Warden Director Raja Rustam to ensure that the wardens deployed at 57 locations across Karachi's five districts, including key roads, mosques, and shopping plazas, remain active to prevent traffic congestion, allowing commuters to reach their homes for iftar on time. He also issued strict orders to the Anti-Encroachment Director to remove any obstacles hindering traffic and to continue operations against encroachments.

The mayor affirmed that development projects currently underway will continue even during Ramadan to ensure their timely completion. He assured that funds are available for the projects whose tenders have been

issued in newspapers and that efforts will be made to complete them as soon as possible to address the city's municipal issues.

He remarked that the people of Karachi are witnessing the city's transformation and reiterated his commitment to furthering Karachi's development in line with Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's vision. He assured the citizens that the Pakistan People's Party would not disappoint them.

Wahab urged UC chairpersons to expedite development projects in their areas and serve the public with dedication. He reassured them that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation stands with the UC chairpersons and will provide all possible support for the city's improvement and progress. He concluded by stressing the need for collective ownership of Karachi, stating that the city's future is linked to its residents, and they must take responsibility for its development.

CM launches free solar panel scheme

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif formally launched the 'Chief Minister Punjab Free Solar Panel Scheme' by conducting a digital balloting here on Monday. She conducted an automatic digital balloting of the 'Chief Minister Free Solar Panel Scheme' by giving different numbers and congratulated the lucky users who succeeded in the scheme.

The CM directed to complete the solar panel installation process as soon as possible. She said, "We want to provide maximum relief to the people from expensive electricity and there should be no delay in this regard. The free solar panel scheme should be completed at the earliest."

On this occasion, it was informed that after physical verification, the installation of solar systems will start across the province by the end of March. The first phase of the free solar panel scheme installation will be completed by the end of July.

The Secretary Energy gave a detailed briefing to the CM about the scheme. The secretary said that 94,483 solar systems will be installed in the first phase. Solar systems will be installed free of charge for consumers consuming up to 200 units per month in the province. Over 861,000 consumers have applied for the scheme. The entire process was completed through end-to-end digitization. It was further informed that 47,182 systems of 0.55

kW and 47,301 systems of 1.1 kW will be installed. Consumers using 100 units per month and up to 200 units per month will be given free solar systems. Verification will be done using the reference number and CNIC number listed on

the consumer's monthly bill. A helpline has also been set up to assist and facilitate the consumers who receive free solar panels. The solar panels and inverter will be linked to the consumer's computerized identity card to protect

them from theft. It was apprised in the briefing that installing 100,000 solar systems in Punjab will reduce carbon emissions by 57,000 tonnes. The scheme will also reduce the burden of subsidy on the federal government.

OFFICE OF THE TEHSIL MUNICIPAL OFFICER
TMA BALAKOT

TENDER

Tehsil Municipal Administration Balakot invite sealed Tender for Different Schemes out of ADP NO. 1173/210557 "District Development Plan (DDP)" (2020-21) and ADP Scheme NO. 934/240315(DDI) 2024-25 from the eligible Contractor /firm registered with Pakistan Engineering Council , fresh enlisted Local Council Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and KPRA Revenue Authority, for the following work.

ADP NO. 1173/210557 "DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN (DDP)" (2020-21)

S#	Name of work	Allocation	2% E/ Money	Last date of submission of Tenders Form	Opening Date of Tenders	Completion Period
1	Const. of PCC Path+Wall Naran	1000000	20000	20-03-2025, 12:00 PM (Noon)	20-03-2025, 2:00 PM (Noon)	As per work order
2	Const. of PCC Road Darmania Gran & Extension Road Darmania Gran	10000000	200000			
3	Const. PCC link road wall Mangli Haroon Abad	800000	16000			
4	Repair of Water Channel pattan Dass	500000	10000			
5	Const. of PCC Path Bachia Phagal	500000	10000			
6	PCC Road/Street, Ghari Habibullah	5800000	116000			
7	PCC Road Moh: Cham Ejaz Ghari Habibullah	2000000	40000			
8	Provision of HDPE Pipe Different Size in Different U/C Tehsil Balakot	7800000	156000			
9	PCC Road Shagai Arqam	500000	10000			
10	PCC Road Hasamabad	500000	10000			
11	Const. of PWall Moh: Aurangzeb garhi	500000	10000			
12	Const. of Road Mana Paya Ghanool	3000000	60000			
13	Const. of PCC Road R/Wall Sanghar	1200000	24000			
14	Const./Rep: of wall/Road Dhano	1500000	30000			
15	PCC Road Jabbar Shohal Najaf Khan	1000000	20000	20-03-2025, 12:00 PM (Noon)	20-03-2025, 2:00 PM (Noon)	As per work order
16	Const. of Culvert Near Suspension Bridge Garlat	1000000	20000			
17	Const. Of PCC Road Barawal Batakundi	3000000	60000			
18	PCC Street Malai Pandi	1300000	26000			
19	PCC Street Batdarian, Mansehra & Ghazi Kot	2500000	50000			
20	Const. of H/Pump near Madina Colony near Shell Pump Mansehra	800000	16000			
21	Const. of P/Wall Char Kassi Kulhary	1500000	30000			
22	Const. of P/Wall Kewai	2500000	50000			
23	PCC Street VC Daib Gran & P/Wall Graveyard Shaikh Abad	3000000	60000			
24	PCC Road Phagla, Mundiar	3000000	60000			
25	PCC Road & Wall Jageer Bissian	3000000	60000			
26	Const. of R/Wall & Drain Moh Lughmani Balakot	2500000	50000			
27	PCC Road & R/Wall Hassa	5000000	100000			
28	Repair of Filtration Plant at Tehsil Balakot	1000000	20000			

ADP SCHEME NO. 934/240315(DDI) 2024-25

S#	Name of work	Allocation	2% E/ Money	Last date of submission of Tenders Form	Opening Date of Tenders	Completion Period
1	PCC Road Bhooraj	1500000	30000	20-03-2025 12:00 PM (Noon)	20-03-2025 2:00 PM (Noon)	As per Work Order
2	PCC Road Denga Shohal Mazullah	1000000	20000			

ADP SCHEME NO. 934/240315(DDI) 2024-25

S#	Name of work	Allocation	2% E/ Money	Last date of submission of Tenders Form	Opening Date of Tenders	Completion Period
1	Provision of HDP pipes Different size in repair/Rehabilitation of different water supply schemes and const/ repairing sources tank in Tehsil, IDPs PK-36 District Mansehra	5000000	100000	20-03-2025 12:00 PM (Noon)	20-03-2025 2:00 PM (Noon)	As per Work Order
2	Const. of PCC link roads/culvert in tehseil Balakot	4000000	80000			
3	Const. of Streets in Tehsil Balakot city, shohal, Garlat, Garhi Habibullah , Talhata and IDPs PK-36 District Mansehra	6000000	120000			
4	Const. protection/ Retaining walls at different places, Balakot city, shohal, Garhi Habibullah, Mangli gran	5000000	100000			
5	Const. of shelter Maktab school khait kali Matti Balakot	1000000	20000			

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- The award of contract shall be on the basis of above/below engineer estimate on MRS 2024 instead of item rate basis.
- The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security @ 2% only of Engineer Estimate.
- The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineer's Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimate cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer's Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- Any such effort to conspire to cartel making shall be considered as violation of Rule 44 and shall be attributed towards mis-procurement under Rule 54 of Procurement Rules Iblid
- The following documents are compulsory with tender form:**
 - The fresh Registration of LCB. ii. The fresh Registration of KPRA Revenue.
 - The Fresh Registration KP Revenue Authority (KPRA) Revenue.
- After issuing the work order, if the contractor / firm is not commence the work in one week, then the tender will be cancelled including forfeiting of security.
- According to the Government Laws, all the taxes will be deducted.
- In case of receiving equal offers / tie, the award of contract shall be decided through a free toss.
- All those contractor which have incomplete / pending works, are avoid to participate in the tenders and to concentrate / priority on completion of previous incomplete schemes.
- Work order will be issued on the availability of funds with Tehsil Municipal Administration, Balakot.
- Tender form can be obtained after deposit of 2% call deposit from the office of Tehsil Officer (I&S) , TMA Balakot, on the submission of tender form fee as per Government rules. The Tender Form will be available from the dated of advertisement.
- All other Term & Conditions can be seen & follow from the relevant advisement which has been advertised on the KPRA Website and in the Newspaper.
- Bidder shall submit their bids in sealed envelope with due time and date with requisite mandatory documents i.e Tender form, duly signed and stamp, BSDs, LCB enlistment, active NTN/income Tax certificate, valid PEC license, active KPRA Registration.
- The quoted rate must be clearly mentioned in word and in finger on tender form. Incomplete/over-writing /dis-figuring will not be acceptable and will be considered as non-responsive.
- The procuring entity may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to acceptance of bids or proposal in light of KPRA rules 47.
- Any addition made in term and conditions in the NIT advertisement will be implemented as per KPRA rules and department policy.

Order By: Tehsil Municipal Officer, TMA Balakot

Advertise By: Tehsil Officer (I&S), TMA Balakot

INF#891/25

Steps being taken to remove illegal occupiers from agri dept lands: Kirmani

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani on Monday said that the department was actively working on removing illegal occupiers from its lands with a zero-tolerance policy.

He presided over the meeting held at Agriculture House. The meeting comprehensively reviewed the progress on projects aimed at agricultural development in line with the Punjab Chief Minister's directives, including a robust campaign against illegal encroachments on government lands.

He said that no political influence would be entertained in this regard. He instructed the Seed Corporation, Agricultural Universities in Faisalabad, Multan and Rawalpindi, Research Institutes, Pest Warning department and the Agriculture Extension

Department to submit detailed reports regarding illegal occupations on their lands.

He asserted that private occupiers had no justification for maintaining their unlawful possession on government land.

The minister announced that the second phase of the Kisan Card would include small and medium-scale farmers owning up to 25 acres of land, with an increase in the per-acre loan limit to benefit more farmers.

Under the Green Tractor Programme, 9,500 farmers were selected through a ballot, of which 9,375 had deposited their share of the payment, he said and added that by March 15, a total of 9,000 tractors would be handed over.

He further said that Solarization of Agricultural Tube Wells Programme had received over

533,000 applications, with 385,128 applications verified through a draw and 14,648 approved. Among these applications, more than 64,000 were for electric tube wells, and over 46,000 for diesel tube wells. So far, 7,911 successful farmers had been issued allotment letters.

He said that the construction of Model Agriculture Malls in Sahiwal would be completed by April 15 and work was ongoing swiftly in Multan, Bahawalpur and Sargodha in this regard.

Punjab Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said that the department was working with Deputy Commissioners to reclaim encroached lands, following clear instructions from the Punjab Chief Minister. He also assured that the Chief Minister's Farmer Package was being implemented according to the timeline.

Govt announces laptop scheme for students

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has announced a new laptop scheme for students, bringing great news for those pursuing higher education.

Under the initiative, 110,000 state-of-the-art i3 generation Core i7 laptops will be distributed among eligible students. The scheme is open to first and second-semester BS students in public sector institutions as well as for medical students, with a merit-based selection process. The online application portal is now live, and thousands of students have already registered within hours of its launch.

Punjab Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat said that the official link for online applications has been published and is available on the Punjab Higher Education Department's website with complete details. Students can apply online at: https://cm1aptophed.punjab.gov.pk/

The minister also mentioned that the merit criteria for BS students has been set at 65%, while for medical students, it is 80%. This merit will be determined based on intermediate marks.

CS reviews financial position, highlights revenue growth



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chaired a high-level review meeting of the Finance Department to assess the province's financial position. The session, attended by Secretary Finance and senior officials, focused on budget planning, fund allocations, and expenditure across key sectors. During the meeting, officials briefed the Chief Secretary on allocations and spending for key projects and flagship initiatives. Discussions also covered salary and pension projections, as well as the overall fiscal outlook. Emphasizing the need for early preparations for the upcoming budget, the Chief Secretary directed all secretaries to closely analyze financial requirements in their respective sectors. A roadmap for governance and fiscal management reforms was also presented, underscoring the importance of transparency, digitization, and process automation. It was revealed that a two-year rotation policy would be enforced to enhance transparency in financial matters. Officials highlighted several significant financial milestones, including implementation of over 50 revenue measures in the finance bill, leading to a

Rs. 14 billion revenue increase—a 50% rise compared to the previous year. Similarly, 90.7% of revenue targets achieved in the first half of FY25, significantly surpassing last year's 66% performance. A 200% increase in royalty on minerals, with expectations of further doubling. Rs. 100 billion projected from provincial own-source revenue. The meeting was informed that a 35% increase in released development funds compared to the previous year. Similarly, Rs.5.4 billion generated in royalties from mines and minerals. The review underscored the government's commitment to sound financial management, ensuring efficient resource allocation for the province's development. The meeting also reaffirmed efforts to strengthen fiscal governance through data-driven policies and structural reforms.

KP Food Minister criticizes Uzma Bukhari

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, has criticized Punjab Minister for Information Uzma Bukhari, stating that she was included in the Punjab cabinet solely to issue statements against the KP government. Zahir Shah

claimed that Bukhari has nothing to offer for her own province, which is why she engages in baseless criticism of the KP government. The provincial minister made these remarks in a statement issued from his office in Peshawar. Toru further stated that "Maryam Nawaz needs to

focus on public welfare projects like Ali Amin Gandapur, as mere statements and self-promotion cannot lead to the progress of the province."

The KP minister also took aim at the Punjab government, alleging that most ministers in its cabinet are part of a corrupt mafia. He added that due

to their poor policies, the people of Punjab are no longer willing to tolerate the government of form 47.

Zahir emphasized that under the leadership of the KP Chief Minister, the province is on the path to development, and his government remains committed to serving the public.

KP achieves impressive 44% increase in tax collection: Muzzammil Aslam

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Finance and Interprovincial Coordination Muzzammil Aslam, has announced that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) has continued its tradition of collecting additional revenue in February. According to KPRA statistics, there has been a 44% increase in tax collection from July to February, which is significantly higher than the 28% increase recorded by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). Muzzammil Aslam stated

that this achievement is particularly noteworthy given that the country's GDP growth has stalled. He expressed optimism that the province will surpass the full year target comprehensively.

Khizar says Saif's response on KP govt's performance is fabricated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Additional Secretary Information, Arbab Khizar Hayat, has strongly reacted to Barrister Saif's report on the provincial government's one-year performance, calling it fabricated. "I challenge Barrister Saif to a debate on any platform," Arbab Khizar Hayat stated. He added that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government claims to have completed 625 development projects, but the ground realities are entirely different. "Just like the false promises of five million houses and 350 dams, the propaganda of 625 development projects is another hoax," Arbab Khizar Hayat remarked. During its 11 years in power, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has not completed a single development project in the province, he claimed. He further compared the performance of Maryam Nawaz with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, stating that "Gandapur's government performance is zero." Arbab Khizar Hayat went on to declare Barrister Saif the "Best Liar of the Year" among the province's so-called spokespersons.

Broadcasting resilience: The unyielding journey of Radio Pakistan Peshawar - I

Hamid Ullah Khan & Iqram Ullah Marwat

In the crucible of mid-19th-century scientific inquiry, James Clerk Maxwell's visionary theories of the 1860s unveiled the existence of electromagnetic waves, an ethereal force destined to transform communication. Decades later, Heinrich Hertz's pioneering experiments in the 1880s transmuted theory into reality, heralding the advent of wireless communication. Together, their breakthroughs laid the cornerstone for radio broadcasting and the boundless wireless world we inhabit today. Marconi sent telegraph messages without wires in 1895. On a chilly Christmas Eve in 1906, Canadian pioneer Reginald Fessenden wedded speech with song in a daring broadcast that flung both chatter and tunes over the airwaves to ships using amplitude modulation (AM). In 1914, as World War I erupted, radio waves carried whispers of secrets across the battlefields. Radio was still so young; it wasn't yet a source for news or music for the masses: It pulsed with coded military commands, inputting troops, plotting strategies, all out of civilian ears. In the 1920s radio broadcasting emerged, and the first public transmissions began in the United States in 1920. At the KDKA station on Pittsburgh, where it all

began, and a variety of news, music, and entertainment was broadcasted to the public. Radio quickly became popular across the world, proving to be an effective tool for communication, education, and culture.

On March 6, 1935, a significant milestone in radio broadcasting was achieved in the region when a gifted transmitter from Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of the radio, was installed. This initiative was made possible through the efforts of Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan, a renowned educationist and politician.

During his visit to London for the Third Round Table Conference in 1931, Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan was introduced to the radio, a revolutionary wireless communication device. Fascinated by its potential, he expressed a desire to meet Marconi. Upon meeting him, he requested a radio transmitter for the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Marconi not only agreed but also fulfilled his promise on March 6, 1935, when the transmitter was installed in a small room of the Secretariat, along with 30 radio sets.

At the time, the region lacked modern means of communication, people largely disconnected from world affairs. The launch of radio broadcasting was a groundbreaking development. However, the local administration faced consid-

erable challenges in setting up the service, including finding technical expertise and talent for radio programs. Despite these difficulties, their determination led to the successful initiation of broadcasts, beginning with news and entertainment programs.

To ensure widespread access, Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan distributed radio sets among prominent individuals in different localities, particularly those with Hujras-traditional gathering spaces. In the evenings, villagers, especially farmers and laborers, would assemble to listen to the news and other programs like Drama. The success and growing popularity of radio compelled the administration to expand its reach. As a result, on July 16, 1942, the radio office was moved from its small room to a larger facility, the Broadcasting House, located in a building that now houses a branch of the Supreme Court, near the High Court.

This historic initiative not only introduced modern communication to the region but also played a crucial role in informing, entertaining and educating the local population, marking the beginning of a new era in media and public awareness.

While this city Peshawar is known for a lot of things, including a radio station established in 1935 during the British colonization, which formed a part of the All India Radio network, the Radio Pakistan

Peshawar was instrumental in promoting cultural heritage and serving as a life line between public and government. The station primarily broadcast in Pashto, Hindko and Urdu during its pre-partition 1935-1947 era, reflecting the rich linguistic diversity of the region. It became a lively venue for local artists, poets and musicians, helping promote the Pashto culture and literature on a large scale. During World War II, Radio Pakistan Peshawar played an important role in providing timely news and broadcasting of programs. The broadcasting station soon became an important source of information, providing accurate updates and content to enhance the atmosphere of both the front line soldiers and civilians. During the 1947 partition, Radio Pakistan Peshawar played a vital role in providing timely news, safety instructions, and government announcements amid widespread chaos. It promoted peace, countered rumors, and offered guidance to refugees. Through patriotic songs and leaders' speeches, the station boosted morale and helped shape a unified national identity.

To be continued
The writers are Senior Producers at Radio Pakistan Peshawar
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PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi chairing a meeting on advertisement for vacancies of different faculties in Islamia College University.

PHC suspends transfer of NAB's Director Investigation to Rawalpindi

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notices to the Chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Director General (DG) of NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, seeking their response to a petition challenging the appointment of the DG NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Monday. PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Sabit Ullah, heard the petition. The petitioner, Ghazi Rahman, was represented by Shumael Ahmed Butt and Haris Khan advocates. The petitioner's counsel informed the court that the petitioner is currently serving as the Director of Investigations in NAB and that his promotion was due on the day an inquiry was initiated against him. The counsel alleged that the inquiry was started to block the petitioner's promotion. The counsel further informed the court that despite the court's previous order to refrain from taking any adverse action against the petitioner, NAB transferred the petitioner to Rawalpindi on February 4. The lawyers also informed the court that NAB initiated two more inquiries against the petitioner on the same day, allegedly to block his promotion. The petitioner's counsel argued that this is a common practice, where departmental action is taken against employees who approach the court. The counsel claimed that the petitioner's transfer and the initiation of new inquiries against him are a clear example of mala fide intentions. The court, after hearing the arguments, suspended the notification of the petitioner's transfer to Rawalpindi and issued notices to the Chairman NAB and the DG NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, seeking their response to the petition.

Hope Every Soul Matters launches daily iftar Dastarkhwan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As part of its humanitarian efforts, the charitable organization Hope Every Soul Matters has officially launched its Iftar Dastarkhwan on the 1st of Ramadan.

Around 500 people will be provided with free Iftar meals every day. This initiative will continue throughout Ramadan, concluding on Chand Raat.

The program is open to everyone, especially targeting the underprivileged, laborers, and travelers. The initiative is funded by generous donors from across the country who contribute to ensure that no one goes hungry during the holy month.

A team of dedicated volunteers is working tirelessly to organize and distribute the meals, ensuring that those in need are served with dignity and respect.

The CEO of Hope Every Soul Matters Osama Yousufzai emphasized that the organization is a non-profit charitable trust dedicated to providing relief to the less fortunate.

He further highlighted that the initiative is made possible through contributions from donors nationwide, reflecting a spirit of unity and compassion during Ramadan.

He has also appealed to individuals and businesses to step forward and contribute to the cause, ensuring that more people can benefit from the Iftar program.

Seminar on self-accountability held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A seminar on self-accountability was organized at the University of Agriculture Peshawar, attended by Special Guest Musaddiq Abbasi, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Anti-Corruption. Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Jahan Bakht, faculty members, and students were also present.

The seminar is part of an awareness campaign focused on combating corruption and promoting self-accountability.

Addressing the event, Musaddiq Abbasi emphasized that societies governed by the rule of law and justice achieve prosperity, stressing the need to

eliminate negative ideologies and practices. He highlighted Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's efforts to legislate against corruption, which he deemed a grave threat to the nation.

Musaddiq Abbasi outlined three pillars for curbing corruption: raising public awareness, closing loopholes for corrupt practices, and strict enforcement of laws. "We must avoid judging others while justifying our own actions," he added. He further added that measures are being taken to eradicate corruption opportunities within departments, particularly targeting elite corruption.

Advisor to Chief Minister Musaddiq Abbasi

noted that societies with weak rule of law suffer from poor accountability, while those with robust legal frameworks experience less corruption and greater prosperity. He also discussed the individual and collective impacts of corruption and elaborated on the concept of self-accountability.

Musaddiq Abbasi stated, "If one individual changes themselves, the world will change." He advised students to cultivate a habit of reading, particularly studying the Quran, the life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). "Read and understand the Quran, let it guide your practical lives. Always speak the truth and abandon falsehood," he added.

Training for millers on wheat flour fortification held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Nutrition International in collaboration with Techno serve under the Millers for Nutrition project organized an awareness and training session in Peshawar. The session was attended by representatives from Flour Mills Association and Academia University Professors.

Intiaz Ali Shah, Provincial Program Manager of Nutrition International, briefed the participants on the organization's objectives and the project's aims. He also

expressed gratitude to Flour Mills Association representatives and stressed the need for collective efforts among the key stakeholders to build a healthier society. He further elaborated that fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient (vitamins and minerals) in a food to improve the nutritional quality of the food. He said that fortified wheat flour is healthy as it contains flour essential minerals and vitamins that our body require on daily bases. These include Iron, Folic Acid, Zinc and Vitamin B12.

He also said that Nutrition International is digitalizing monitoring the wheat flour fortification process at mills level, and for this the miller capacity are building to properly calibrate the micro feeders and enter fortified production data on the millers for nutrition website.

Speaking on the occasion, the Provincial Chairman and executive members of Pakistan Flour Mills Association appreciated the Nutrition International efforts and showed interest in introducing digitalizing system in mills regarding fortified flour production.

People of KP laud PM ramazan relief package

PESHAWAR (APP): The Prime Minister's Ramadan relief package of Rs20 billion has garnered widespread praise from people across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), with citizens from all walks of life lauding the unprecedented financial support.

This package, which is the largest ever announced for the holy month of Ramadan, is expected to offer significant relief to millions of poor families across Pakistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's announcement of the Rs20 billion package on Saturday has been hailed as a much-needed gesture in these challenging times.

The package aims to support approximately 4 million deserving families, benefiting about 20 million people, including those in KP. This move is seen as a substantial increase over last year's relief of Rs7 billion, representing a 186% increase. Politicians, economists, teachers, and civil society members have all voiced their support for the relief initiative, but it has particularly resonated with low-income groups. Workers, farmers, laborers, and low-paid employees expressed their gratitude, saying the relief would ease the financial burden during the holy month.

Riaz Khan, a retired school teacher, praised the Prime Minister for his empathy and commitment to helping those in need. "This massive relief package will provide much-needed assistance to many poor families, and termed it very positive to see the government prioritizing the welfare of ordinary citizens," Riaz Khan remarked.

The relief package, which will be distributed within the first ten days of

Ramazan, will provide Rs5,000 per family, disbursed through digital wallets.

This financial support is expected to be particularly impactful for daily wage earners, farmers, labourers and small business owners who are struggling with inflation and rising living costs.

Bilal Khan, a local fruit seller, expressed his gratitude for the Prime Minister for the mega package, calling it important for people in his community.

"The Ramadan relief package will make a huge difference for people like me who struggle to make ends meet. It will help us buy essentials for our families and observe the holy month with peace of mind."

Similarly, farmers and small-scale vendors such as Misal Khan, a farmer, Lateef Shah, a hairdresser, and Shahjehan, a bread

maker, thanked the Prime Minister for his timely support. "This package will ease our daily challenges and ensure that we can provide for our families during the holy month," they said.

The Prime Minister's Ramadan package has been widely seen as a symbol of solidarity with the masses.

Many believe that this initiative will foster a sense of national unity and highlight the government's commitment to uplifting the most vulnerable sectors of society.

As the holy month of Ramadan begins, the relief package stands as a beacon of hope for millions, reaffirming the government's focus on alleviating the financial hardships faced by ordinary citizens.

The people of KP, along with the rest of the nation, have expressed their sincere appreciation for this timely and generous initiative.



In brief

Public service delivery directed
F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: On the directives of Punjab Chief Minister, a 'Kuli Katcheri' held by Revenue department to ensure Public Service in Toba Tek Singh under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner. Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue, Assistant Commissioners, Tehsildars and Land Record Center officials attended the session, addressing public grievances and issuing on the spot directives. DC Muhammad Naeem Sandhu emphasized the administration's commitment to swift and transparent issue resolution, ensuring that revenue matters are handled efficiently. Participants appreciated the initiative and called for regular open courts to continue facilitating citizens. DC Sandhu reaffirmed that this step aligns with CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision of good governance and public service.

Affordable transportation
F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: As per the development vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, departmental work is underway on planning a mega project of Metro Bus Service under Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to provide dignified, affordable and efficient urban transport facilities in Faisalabad city. In this regard, a team of Punjab Transport Department headed by Managing Director Punjab Mass Transit Authority Kanwar Anwar Ali Khan visited Faisalabad and meet with Director General Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Muhammad Asif Chaudhry. The team of the Transport Department included General Manager Operations Punjab Mass Transit Authority Uzair Shah, Manager Operations Rizwan Aziz, Senior Engineers NESPAK Musa Dar, Sameed Anis, Obaidullah and Project Manager Jamshed Faisal. Additional Director General FDA Yasir Ijaz Chatha, Chief Engineer Mehra Ayub, Deputy Director Engineering Umar Iqbal and other FDA officers were also present in the meeting. Director General FDA Muhammad Asif Chaudhry welcomed the team of Punjab Transport Department and discussed with them the details of the planning of the Metro Bus Service. He said that the FDA has provided full support to the experts of the Asian Development Bank during the study of the project and is committed to the departmental responsibilities in this regard. He said that various routes have been proposed in the city for the Metro Bus Service, on which consultation sessions have also been held with some stakeholders. He also shared the details of the study conducted for the project and necessary information related to the planning with the team of the Transport Department and said that modern and organized urban transport facilities are indispensable for the city of Faisalabad as per the future requirements.

Rescue respond emergencies
F.P. Report

MULTAN: Punjab Emergency Service Rescue 1122 Multan responded to 9,590 emergencies in February 2025, providing relief to 9,858 affected individuals. The average response time remained under seven minutes. The emergencies included 2,169 accidents, 89 fire incidents, 179 crime-related emergencies, one drowning case, four building collapses, and 6,203 medical emergencies such as heart attacks and respiratory issues.

Heavy downpour, snowfall led to closure of roads

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Shangla has been hit by another spell of heavy rain and snowfall, resulting in a significant increase in cold temperatures. The rain and snowfall have caused landslides on various roads, including the main highway from Alpur to Mangorah and Alpur to Krorah, on Monday.

After a two-day break, Shangla experienced heavy rain and snowfall again, resulting in a significant increase in cold temperatures. The rain and snowfall caused landslides at various points on the main roads, including Alpur to Mangorah and Alpur to Krorah. The administration has imposed a ban on vehicular traffic on certain roads in the upper regions, including Shangla Top, Yakh Tangi Top, Kandao Top, and Loge Ajmeer, due to heavy snowfall.

According to the Met Department, the rain and snowfall are expected to continue intermittently. The snowfall has been reported to be over one foot in the hilly areas, while the district headquarters, Alpur, and other residential areas have also received significant snowfall.

Power outages continue unabated: The people of Shangla are facing severe power outages, which have become a norm during the winter season. The district has been experiencing load shedding for the past two years, with the Pesco authorities citing excessive losses on the feeder as the reason.

The power outages have worsened with the onset of winter, with the Pesco authorities introducing a new experiment of shutting down the entire power supply from Kotki Grid Station to Alpur during rainfall. This has resulted in prolonged power outages, not only in Alpur but also in surrounding areas, including Lelonai and

Raniyal.

Admn crackdowns against profiteers: Assistant Commissioner Alpur launched crackdown against profiteers on the first day of Ramadan, sealing 8 shops and arresting their owners.

According to details, on the orders of Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner Alpur inspected various markets in Lilownai, District Headquarters Bazaar Alpur, Alpur Payan, and Baley Baba. Prices of essential commodities were checked, and 8 individuals were found guilty of profiteering by violating the official price list issued by the district administration. Their shops were sealed, and they were arrested. He directed strict action against all profiteers.

During the inspection, he also instructed the public and shopkeepers not to sell essential commodities at higher prices during Ramadan. At several locations, vehicles were stopped for inspection, and information was gathered from passengers regarding fares. On the complaints of the people, he also ordered action against those charging excessive fares and handed them over to the police. The public in Shangla highly appreciated the positive action of Assistant Commissioner Alpur and demanded that such actions continue.

Coal miner laid to rest: In Darra Adam Khel, a coal miner lost his life in the Tundi Coal Mine. According to details, a coal miner named Muhammad Rehman, son of Muhammad Naushad, resident of Kairin Lari Peer Khana, lost his life due to inhaling toxic gas while working inside the mine. The deceased's body was rescued and brought out. After completing the funeral rites, the body was taken to his native area for burial, where he was laid to rest in the presence of hundreds of tearful eyes.

Enrollment drive continue with full swing

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Children Enrolment Campaign is in full swings in district Hafizabad and Chief Executive Officer Muhammad Akram Ashraf is personally leading the campaign to ensure enrolment of every child above 4-year-old in the district.

In this connection, CEO Education Muhammad Akram Ashraf visited government girls elementary school Qila Sahib Sing to check admission of children in the school and he entered them name himself in enrolment register of the school. He interacted with students and spent joyful moments with little children and welcome new students with open arms. Assistant Director Education Amjid Ali Bhatti, DDEO (W) Madam Sadaf Khanam and school teachers were also present on this occasion.

While talking to the staff of the school, CEO Said that education is fundamental right of every child and Chief Minister of the Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif desires to promote quality education and to ensure enrolment of hundred percent children in the schools above 4-year-old. He said that teachers, it was national responsibility of parents, teachers and peo-

ple belong to different segments of society to play their vital role to make hundred present enrollment of children in schools.

Civil society role recognition demanded: Regional Manager Shah Hussain Network Sajid Ali has urged the government to acknowledge positive roll of NGOs which are wording for the welfare of people and to eliminate such policies which are creating hurdle in serving the masses.

While addressing a meeting of Shah Hussain Social Welfare Network held at its office, he said that NGOs are providing services for welfare and progress of people. Shazad Haider Khan, Afshan Nazli, Khuram Shahzad (Gujranwala), Shahnaz Rafiq (Wazirabad), Nazar Hussain Khokhar (Hafizabad) and Ruksana Liaquat (Sheikhupura) attended the meeting.

One killed in encounter: An accused involved in more than 38 robbery cases killed in police encounter. According to police spokesman, Hafizabad police arrested accused Tehseen son of Ameen Kotli of village Raitwali (Gujranwala) and last day police was carrying accused for recovery.

On his way, when police

party was reached near Akkanwali village, unidentified accused started firing on police party allegedly to get released accused Tehseen from police custody. Police also retaliated. As a result of which, accused Tehseen was injured and shifted to Trauma Centre, where he lost his breath.

World Civil Defense Day observed: World Civil Defense Day celebrated here to pay homage and acknowledge services of voluntarily of civil defence as well as highlight the importance of civil defence and promote safety awareness.

In this connection seminar held and walk was taken out from district complex led by Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq. ADCR Tanveer Yaseen, Civil Defense Officer Shahid Parvaiz, officers from various government departments, representatives of social organizations and other concerned individuals joined walk to raise awareness about civil defence measures. Addressing the participants of seminar and walk, DC said that volunteers of civil defence play laudable role in floods, natural disasters, war and other emergencies to protect lives and properties of the people always.

Finnish tourist delegation visits Mohanjo Daro

F.P. Report

LARKANA: A delegation of foreign tourists from Finland under the leadership of Marker visited Mohanjo Daro, an ancient civilization site of Sindh.

The delegation visited DK Area, Great Bath, Museum and others old civilization points, on this occasion Ehsan Abbasi also welcomed the foreign tourists and presented them with the traditional gifts of Sindh hats and Ajrak. Security measures were tightened during the visit.

BTF hold eye camp in

Badeh, 400 patients were operated: In collaboration with Badeh Trust Forum (BTF) and Sindh Rising Foundation free eye camp was established in the government hospital of Badah city of Larkana district.

The number of enrolled men was more than 1300, while 900 patients suffering from eye disease were examined by doctors, they were given necessary medicines free of charge, while 400 patients suffering from eye diseases were successfully operated on their eyes. For this reason, we have

established a free eye camp for the benefit of women and men suffering from eye diseases in Badeh city and surrounding areas, by the Badeh Trust Forum in collaboration with Dr. Muhammad Khan Shaikh of the Sindh Rising Foundation.

We will continue to serve. Meanwhile, Badeh Trust Forum also organized a Raag Rang concert in Jannat Hall of the city, in which political, social, literary, journalists and ordinary citizens participated and enjoyed listening to music.

Rescue 1122 issues performance report

F.P. Report

BUNER: Rescue 1122 announced performance report of February claimed that as many as 6160 unnecessary calls have been received which has caused wastage of time and energy, on Monday.

As per the report Rescue 1122 Buner served the public in a total of 242 different

accidents while Control Room received a total of 11442 including 5040 informative or drop calls and 6160 unnecessary or harassing the ended month it covered 177 medical, 39 road traffic accidents, 04 bolt injuries, 05 fire and 17 recovery incidents.

During 220 people were affected in these incidents / accidents, out of which 197

people were shifted to the hospital after providing first aid on the spot. Among them, 00 died in the hospital, 04 before reaching the hospital.

Besides, handled 67 emergency situations under hospital-to-hospital transfer service, in which 75 patients were transferred from one district hospital to another district hospital.



SHANGA: A driver busy to setting chain with vehicle's tyre due to heavy snowfall in the valley. — F.P. photo

Court convicts murderer for life imprisonment
F.P. Report

SHANGLA: District and Sessions Judge (D&SJ) Shangla Nasrullah Khan Gandapur convicted Habibullah, for life imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 5 million in murder case.

The case was registered at the Alpur police station in 2023 under sections 302/337F(iv)337c of the Pakistan Penal Code. Habibullah, son of Sabah Khan, was found guilty of murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment with compensation of Rs 5 million to the heirs of the deceased.

Government announces revised office timings for Ramadan: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has issued a new office schedule for government employees during the holy month of Ramadan.

According to the notification, government offices operating on a five-day workweek will observe the following timings: Monday to Thursday: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and Friday: 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. For offices operating on a six-day workweek, the new timings will be: Monday to Thursday & Saturday: 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, Friday: 9:00 am to 12:30 pm.

Power outage plunges Shangla into darkness: A prolonged power outage has gripped Shangla, leaving the district headquarters, Alpur, and surrounding areas in darkness. The outage occurred due to the malfunctioning of 16 transformers in the region.

The traders and locals have staged protests, demanding immediate restoration of electricity. Political leaders from the Pakistan Muslim League and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have also joined hands, offering to repair the transformers themselves.

Veteran politician passes away
F.P. Report

KOHISTAN: Malik Saeed Ahmed Khan, a veteran politician from Kohistan, has passed away. His funeral was attended by thousands of people, and he was laid to rest in his ancestral graveyard in Dobair, Kohistan.

Various political, religious, and social leaders have paid tribute to the late Malik Saeed Ahmed Khan, acknowledging his selfless services to the people of Kohistan. They described him as a leader who dedicated his life to the service of the poor and marginalized communities of Kohistan.

Malik Saeed Ahmed Khan was a member of the National Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary for Frontier Regions. His death has created a void that can never be filled. He was a prominent political leader in Kohistan, and his services to the people of Kohistan will always be remembered.

In a condolence message, the people of Kohistan expressed their grief and sorrow over the passing away of Malik Saeed Ahmed Khan. They prayed for the departed soul and expressed solidarity with the bereaved family.

D&SJ kicks off plantation drive

F.P. Report

KARAK: A tree plantation drive was launched in Karak district under the provincial government's public service agenda to increase forest cover and overcome environmental hazards. District and Sessions Judge Syed Adnan Shah and Deputy Commissioner Shakil Ahmad Jan inaugurated the drive by planting saplings on the premises of the newly built judicial complex.

The officials also inspected the judicial complex building and conducted an overall review of the construction work. On the

occasion, other judges of the district courts, SP investigation and forest department officials also sowed seedlings. The officials declared increasing the area of forests inevitable to control pollution, land degradation, and erosion and climate issues.

They called upon people especially youths and students to take active part in tree plantation activities and grow more and more trees in their respective localities. "An enthusiastic participation by people from all walks of life in the drive will help to make the clean and green Pakistan programme a success",

they maintained. Meanwhile, elders of Karak district have told the police authorities that they have formed chagha parties (armed militia) to assist local police in case any terrorist attack occurs on police installations in their areas.

During separate meetings with District Police Officer Shahbaz Elahi, they said that they would work shoulder by shoulder with the police to protect their land from anti-peace elements. They also reiterated that they would not allow terrorists to use their soil for carrying out subversive activities.

Commissioner commends hospital staff

F.P. Report

KALAYA: Commissioner Kohat inspected various government institutions including hospitals, schools, bazaars, construction works and animal husbandry in the Orakzai district along-with the authorities concerned the other day under 'Awami Agenda', on Monday.

Commissioner Kohat, during his visit, commended the Head of the Meshti Mela Hospital and its entire

staff for excellent performance and exemplary cleanliness of the hospitals while ordered action against the Tehsil Officer of TMA for his poor performance. Similarly, he also ordered deduction of the one day's salary of all the staff except the Class-IV Staff of 2 government schools for closing the schools one and a half hours before the time.

Commissioner Motasim Billah also issued orders to the authorities concerned regarding the quality, quan-

tity and timely completion of all the construction works in the entire district.

He, during the visit, also met the people at different places and after listening to their problems related to various government departments and institutions gave directions to the quarters concerned on the spot for its redressal.

The people of Orakzai Tribal District termed the Chief Minister's Program "Awami Agenda" as very effective and useful.

Commissioner directs DCs to facilitate public

F.P. Report

BANNU: Commissioner Bannu has asked the Lakki Marwat, Bannu and North Waziristan district administrations to fully mobilize officials of food, livestock and police departments and Food Safety and Halal Food Authority for provision of maximum relief to general public during the month of Ramadan.

Through an office order, the divisional commissioner has asked the deputy commissioners to formulate a workable plan of

action to ensure availability of sugar, price regulations and cleanliness during the fasting month. He asked the deputy commissioners to focus on wholesale grain dealers and cold storage points in order to curb and discourage hoarding and profiteering.

He said that the deputy commissioners should allow only one auction of fruits and vegetables in the relevant markets, besides they should ensure use of an authorized slaughter house and examination of animals by veterinary experts before

being slaughtered.

Commissioner Muhammad Ali Shah said that cleanliness of all vicinities, especially around mosques should be ensured to the maximum level. "The administrative prudence and respect of vendors should be the guiding principles during the campaign without any compromise against profiteering and hoarding", he maintained, making clear that all relevant officers should be on ground without any fail and price monitoring report should be shared on a daily basis.

50 institutions participated in AWKUM festival

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The curtains have closed on a monumental and magical 3-day festival, leaving behind a legacy of excitement, entertainment, and memories that will last a lifetime. The extraordinary event brought together over 50 institutes from across Pakistan, fostering a vibrant atmosphere of unity, creativity, and celebration.

The success of the festival was made possible through the unwavering support and guidance of the esteemed Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Zahir Shah, whose leader-

ship was pivotal in bringing this vision to life. Gratitude was also extended to the Provost Office for their exceptional leadership and vision, which played a crucial role in ensuring the festival's triumph.

Special thanks were extended to Deputy Commissioner Mardan for his invaluable support and contributions, which significantly enhanced the festival's success.

The event was further elevated by the collaboration of the District Administration, District Youth Office Mardan, and Abdul's Pharmacy, whose collective efforts helped

create an unforgettable experience for all attendees.

A special acknowledgment was given to the Student Council, whose tireless efforts and dedication ensured that every detail was executed flawlessly, contributing to the festival's resounding success. From captivating performances to inspiring collaborations, the festival showcased the immense talent, creativity, and spirit of all participants. It stood as a true celebration of culture, innovation, and community, leaving an indelible mark on everyone who attended.

Flag-hoisting ceremony held

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: A flag-hoisting ceremony was held in Chahkan Fort, Dera Ismail Khan. General Officer

Commanding of Dera Ismail Khan Major General Naik Nam Muhammad Baig was the chief guest on the occasion.

Naik Nam Muhammad Baig laid floral wreath at the grave of Captain Haroon Mehud Shaheed near Chahkan fort and offered fateha.



USAID cuts hitting countries around the world

DAKAR (AP): Countries around the world already are feeling the impact of the Trump administration's decision to eliminate more than 90% of foreign aid contracts and cut some \$60 billion in funding. Hours after the announcement earlier this week, programs were shuttered, leaving millions of people without access to life-saving care.

Some 10,000 contracts with the US Agency for International Development were terminated, in letters sent to nongovernmental organizations across the globe. The letters said that the programs were being defunded "for convenience and the interests of the US government," according to a person with knowledge of the content who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the issue.

Many of the programs are in fragile countries that are highly reliant on US aid to support health systems, nutrition programs and stave off starvation. Other major issues like fighting terrorism, human and drug trafficking, including fentanyl, and monitoring and aiding migrants will also suffer as a result of the US cuts, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

In Congo, aid group Action Against Hunger will stop treating tens of thousands of malnourished children from May, which the charity said will put the children in "mortal danger." In Ethiopia, food assistance stopped for more than 1 million people, according to the Tigray Disaster Risk Management Commission. The Ministry of Health was also forced to terminate the contract of 5,000 workers across the country focused on HIV and malaria prevention, vaccinations and

helping vulnerable women deal with the trauma of war.

In Senegal, the biggest malaria project closed. It distributed bed nets and medication to tens of thousands of people, according to a USAID worker who was not authorized to speak to the media. Maternal and child health and nutrition services also closed. They provided lifesaving care to tens of thousands of pregnant women and treatment that would have prevented and treated acute malnutrition.

In South Sudan, the International Rescue Committee closed a project providing access to quality health care and nutrition services to more than 115,000 people. A program shuttered by the Norwegian Refugee Council in Colombia left 50,000 people without lifesaving support including in the northeast, where growing violence has precipitated a once-in-a-generation humanitarian crisis. It included food, shelter, clean water and other basic items for people displaced in the region.

In war-torn Sudan, 90 communal kitchens closed in the capital, Khartoum, leaving more than half a million people without consistent access to food, according to the International Rescue Committee. In Bangladesh, 600,000 women and children will lose access to critical maternal health care, protection from violence, reproductive health services and other lifesaving care, according to the United Nations Population Fund.

In Mali, critical aid, such as access to water, food and health services was cut for more than 270,000 people, according to an aid group that did not want to be named for fear of reprisal.

More than 400,000 people in northern Burkina Faso lost access to services such as water. Services for gender-based violence and child protection for thousands are also no longer available, according to an aid group that did not want to be named for fear of reprisal.

In Somalia, 50 health centers servicing more than 19,000 people a month closed because health workers are not being paid, according to Alright, a U.S. aid group. In Ukraine, cash-based humanitarian programs that reached 1 million people last year were suspended, according to the spokesperson for the UN secretary-general. In Afghanistan, hundreds of mobile health teams and other services were suspended, affecting 9 million people, according to the UN spokesperson.

In Syria, aid programs for some 2.5 million people in the country's northeast stopped providing services, according to the UN secretary-general. Also in the north, a dozen health clinics, including the main referral hospital for the area, have shut down, said Doctors Without Borders. In Kenya, more than 600,000 people living in areas plagued by drought and persistent acute malnutrition will lose access to lifesaving food and nutrition support, according to Mercy Corps.

In Haiti, 13,000 people have lost access to nutritional support, according to Action Against Hunger. The cuts will affect in total at least 550,000 people who were receiving aid. In Thailand, hospitals helping some 100,000 refugees from Myanmar have shuttered, according to aid group Border Consortium.

Pentagon sending about 3,000 troops to US-Mexico border

WASHINGTON (AP): The Pentagon is sending about 3,000 more active-duty troops to the US-Mexico border as President Donald Trump seeks to clamp down on illegal immigration and fulfill a central promise of his campaign, US officials said.

His defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, has ordered elements of a Stryker brigade combat team and a general support aviation battalion for the mission, the Pentagon announced. The forces will arrive along the nearly 2,000-mile border in the coming weeks. The Defense Department's statement did not specify the size of the deployment, but it was put at about 3,000 by the officials, who were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Strykers are medium-armored wheeled personnel carriers. Already, about 9,200 US troops in total are at the southern border, including 4,200 deployed under federal orders and about 5,000 National Guard troops under the control of governors. The new troops will "reinforce and expand current border security operations to seal the border and protect the territorial integrity of the United States," the Pentagon said. Trump is determined to expand the military's role in his effort to shut down the border and send detained migrants back to their home countries.

Military personnel have been sent to the border almost continuously since the 1990s to help address migration, drug trafficking and transnational crime. The Washington Post first reported on the new deployment.

Egypt says Gaza reconstruction plan ready

DUBAI (Reuters): Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said that Egypt's Gaza reconstruction plan, which ensures Palestinians remain in their land, is ready and will be presented at an emergency Arab summit in Cairo. Arab states, which were swift to reject President Donald Trump's plan for the US to take control of Gaza and resettle Palestinians, are scrambling to agree on a diplomatic offensive to counter the idea.

Trump's plan, announced on February 4 amid a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, appeared to back away from longstanding US Middle East policy focused on a two-state solution and sparked anger among Palestinians and Arab nations. Abdelatty said Egypt would seek international backing and funding for the plan and emphasized Europe's crucial role, particularly in the financing of Gaza's reconstruction.

"We will hold intensive talks with major donor countries once the plan is adopted at the upcoming Arab Summit," he said in a press conference with the EU Commissioner for the Mediterranean, Dubravka Suica. Israel blocked the entry of aid trucks into Gaza as a standoff over the truce that has halted fighting for the past six weeks escalated. Abdelatty said the use of aid as a weapon of collective punishment could not be permitted. The first phase of the fragile ceasefire agreement expired this weekend. Abdelatty reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to the originally agreed ceasefire that had been scheduled to move into a second phase.

"It will be difficult, but with goodwill and political determination, it can be achieved," he said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said earlier that it had adopted a US proposal for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza for the Ramadan and Passover periods. Abdelatty said after Tuesday's summit, foreign ministers of member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation would hold an urgent meeting in Saudi Arabia to discuss how to present the plans.



GAZA: A Palestinian woman carries buckets in al-Mawasi tent camp near Khan Younis.

Russia praises Trump and scolds Europe for being the crucible of war

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov praised US 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. President Vladimir Putin's foreign minister of 21 years said the model of the US-China relationship was the one that should be built between Russia and the United States to do a lot of "mutually beneficial things" without allowing disagreements to collapse into war.

"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, although 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.

Trump, who spoke to Putin on February 12 and says he wants to be remembered as a "peace maker", has upended US policy on the Ukraine war. Lavrov said that the call with Putin had been at Trump's initiative. Trump said last week that the war could develop into World War Three, that he had spoken to Putin on "numerous occasions" and that he thought that there would be a deal on Ukraine peace.

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. European leaders leapt to Zelenskyy's defence. But Lavrov criticised Europe, saying that for the past 500 years Europe had been the crucible of "all the tragedies of the world" including colonisation, wars, crusaders, the Crimean War, Napoleon Bonaparte, World War One and Adolf Hitler.

"And now, after (former US President Joe) Biden's term, people have come in who want to be guided by common sense. They say directly that they want to end all wars, they want peace," Lavrov said. "And who demands a 'continuation of the banquet' in the form of a war? Europe." Lavrov also dismissed European ideas for sending in a contingent of European peacekeepers and said Russia had no trust in Ukraine after the collapse of the Minsk agreements, which were designed to end a separatist war by Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine.

Europeans, Lavrov said, could not explain what rights Russian speakers would have under the European peacekeeper plans, adding that Russia did not like the idea of Europeans propping up Zelenskyy. "Now they also want to prop him up with their bayonets in the form of peacekeeping units. This will mean that the root causes will not disappear," Lavrov said.

Europe must take responsibility for defending itself: Starmer

LONDON (AP): British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Europe must take responsibility for defending itself as world leaders met in London to discuss working together to stop Russia's war in Ukraine. Britain hosted the summit to shore up support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after an astonishing Oval Office meltdown with President Donald Trump that left many uncertain where the once staunch allies stood.

Starmer said Britain, France and Ukraine have agreed to work on a ceasefire plan to present to the United States. Starmer pledged to supply more arms to defend Ukraine, announcing that the U.K. will use 1.6 billion pounds (\$2 billion) in export financing to supply 5,000 air defense missiles. Starmer says Europe summit on Ukraine a 'once in a generation moment' British Prime Minister Keir Starmer called a summit of European leaders that he

convened in London a "once in a generation moment for the security of Europe."

The British prime minister said he spoke to US President Donald Trump before announcing that the U.K., France and Ukraine will work together to develop a plan to present to the US to stop the fighting. Starmer insisted any peace plan for Ukraine must have American security guarantees and said the plan is currently being developed on the basis that "it will have US backing." Starmer announced around \$2 billion in funding for Ukraine to buy more than 5,000 defense missiles. He also set out four key points to ensure Ukraine gets a just and lasting peace. Military aid to Ukraine will continue as will economic pressure on Russia. Ukraine must be at the table for talks and any deal must ensure Ukraine's sovereignty and security. If there is a peace deal, the U.K. and other like-minded countries will

keep boosting Ukraine's defensive capability to deter any future invasion. A "coalition of the willing" will be assembled to defend Ukraine and guarantee peace. The U.K. is prepared to back this with "boots on the ground and planes in the air," Starmer said although he did not name other countries which have also committed resources. France and Britain have proposed a one-month ceasefire in Ukraine "in the air, on the seas and on energy infrastructure," French President Emmanuel Macron told Le Figaro newspaper.

Macron did not speak to reporters as he left a meeting on Ukraine defense in London but spoke to Le Figaro on his way to the summit. Macron said he and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer have devised a truce that would last a month. Soldiers would only be deployed on the ground at a later stage. "There won't be any European troops on

Ukrainian soil in the coming weeks," he said. "The question is how we use this time to try and get an accessible truce, with negotiations that will take several weeks and then, once peace is signed, a deployment." Asked at a press conference whether he was aware of the plan put on the table by Macron and Starmer, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said without elaborating, according to a BBC translation: "I'm aware of everything." Dutch leader Schoof says a secure Ukraine is in Europe's interest.

Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof says a safe and secure Ukraine is in the interest of all of Europe, including the Netherlands, and that's why a united Europe is now "more important than ever." Schoof, who attended the security summit in London said Europe "has to play a bigger role in safeguarding the security of our continent."

Iraq's displaced Kurds hope to return home

GUHARZE, Iraq (AP): Iraqi Kurdish villagers, displaced by fighting between Turkish forces and Kurdish militants that has played out for years in northern Iraq, are finally allowing themselves to hope they will soon be able to go home. Their hopes were raised after the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, declared a ceasefire in the 40-year insurgency against the Turkish government, answering a call to disarm from earlier in the week by the group's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, imprisoned in Turkey since 1999.

The truce - if implemented - could not only be a turning point in neighboring Turkey but could also bring much needed stability to the volatile region spanning the border between the two countries. In northern Iraq, Turkish forces have repeat-

edly launched blistering offensives over the past years, pummeling PKK fighters who have been hiding out in sanctuaries in Iraq's northern semi-autonomous Kurdish region, and have set up bases in the area. Scores of villages have been completely emptied of their residents.

Adil Tahir Qadir fled his village of Barchi, on Mount Matn in 1988, when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein launched a brutal campaign against the area's Kurdish population. He now lives in a newly built village - also named Barchi, after the old one that was abandoned - about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) away, south of the mountain.

He used to go back to the old village every now and then to farm his land. But that stopped in 2015 when Turkish

forces moved in and set up camp there in the fight against PKK, hitting the group with wave after wave of airstrikes. Iraqi Kurdish farmers and their lands became collateral damage. The Turkish airstrikes and ground incursions targeting PKK positions displaced thousands of Iraqi Kurdish civilians, cutting off many from their land.

"Because of Turkish bombing, all of our farmlands and trees were burned," Qadir said. If peace comes, he will go back right away, he says. "We wish it will work so we can return." In the border area of Amedi in Iraq's Dohuk province - once a thriving agricultural community - around 200 villages had been emptied of their residents by the fighting, according to a 2020 study by the regional Iraqi Kurdish government.

The Frontier Post

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The flare-up between Trump-Vance and Zelensky

THE 10 minutes of belligerence shown by US Vice President James D Vance and President Donald Trump on the one side, and the mistimed argumentativeness of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the Oval Office, the President of the United States (POTUS) seat, on Friday had all the elements of a reality TV show.

It has rightly gone viral round the globe, and evoked responses from politicians in the United States, leaders in Europe, and the media, including the social media and the netizens. Yes, the talks between Trump and Zelensky had broken down, but it is unlikely that the US-Ukraine relations are at an end.

Editorials in The New York Times and The Washington Post have shown restraint. The arguments from these liberal newspapers was that Trump and Vance should not have berated Zelensky the way they did, and they did not fully endorse Zelensky while conceding that his arguments about Russian President Vladimir Putin's unreliability had merit.

So, the 10 minutes of what might in retrospect may seem as inconsequential, should not close the different viewpoints and opinions about the war in Ukraine. President Trump's approach to the ceasefire might seem a little too hasty and even one-sided. But he and Vance have a point that there is no alternative to diplomacy in ending the war in Ukraine.

As a victim of the war, and there cannot be any fudging of truth here that Russia is the aggressor in this war, Ukraine has every reason to be suspicious of any commitments of peace that Putin would make. The Ukrainian apprehensions are justified. So, one has to look beyond the fiery 10 minutes in the Oval Office and in media glare.

It is certain that Trump would end military aid to Ukraine. This could have consequences for the military resistance and resilience of the Ukrainian military. It is the pressure on the battle-front that would push Zelensky to come round to the Trump mediation with Russia.

The speculation is that Zelensky will not be able to deal with the Trump White House and there is need for another leader to take his place. The US pressure on Ukraine's political leadership cannot be ruled out. What seems to have happened is that Trump was in a tearing hurry to conclude the rare minerals agreement with Zelensky and also push Ukraine towards a ceasefire. Zelensky might have resisted handing full control of the mineral resources to the US in lieu of a ceasefire with Russia.

The attempted arm-twisting of Zelensky by Team Trump seems to have failed. Zelensky must have been quite conscious of the fact that he could not be seen as the Ukrainian leader who mortgaged the mineral wealth of the country to the US. The mineral resources are the main bargaining chip that Zelensky holds.

President Trump has to understand that Zelensky cannot be reduced to the status of an American puppet because that would cost him not only the popularity in Ukraine but it would also put an end to his political career. So, the belligerence on the part of Vance and Trump towards Zelensky was bad diplomacy and it was also a bad business tactic.

Trump must leave the door open to the possibility that while Ukraine is ready to sign a bilateral agreement on rare minerals with the US, it would expect the American military aid to continue to flow so that Ukraine will continue to fight the war with Russia until Moscow feels the pinch to end the war.

The Trump assumption that Ukraine is in no position to fight Russia is wrong. Ukraine has been fighting all on its own. If the Ukrainians did not fight, then the American and European military aid to Ukraine would be of no avail.

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Trump's attempt to topple Zelensky through elections could be catastrophic

Sergey Maidukov

ON February 28, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky held a long-awaited meeting with US President Donald Trump in an attempt to persuade him to continue US support for Ukraine. The encounter was likely not what the Ukrainian head of state had expected.

Trump and US Vice President JD Vance chastised Zelensky in front of TV cameras for being "disrespectful" and for refusing to embrace their initiative for a ceasefire with Russia.

It is evident that Zelensky will not make a return to Washington during Trump's presidency. It is also evident that US pressure on Ukraine will significantly escalate in the following weeks and months, as Trump presses Kyiv to make significant concessions to Russia in return for peace.

Even before the showdown at the White House, the Trump administration was questioning Zelensky's legitimacy and pushing for presidential elections to be held. Holding a rushed election with the sole purpose of eliminating the incumbent, however, could spell disaster for the country.

Before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, approval ratings for Zelensky's presidency were as low as 28 percent and 11 percent for his party. Russia's full-scale invasion sent Ukrainians rallying behind the president and his popularity reached record highs.

However, over the past two years, his approval ratings have been on a consistent decline. According to polls, trust in Zelensky fell from 54 percent in April 2024 to 49 percent in January – not as low as Trump has claimed, but a far cry from his 90 percent rating in May 2022.

Multiple factors have contributed to Zelensky's declining popularity, including rampant corruption under his administration and the growing fatigue from the ongoing war.

The Ukrainian president – well aware of his vulnerability – has made clear that he is not comfortable with competition. For him, the stakes are high because if he were to lose a re-election bid, he could face prosecution for corruption or various forms of retribution from his rivals. The polls are already showing that if elections were to be held immediately, he would lose.

A formidable challenger to Zelensky has already emerged: Valerii Zaluzhnyi, a four-star general who served as commander-in-chief of Ukraine's armed forces until February 2024. Polls show that Zaluzhnyi – if he were to run in a presidential vote – would defeat Zelensky. Public trust in him is among the highest and stood at 72 percent in January.

Although Zaluzhnyi was dismissed by the president on the heels of the failed Ukrainian counteroffensive in 2023, there have been speculations that his popularity in Ukraine may have also been a factor. The general was sent abroad to serve as the Ukrainian ambassador to the United Kingdom – a position he still occupies.

So far, Zaluzhnyi has not declared an intention to run, although there are no guarantees he would not change his mind. If he stays out, other military figures, such as Kyrylo Budanov, may step in.

Budanov, Ukraine's intelligence chief, has a public trust rating of 62 percent. He recently disappeared from the public eye after a year of high-profile media appearances. Rumours have spread that

Zelensky's office planned to remove him, resulting in his sudden retreat. But he may well reappear once the campaign begins.

Boxing champion Oleksandr Usyk could become a potential dark horse. In a country where a former comedian became president, a victorious athlete doesn't seem like an unlikely contender. Although he has not made any political ambitions public, he has started appearing in polls and his rating currently stands at 60 percent.

Then there is former President Petro Poroshenko, who has low approval ratings, but remains a dangerous rival to Zelensky. Since 2019, more than 130 criminal cases have been launched against him – including one accusing him of treason for approving a coal-supplying scheme from the Russian-occupied Donbas region.

Poroshenko is an outspoken critic of Zelensky and is not hiding his political ambitions. He has travelled to the US and met with Trump's team. In February, when he tried to go to the Munich Security Conference, he was not allowed. He now faces state-imposed sanctions on "national security grounds", which include an asset freeze.

The message of the sanctions is clear: Poroshenko will be eliminated from the presidential race before it even begins. In this context of perceived political persecution, other potential challengers have not come forward, being too afraid to run. There has been growing concern over Zelensky's handling of opposition figures, but so far, no strong public rebuke has emerged from his allies.

After the confrontation at the White House, European leaders expressed support for him. This has given

Zelensky a temporary boost at home, but it is unclear how long it could hold.

Apart from the bitter political rivalries and retribution, the Ukrainian political scene is also marked by continuing divisions within society. The war has intensified emotions and split the country right down the middle, creating a volatile situation.

The ultranationalists not only hold sway among certain parts of the population but also are empowered as active participants in the war. There is also still a portion of society that leans pro-Russian and does not want the conflict to continue.

If an election is imposed from abroad in this volatile situation, it could prove more catastrophic than Russia's invasion or the loss of Ukraine's industrial heartlands. The danger isn't just that a third of the population would be unable to vote and the election's legitimacy may be in question.

The real threat is that the vote could ignite a fight of all against all before a single ballot is cast. An incumbent who fears losing a re-election bid and political rivals who are hellbent on regaining relevance may resort to exploiting societal divisions. The military and security agencies could be forced to act, which adds to a potentially explosive mix.

If presidential elections can dangerously polarise societies at peace – as we have seen in the United States – they can do much worse in times of war. A rushed election in Ukraine that serves the political plans of a foreign power is certainly a recipe for disaster.

A vote should be held once there is a durable ceasefire that allows for all Ukrainians to cast their votes without fear of the prospect of polarisation and conflict.

presence in Africa to counter China's growing dominance in the continent's critical mineral supply chains for emerging technologies.

Within its recommendations, Project 2025 urges Trump to prioritize Africa and implement significant changes, including abandoning traditional aid policies in favor of engaging the US private sector. It describes aid as a source of corruption that does not serve America's strategic interests, advocating instead for a focus on free market growth. Trump is also advised to confront what he calls China's harmful activities in Africa and to recognize Somaliland as an independent state to strengthen America's position in the region.

This is just a glimpse of the conservative ambitions to ensure Trump's tenure does not pass without profound changes in policies, leadership and foundational ideas – both domestically and globally. The desire for internal transformation is even greater and more challenging. Trump has the popularity and strong personality and he has brought executives into his administration who share his enthusiasm, such as Elon Musk.

However, governing in America is complex – even for someone like Trump – due to the checks and balances among the three branches of government, which could slow him down.

Hopes rise over fresh talks for Iran nuclear deal

Michael Jansen

WHILE the Trump administration has stepped up its "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran by adding to existing sanctions, Tehran has called for fresh negotiations over a "deal" to curb its nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

There appears to be some optimism that talks could resume as real estate developer Donald Trump also fancies himself as a "deal maker" and has pledged to be a peacemaker during his second term in the White House. Nothing Trump would like better than a Nobel Peace Prize.

On the regional front, it has been suggested that Riyadh – which reconciled with Iran in 2023 – could address Iran's nuclear programme as well as its regional activities with the aim of easing tensions and promoting stability. Since Iran's regional allies Hamas and Hizbollah have been weakened over in recent months, the main focus of mediation would be Iran's nuclear programme and sanctions which have crippled Iran's economy.

On the global front, Russia is back in play. Trump has broken with the Biden administration's policy of isolating and sanctioning Russia over its war in Ukraine and has called for a deal to end it.

During a meeting in Riyadh last week, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, reportedly, asked Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to suggest Iran reopen talks with the US.

He did so during his subsequent visit to Tehran, according to the Kuwaiti daily Al-Jarida. It reported the US is ready to start with talks at the expert level and if there is progress proceed to foreign ministers with a new deal to be signed between Trump and Iranian President Massoud Pezeshkian. It would be ironic for Trump to take the US back into the nuclear deal from which he withdrew in 2018.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has responded positively to this report, conditioning talks on the rejection of pre-conditions before talks begin, suspension of US sanctions during negotiations, and a halt to Israeli threats to attack Iran's nuclear sites. For at least two decades the US has resisted Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's plan to obliterate Iran's nuclear facilities.

Qatar has also offered to mediate between Iran and the US while Oman could also play a role. Oman acted as go-between during negotiations which led to the landmark 2015 agreement.

Last week the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that Iran has boosted its output of 60 per cent enriched uranium by more than 91.7 kilograms since last November.

This means Iran has a total of 274 kilograms of uranium purified to this level, which is an easy step from 90 per cent needed for weapons. Iran's total stockpile of enriched uranium has reached 8,294 kilograms.

This includes uranium enriched to the permitted 3.67 per cent as well as the banned 20 and 69 per cent. It is not known what percentage of the stockpile consists of material enriched to 60 per cent.

The IAEA estimates that 41.7 kilograms of 90 per cent enriched uranium are needed to produce one nuclear bomb.

Until Trump pulled out of the deal, entitled the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran's nuclear programme had been the world's most circumscribed and monitored. Iran was one of the founding 62 signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which went into effect in 1970.

The NPT banned

countries other than the US, Russia, China, Britain, and France from acquiring nuclear weapons while NPT signatories have been permitted to develop peaceful nuclear programmes for power plants. These include Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Iran, Japan, and Holland.

Among UN-member states which are not NPT signatories, Israel, India, North Korea, and Pakistan have manufactured nuclear weapons. Israel – which has never admitted it has nuclear bombs – is said to have an arsenal ranging from 60 to 400.

The JCPOA reached between Iran and the US, UK, France, Germany, China, Russia, and Germany was the most intrusive agreement ever to be reached by any country engaged in nuclear research and development.

The JCPOA limited enrichment to 3.67 per cent and Iran's stockpile at 202.8 kilograms. Iran was required to export excess to Russia for repurposing. Iran was permitted to employ old model centrifuges for purification.

Iran also submitted to constant surveillance and monitoring by IAEA cameras and teams who present regular reports to the agency's board of governors.

Tehran waited for a year while the UK, Europe, Russia, and China failed to breach US sanctions imposed by Trump before systematically violating the restrictions imposed by the JCPOA.

Iran's initial violations were tentative but as sanctions continued to bite, Iran dramatically advanced its nuclear programme to its current high level in terms of technical development and expertise as well as capabilities and stockpiles while vowing not to pursue nuclear weapons.

Iran's adversarial relationship with the US has been a major cause of the trouble over the nuclear programme. Two coups d'etat have determined this relationship. The first was the British-inspired, US ouster of Iran's elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953 due to his nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian oil company.

The beneficiary of this coup was Shah Mohammed Raza Pahlavi who established his iron fist rule over the country while becoming dependent on the US for protection. Iranians have never forgotten or forgiven this intervention which they claim undermined their democracy.

The second coup was the 1979 overthrow of the shah by clerical revolutionaries led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who adopted a strong anti-US line.

Like Iranians, US policy makers have neither forgotten nor forgiven this coup although by the 1990s Iran's fourth President Hashemi Rafsanjani indicated that Tehran sought to begin the process of normalising ties.

This policy was amplified by his successor Mohammed Khatami who initiated a "Dialogue of Civilisations" with the aim of restoring Iran's relations with the West and the wider world.

Failure led Iran's hardliners to engineer the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to two presidential terms, but he was followed in 2013 by moderate Hassan Rouhani who negotiated the JCPOA with the Obama administration.

Iran scrupulously adhered to its terms although the US did not deliver on key financial sanctions. Trump withdrew from the JCPOA and his successor Joe Biden failed to deliver on a campaign pledge to return to the deal.

Thanks to Iran's advances over the past 6 years, an entirely new JCPOA will have to be negotiated and bolstered with guarantees that no signatory would be able to renege.

Europeans embrace Zelensky after he was vilified by Trump

TOP US officials are piling heat on Volodymyr Zelensky, suggesting he may need to relinquish power after his disastrous Oval Office meeting — even as Europe embraces the Ukrainian president more tightly than ever.

The contrast highlighted the most damaging split in the Western alliance at least since the Berlin Wall fell and bolstered a sense that the “free world” has been pushed to the brink of fracturing early in President Donald Trump’s new term.

Yet the sight of Europe stepping into the impasse left by Trump’s first bid to end the Ukraine war could also represent hope that good could come out of the debacle of Zelensky’s visit. That’s if the continent can, as it promised Sunday, construct a peace plan to hand to the US president.

Still, the fallout from Zelensky’s calamitous trip to Washington is growing.

Trump’s national security adviser, Mike Waltz, told CNN’s Dana Bash on “State of the Union” on Sunday that the administration now questions whether Zelensky really wants to end the conflict.

“We need a leader that can deal with us, eventually deal with the Russians, and end this war,” Waltz said. “If it becomes apparent that President Zelensky’s either personal motivations or political motivations are divergent from ending the fighting in his country, then I think we have a real issue on our hands.”

Waltz’s comment underscores the US’ position that the war must end no matter what as Trump races toward a rapprochement with Russian President Vladimir Putin after falsely blaming Zelensky for the unprovoked invasion.

But British Prime Minister Keir Starmer led a gathering of Western leaders in London on Sunday that welcomed Zelensky as a guest of honor. In a highly symbolic move, King Charles III granted Zelensky an hour-long audience, days after inviting Trump to a second state visit. Starmer promised a “coalition of the willing” to arm and defend Ukraine and warned again that any durable peace would need US security guarantees Trump has not yet offered.

And France and Britain also proposed a month-long limited truce in Ukraine, French President

Emmanuel Macron told the newspaper Le Figaro on Sunday. Zelensky said he was aware of the proposal but did not say whether he agreed with it.

The aggressive European leadership effort came as Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, said Ukraine’s allies needed to turn the country into a “steel porcupine that is indigestible for potential invaders.”

The extraordinary scene Friday, when Trump and Vice President JD Vance berated Zelensky — and then kicked him out of the White House — is already an indelible moment in the history of modern US foreign policy.

The bullying of the leader of a democratic nation under a Russian tyrant’s illegal onslaught

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Waltz’s comment underscores the US’ position that the war must end no matter what as Trump races toward a rapprochement with Russian President Vladimir Putin after falsely blaming Zelensky for the unprovoked invasion. But British Prime Minister Keir Starmer led a gathering of Western leaders in London on Sunday that welcomed Zelensky as a guest of honor. In a highly symbolic move, King Charles III granted Zelensky an hourlong audience, days after inviting Trump to a second state visit. Starmer promised a “coalition of the willing” to arm and defend Ukraine and warned again that any durable peace would need US security guarantees Trump has not yet offered. And France and Britain also proposed a monthlong limited truce in Ukraine, French President Emmanuel Macron told the newspaper Le Figaro on Sunday. Zelensky said he was aware of the proposal but did not say whether he agreed with it. The aggressive European leadership effort came as Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, said Ukraine’s allies needed to turn the country into a “steel porcupine that is indigestible for potential invaders.”
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that has killed thousands of civilians sent shock waves through Washington and around the world. Trump’s critics accuse him of siding with the invader in a repudiation of every US foreign policy value since World War II.

For Trump’s supporters and key subordinates, however, the dressing down of Zelensky was a triumph. They argue it projected strength and epitomized the “America first” policy that has transformed the nation’s global role.

Heated commentary and proclamations that the West is over in recent days may have been cathartic for all involved. But they hardly serve the cause of peace or the interests of the key players — apart from Putin, who must be enjoying the splintering of the West — long his principal foreign policy aim.

— Trump’s Cabinet members took to the Sunday cable news shows praising their boss. Yet Friday’s fury undermined the claim that Trump is a masterful dealmaker and the only man alive who can end the war. It’s clear Trump’s only plan was to impose a peace deal on Ukraine after offering multiple concessions to Putin. And the showdown

Stephen Collinson

derailed a proposed deal for the US to exploit Ukraine’s rare-earth minerals that Trump saw as a huge personal win. His insistence that he is a global peacemaker and his quest to win the Nobel Peace Prize now look more unrealistic than ever.

— Zelensky’s loss of his cool contributed to the diplomatic cataclysm, even if he was trying to explain to Vance and Trump why Ukraine is skeptical of a peace that does not include guarantees after Putin’s repeated trashing of agreements. It’s hard to imagine how Zelensky can ever sit at a peace table with Trump, and the US president could now decide to cut pending aid, intelligence and other support for

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Ukraine that could impede its forces on the battlefield.
— The drama in the Oval Office prompted America’s European allies into emergency action. They now intend to shield Zelensky from Trump and hope to draw up a viable peace framework that they could give to him as a basis for talks with Putin. But if the US walks away from Ukraine, Europe’s capacity to fill the gap is questionable, largely because of its years of slashing military spending, its eroded military production base and its own reliance on US security guarantees to NATO members.

US officials suggest it’s time for Zelensky to go

House Speaker Mike Johnson reinforced Waltz’s warnings about the Ukrainian leader. “Either he needs to come to his senses and come back to the table in gratitude, or someone else needs to lead the country to do that,” the Louisiana Republican said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

After the Oval Office breakdown Friday, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham — who has been a supporter of Zelensky — chose to prioritize his loyalties to Trump, saying, “I don’t know if we can ever

do business with Zelensky again.”

On “State of the Union,” Bash asked Waltz why he had once compared Zelensky to British wartime leader Winston Churchill but referred to him on Sirius XM on Saturday as an “ex-girlfriend that wants to argue.”

“If we want to do a history lesson — Churchill ... stood and fought for his people,” Waltz said. “But Churchill was also voted out of office in 1945. He was a man for a moment, but he did not then transition England into the next phase. And it’s unclear whether President Zelensky, particularly after what we saw Friday, is ready to transition to Ukraine to an end to this war and to negotiate and have to

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compromise.”
Waltz’s analogy misses important context. Like Ukraine, Britain didn’t hold elections during wartime because of the national emergency. The 1945 election followed the Labour Party’s exit from the national unity coalition — but only after victory in the European war was achieved and peace was secure. British troops were however still fighting in the Pacific war.

Ukraine was due to hold an election last year, but it was delayed while the country is under a Russian barrage with troops on the front lines and millions of refugees abroad.

This reality undercuts the calls for the Ukrainian leader to go and Trump’s claims that Zelensky is a “dictator” — another Russian propaganda favorite. In December, former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, who leads the largest Ukrainian opposition party, told a Council on Foreign Relations forum that elections should take place only “60 days after our victory.”

A growing rift in the Western alliance

Zelensky’s vilification in Washington and his embrace in London laid bare an estrangement

between the US and its European allies, precipitated not just by Ukraine but by the Trump administration’s warning that the continent must now take primary responsibility for its conventional defense.

The best-case scenario for the latest European initiative is that it proves to the US that Britain and its European Union friends are serious about fulfilling Trump’s calls to police an eventual peace deal and that simultaneous promises to hike defense budgets preserve the NATO alliance despite the president’s skepticism.

Europe may be betting that Trump needs its help to forge a peace deal that he’d rightly claim as a huge victory. And while the president’s attempts to forge peace have so far been erratic and have favored Putin’s positions, his friendship with the Kremlin strongman means he may be the only Western leader who can coax him to the table.

Europeans got some encouragement of a more evenhanded US role on Sunday when Waltz said on “State of the Union” that an agreement was “going to take Russian concessions on security guarantees.”

But Trump is yet to agree to Starmer’s and Macron’s calls for a US backstop to any British- and French-led peace force. The British prime minister tried to dismiss suggestions of tension with the Trump team, saying Sunday, “I do not accept that the US is an unreliable ally.”

Still, two top members of Trump’s orbit sought to sabotage the European initiative.

Tulsi Gabbard, the director of national intelligence, argued European countries that supported Zelensky after he was ejected from the White House are “not committed to the cause and values of freedom” and don’t believe in peace. Her remarks on “Fox News Sunday” will cause alarm in Europe, since they recall Moscow’s talking points and because of her role as the top US spy.

And Elon Musk, who is an ally of far-right extremists in Europe and slams the region’s leaders — including Starmer — mocked the London summit. “The EU leaders and Zelensky having fancy dinners while men die in trenches,” he wrote on X. “How many parents will never see their son again? How many children will never see their father?”

— CNN

Starmer switches UK’s focus from soft to hard power

Mohamed Chebaro

DIVERTING funds from aid and soft power to pay for hard military power is alarming for a country like the UK, recently divorced from the EU project. The proponents of Brexit wrongly believed that EU membership was wasting the country’s riches by diverting them from its own welfare state to Brussels’ bureaucracy and regulations, hampering its ability to provide more for its citizens. Today, however, the winds blowing from the east, the need to protect Europe’s flank and the uncertainty of the transatlantic alliance create a moment of history that might upend Keir Starmer’s premiership into one that advocates for the rebirth of hard power.

Since his election last summer, the UK has been pondering how and when Starmer would find his mojo and morph from a chief prosecutor, or Labour Party convenor and operator, to a leader with a capital “L.” Some would have liked that to be achieved by the prime minister taking charge of rebuilding the state machinery after 14 years of chaotic Conservative government and its policy of austerity. Or by making Britain’s welfare system more reliable, investing in the police and courts or even finding a magic formula for growth, albeit without rejoining the EU’s customs union or reversing Brexit.

But no, it seems that, rightly or wrongly, advocating for hard power and finding the means to get the UK and Europe to the table to negotiate peace with Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump is what might make or break Starmer’s premiership.

Harvard professor Joseph Nye contrasted soft power with hard power in his book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics.” According to Nye, hard power refers to the use of force or coercion to achieve one’s goals, typically through military intervention or economic pressure. It is the art of compelling others to act in a way that aligns with one’s own interests, using tangible means like military force or economic sanctions.

I am not one to claim that the UK is turning to hubris here, but Starmer and the country feel they are being pushed into an existential crisis. It is an ally that seems to be

exerting maximum pressure, which can only be mediated by opting for hard power pledges, even if this means a U-turn and a return to the old principle of spending more on guns and less on welfare and development, which has been increasingly shunned since the end of the Cold War.

Starmer has shifted in an unusual way and seems to have acted impulsively in an effort to buy favor and influence with the resident of the White House. Recognizing that the flow of money must go in another direction, the prime minister last week vowed to raise the UK’s defense spending to 2.5 percent of gross domestic product from 2027, up from the current 2.3 percent, with 3 percent as the eventual target.

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From the perspective of international morality and the principles of international law, territorial integrity and sovereignty are fundamental and inviolable principles. Any peace agreement should be reached based on respect for international law and the United Nations Charter. While the US and Russia have reached a consensus, the challenge now lies in how to implement these agreements, coordinate the interests of all parties, and, in particular, address Ukraine’s legitimate demands and convince Europe to accept the outcome. China has always maintained an objective and neutral stance, actively advocating for peace and promoting dialogue. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson expressed support for the consensus on US-Russia peace talks and hopes that all parties and stakeholders will participate in the dialogue process in due time. This reflects China’s responsible role as a major power in international affairs, not siding with any party but striving to promote a comprehensive, fair, and sustainable peace solution.
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Initially, this funding increase comes at the expense of the overseas aid budget and, symbolically speaking, reorients the British posture from a soft power base to hard power.

It seems that, after his meeting with Trump, Starmer has joined the fray, not only showing a readiness to put weapons procurement ahead of development to gain a seat at the table, but he surprised everyone by also playing the royal card in the hope of boosting his credentials and keeping the US onside.

In his speech announcing the increase in defense spending, Starmer explained that, as the world has changed and as threat levels have increased, so too has the need for more up-to-date military capabilities and larger armed forces.

Such an assessment, which has become a widely held prediction since Russia invaded Ukraine and put the rules-based world order at stake, might represent

the moment that Starmer abandoned parts of his election manifesto. But this could be justifiable in the interests of national defense and the strategic positioning of the UK, as well as through growth as a result of reigniting its military manufacturing industry.

Starmer will soon find out if diverting money from aid to the military will yield any benefits, but he will also learn how such a move is likely to define his legacy as prime minister. For Starmer, this could be his “Falklands moment,” named for the 1982 war that earned Margaret Thatcher her “Iron Lady” title, as she fought for the UK’s reputation and standing in the world and liberated the Falkland Islands by force. Or it could be his Iraq War moment, when Tony Blair felt compelled to stand by US President

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George W. Bush when he decided to attack Iraq and change its regime. That resulted in Blair’s popularity declining at home and abroad, as the evidence on which the invasion was waged proved erroneous to say the least.

The question is simply whether Starmer and the UK will be able to transition to a wartime economy and change the direction of travel not only of the Labour Party, but also of state and society.

As the global geopolitical situation looks to have been transformed in the six weeks since Trump’s inauguration, Starmer looks content to bow to the American president for now. But he could become a victim of abandoning the UK’s soft power and losing his country’s footing across the world, as many variables might challenge Britain and also EU countries in their bid to rearm and meet Trump’s goal of spending 5 percent of GDP on defense.

— Arab News

Germany’s far-right may be frozen out of power, but the AfD is now a force

GERMANY’S political system is set up to exclude extremists. Yet the country is waking up to a new political reality that has lurched to the right with the once outcast Alternative for Germany (AfD) party now firmly established in German politics.

The country’s mainstream conservatives, as polls predicted, won the largest share of votes in Sunday’s election according to official preliminary results and will be looking to form the next government, while the AfD came in second. But make no mistake — second place is a huge result for a party that although it likely won’t be in office once the dust settles, will enjoy expanded influence.

The party has doubled its support since the previous election in 2021, when it received 10.3% of the vote. It is now the first far-right party in Germany’s post-World War II history to have attained such broad levels of public popularity, and it has also significantly increased its share of seats in Germany’s parliament, or Bundestag.

The AfD reached a particularly large number of voters in eastern Germany, where it has long had a stronghold. But it also gained some significant support in constituencies in the country’s west, including the industrial city of Gelsenkirchen which has been suffering with stagnating economy and high unemployment, and Kaiserslautern, which is sur-

rounded by a number of US military installation, including the Ramstein Air Base.

“We have never been stronger - we are the second-biggest force,” AfD co-leader Alice Weidel gloated, as she addressed crowds in Berlin after exit poll results were revealed on Sunday evening.

The mood at the far right’s election party in Berlin was ecstatic as the exit polls first flashed onto the screens, with people cheering and waving Germany flags.

For his part, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) leader and Germany’s likely next chancellor Friedrich Merz claimed victory as he slammed US interference in the country’s election campaign — which saw high-profile figures from the Trump administration speak out in support of the AfD.

These interventions are “no less dramatic and drastic and ultimately outrageous than the interventions we have seen from Moscow,” Merz said.

Formed in reaction to Eurozone policies in 2013, the AfD had become accustomed to being on the fringe of German politics, in a country scarred by its Nazi past and where any far-right party has been treated with caution.

It only secured its first seats in the Bundestag in 2017 and struggled to find a platform on Germany’s traditional media due to its strident anti-migrant and anti-Islam rhetoric. This election marks the first time the party has ever fielded a candidate for chancellor.

The party has called for “remigration” — the mass expulsion of immigrants. The controversial policy has drawn comparisons to the Nazi era. The AfD is officially suspected of right-wing extremism by German authorities, and parts of it

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Having a significant voice in parliament means

Sophie Tanno and Nadine Schmidt

that “they [the AfD] will be able to apply pressure on the major parties from a position of greater strength,” said Gemma Loomes, a Lecturer in Comparative Politics at Keele University.

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ceed in his chancellorship.
Armida van Rij, a senior research fellow and head of the Europe Programme at London-based think tank Chatham House, told CNN this move already represent-

“The surge in support will embolden the party to talk, perhaps even more aggressively, about the issues that matter most to them but that the major parties are reluctant to address,” Loomes added.

All this begs the question: can the so-called “firewall” — an unofficial agreement between Germany’s mainstream parties to band together to keep the AfD out of power — last?

In a display of the party’s confidence, the leader of the AfD’s youth wing, known as the Young Alternative (JA), told CNN on election night he is “certain” that the firewall would end after Sunday’s vote.

Merz’s controversial decision to push through an immigration bill with help from the AfD in January could be an early indication of how he intends to pro-

ed “a big shift in German politics and quite a big break in how things used to be done, when working with the AfD was an absolute no-go.”

She believes there may already be a “crack” in the firewall.

“In five, or 10, or 15 years it may no longer be there,” she speculates, perhaps at the regional level initially, if not the national level.

“The real question for center parties is how do we address voters’ genuine grievances, and how do we do it in a way that doesn’t just amplify the far right.”

Meanwhile, AfD politicians already have their sights firmly set on the next election in 2029 - when they are determined the firewall” will no longer exist.

“I am certain that this so-called ‘firewall’ will stop

after this election.” AfD youth wing leader Hannes Gnauck told CNN Sunday evening. He added, “There will be a CDU after Friedrich Merz, and this CDU will have to work together with the AfD.”

Similarly, Weidel told

reporters in Berlin on Monday morning, “Friedrich Merz has decided to maintain his blockade stance towards the AfD. We consider this blockade to be undemocratic. You cannot exclude millions of voters per se.” Merz now faces a tightrope walk as he seeks to form a new government while carving out a new path for the CDU.

The CDU has been ever-present in Germany’s post-war era and oversaw the reunification of east and west.

Yet, at the same time, everything has changed since it was last in power.

No longer tied with the liberal, “open door” policies it became synonymous with under Angela Merkel, Merz has vowed to bring the party back to its more conservative roots as part of efforts to counter the far right.

However, Merz’s promise to pivot the CDU back to the right does not come without risks. The move threatens to further embolden the AfD while isolating the CDU’s more centrist supporter base.

For Loomes, it is a decision that is “fraught with danger.”

“The AfD currently has positioned itself as the only party willing to talk about immigration and to propose radical action to tackle the perceived problem,” she said.

“If the CDU positions itself in this space, it risks being perceived as a less authentic version of the AfD. Voters are convinced the AfD cares passionately about limiting immigration; they may be less convinced it is a genuine priority for the CDU.”

Merz’s new government will likely involve the other major centrist party, the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), which led Germany’s previous coalition and came out third in Sunday’s vote.

However, coalition building could prove difficult, with the two parties potentially clashing on key issues, particularly foreign policy. There are no guarantees that the new government will not be as incohesive and unable to govern as the previous coalition.

Transatlantic winds

While Germany has long held far-right parties with a disdain not seen in its European neighbours, some Germans believe the time has come to break old taboos.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.1,286 to Rs.258,487 from Rs.257,201 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up by Rs.1,179 to Rs.236,955 from Rs.235,776.

The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.30 to Rs.3,270 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.26 to Rs.2,803.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$12 to \$2,869 from \$2,857 whereas the prices of silver in international market increased by \$0.36 to \$31.41, the Association reported.

Fahad Mirza. Funclution's mission is to expand across Pakistan, ensuring that neurodivergent individuals of all ages have access to inclusive recreational spaces that provide them with equal opportunities for joy and exploration.

Dr. Noorani and the Funclution team invite families to experience this groundbreaking initiative and be part of a movement that champions accessibility, understanding, and inclusivity for all.

clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in the Oval Office last week.

Bitcoin slipped 2.7 percent in Asian trade after a six percent surge on Sunday on the back of Trump's announcement that he was considering adding five digital assets to US strategic reserves.

Bitcoin, one of the most volatile assets, fell below \$80,000 last week for the first time since November, with other crypto currencies mirroring its downward trajectory.

Trump and his wife Melania recently launched their own branded meme coins, sparking accusations they were seeking to make money from his political success.

Billionaire Tesla chief executive Elon Musk -- a close political ally whom Trump has tasked with leading a government efficiency drive -- has frequently promoted crypto currencies on his own social media network X.

the 5.59% hike recorded in January. Commenting on the figures, Treasury and Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said the government expects the steady decline in inflation to continue, supported by fiscal and income policies that promote the disinflation process and improve expectations. "We will resolutely implement our policies to achieve price stability, which will permanently improve the purchasing power and income distribution of our citizens," Simsek wrote on X.



and creating a business-friendly environment that prioritizes ease of doing business.

The Pak-Turk Business Forum provided a significant platform for strengthening economic ties between the two brotherly nations, as the experts at this high profiled panel discussion, highlighted Pakistan's vast potential for growth and the critical role of foreign investment in driving economic progress and industrial development. Both countries look forward to further strengthening long term business partnerships with valuable socio-economic contributions that foster sustainable growth and prosperity on a mass scale.

Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Asia Unity, MP MR Tanker and MSC Krystal another ship 'Eleni-T' carrying Palm oil, Mogas and Container are expected to take berths at LCT, FOTCO and QICT are respectively, while two more container ships, America and Valence are due to arrive at outer anchorage today (Tuesday).

In The Court of Ms Malika Allaaddin Senior Civil Judge
Family Court Kohat, Suit no.
215/F/2025 Date of hearing 04-03-
2025, Titled:- Sajida Ali Vs Fozia
Gul (etc) Notice against:-
(2)Shazia Gul (3)Ghousia Gul
(4)Safia Gul (5)Qurat-Ul-Ain
Dughters of Fozia Gul (8)Naz
Bibi Wife of Talj Ali(Late)/R/o
Fateh Khan Khel Shaikhkhani
District Kohat presently R/o
(now in Abroad) (Defendants)
Whereas the above plaintiff has
instituted a family suit of Dower
against you defendants in which
date of hearing 04-03-2025 is
fixed for your appearance Since
your intimation/service is not
possible through ordinary
means/mode therefore you
defendants is intimated through
this publication to appear before
this court by person or by
pleader on date fixed 04-03-
2025 otherwise court shall be
proceeded in accordance with
law order issued on 17-02-2025
(Court of S.C.J.F.C Kohat)



In brief

Women's blind cricket team to tour Australia

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan women's blind cricket team is set to make history by competing in a five-match Twenty20 series against their Australian counterparts in April. Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) Chairman Syed Sultan Shah said this landmark tour will mark the team's first international outing. "A 17-member squad will be selected for the series, which will take place from April 20 to 26. The team will depart for Australia on April 17," he told APP. A 21-member contingent, comprising 17 players and four officials, will travel to Australia for the series. In preparation, the national team will undergo a training camp in Lahore from April 6 to 16. Sultan expressed his gratitude to the Australian High Commission for their continued support of the Pakistan women's blind cricket team over the past six years. "Their assistance has been invaluable to us," he said.

Navarro claims rare 6-0 6-0 win

MEXICO (Agencies): American Emma Navarro became only the fifth player this century to win a WTA final 6-0 6-0 with victory over Emiliana Arango at the Merida Open in Mexico. World number eight and top seed Navarro, who did not drop a set during the tournament, saw off the Colombian world number 133 in only 55 minutes to claim the second title of her career. Navarro, 23, is the first player to record a 'double bagel' scoreline in a final since Iga Swiatek beat Karolina Pliskova at the 2021 Italian Open. The other women to have achieved the feat since 2000 are Simona Halep, Agnieszka Radwanska and Marion Bartoli. Navarro, the top seed in Merida, did not face a break point and won 76% of points on her first serve. Elsewhere, world number four Jessica Pegula beat fellow American McCartney Kessler 7-5 6-2 on Sunday to win the ATX Open final in Austin, Texas, for her seventh singles title.

Ski crash almost killed me: Sarrazin

MARSEILLE (AFP): French downhill specialist Cyprien Sarrazin said Monday that a crash in December that left him with head injuries had almost killed him. Making his first public appearance, in Marseille, since crashing into protective netting while training for a World Cup race in the Italian resort of Bormio on December 27, Sarrazin said: "I almost died. 'It's a bit of a miracle that I have recovered so well and so quickly. I think I had a little star with me that day,' the 30-year-old said, adding that he no longer has "neurological after-effects". Sarrazin was airlifted to hospital after the crash to treat a subdural haematoma and was repatriated to France in January. He is continuing his rehabilitation at a day hospital in the French Alpine city of Gap. "There is no hatred or disappointment at all," he said. "I realised that I came close to no longer being here, so whatever happens, it's all positive. "I have recovered well and I am aware of everything I went through, the seriousness of my fall." Sarrazin, who still suffers from double vision which he said was improving day on day, added he had no memory of the actual crash that also left him with a sprained right knee and deep bruising on the back. "I don't remember 20 metres before the fall and up to five days after the fall, after the operation... and that's thanks to the sedation that was done well.



KRYNICA: Sangho Lee competes in the FIS Snowboard World Cup, Men's Parallel Giant Slalom, on the Jaworzyna Krynicka slope in Krynica, Poland.

Australia ready for India's spin challenge, says Smith

DUBAI (AFP): Australia captain Steve Smith says his team are confident they can counter India's quality spin attack in their Champions Trophy semi-final in Dubai on Tuesday. The two teams will face off at the Dubai International Stadium in a rematch of the 2023 World Cup final won by Australia in Ahmedabad. Australia beat rivals England by five wickets in their opening match but their next two games were abandoned because of rain in the Pakistani cities of Rawalpindi and Lahore. India made it three wins from three in Group A with a victory over New Zealand on Sunday delivered by their four spinners on a tricky pitch. Varun Chakravorthy took 5-42 in Dubai in only his second one-day international to boost his hopes of selection. "Yeah, I mean, not just Chakravathy, I think the rest of their spin is quality as well," Smith told reporters on Monday. "So I think for us, the game is probably won and lost how we play their spin, particu-

larly in the middle overs, the way we get through there. It's going to be a challenge..." "I think there's going to be some spin, by the looks of it. Yeah, we've got to counter that... We've got a few options of ways we can go about it." The world champions are missing several key players including fast bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc to injuries. But Smith said they could call upon part-time spinners, including Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne, to support Adam Zampa and Glenn Maxwell on a track he believes "looks a dry surface". "We've got a lot of part-time options that could certainly play a role on here and a couple of front-liners as well," he said. Aggressive Head Cooper Connolly, a batting all-rounder who bowls left-arm spin, has joined the squad as a replacement for Matthew Short, who was ruled out of the rest of the tournament due to a thigh injury. Both Australia and Group B winners South Africa flew to Dubai from

Pakistan without knowing who they would play in the semi-finals, the line-up for which was decided after the India-New Zealand match. India have been slammed for playing all their games at one venue, in Dubai, while other teams shuttle between three Pakistani cities and the UAE. India refused to play in host nation Pakistan due to political reasons. But Smith played down any perceived disadvantage. "We guessed right in the end," Smith said on his team travelling to Dubai. "We had a little reset and a chance to have a couple of days here outside of a pretty strict sort of bubble, I suppose, in Pakistan with the security and stuff. It's been nice to just have a couple of days chill here, a bit of training." Australia beat India by six wickets in the 2023 World Cup final, with Head hitting an unbeaten 137. "I mean, there's pressure every time you play in a big game," said Smith of Head. "But, as we know, Travis has stood up in many of those in the past. And, you

know, he looked in great touch the other night against Afghanistan. "I'm sure he's going to be looking to come out here and play the same way he's played for a long time, with good intent, good aggression." South Africa face New Zealand in the second semi-final in Lahore on Wednesday. ICC CT semifinals match officials announced ISLAMABAD (APP): The match officials for the semi-finals of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 have been announced as India take on Australia and South Africa face New Zealand. New Zealander Chris Gaffaney and England's Richard Illingworth will take charge of the first semifinal in Dubai between India and Australia, with Michael Gough serving as third umpire and Andy Pycroft on match referee duties, said a press release. Illingworth continues in Dubai having overseen India's Group A clash with New Zealand, while Gaffaney had been due to umpire Australia's meeting with South Africa in Group B before the weather intervened. Then in the second semifinal in Lahore, Sri Lanka's Kumar Dharmasena will work alongside Australia's Paul Reiffel as the on-field umpires for the clash between the Proteas and the Black Caps. Joel Wilson will be the third umpire, while Ranjan Madugalle is the match referee for this encounter. Dharmasena took charge of New Zealand's win over Bangladesh in Group A, while Reiffel was in the middle when India beat Pakistan. Semifinal 1: Dubai, India v Australia, On-field Umpires: Chris Gaffaney & Richard Illingworth, Third Umpire: Michael Gough, Fourth Umpire: Adrian Holdstock, Match Referee: Andy Pycroft. Semi-Final 2: Lahore, South Africa v New Zealand, On-field Umpires: Kumar Dharmasena & Paul Reiffel, Third Umpire: Joel Wilson, Fourth Umpire: Ahsan Raza, Match Referee: Ranjan Madugalle.

Senior players 'likely to be rested' for NZ T20I series

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan selectors are mulling to bring major changes to the T20I squad by resting senior players including skipper Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam during the upcoming five-match away series against New Zealand. These changes would also include the appointment of a new captain for Pakistan's T20I team. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has completed the consultation process regarding the national men's team's white-ball squads for the New Zealand tour, scheduled to run from March 16 to April 5. The sources further revealed that former pacer Aqib Javed is likely to remain the interim head coach as the cricket board could not start the recruitment process due to the lack of time. However, former Pakistan captain Mohammad Yousuf is likely to replace Shahid Aslam as the batting coach, while Azhar Mahmood and

Muhammad Masroor are set to be retained as the bowling and fielding coaches respectively. Pakistan's white-ball captain Rizwan will lead the ODI squad, which is likely to undergo slight changes, the sources added. Pakistan's T20I squad, however, is expected to undergo a massive overhaul as the PCB plans to give youngsters and domestic performers a chance by resting the senior players including white-ball captain Rizwan, star batter Babar, vice-captain Salman Ali Agha and pacer Naseem Shah. As a result, all-rounder Shadab Khan, whose last appearance came in June last year during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup against Ireland, is likely to lead Pakistan in the five-match T20I series against New Zealand. The development comes against the backdrop of Men in Green's — who were also the defending champions of the Champions Trophy —

below-par performance in the first ICC event hosted by the country in nearly three decades. During the tournament, the Rizwan-led side failed to win a single match and lost two fixtures against New Zealand and arch-rivals India. Meanwhile, their match against Bangladesh was washed out due to rain. It was also learnt earlier that Saqlain Mushtaq is expected to take over as the national cricket team's head coach with sources saying that the former cricketer has agreed to the role after a meeting with PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi. Pakistan's likely squad for T20I series Shadab Khan (c), Mohammad Haris, Sufiyan Muqeem, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Abbas Afridi, Jahandad Khan, Abrar Ahmed, Omair Bin Yousuf, Khushdil Shah, Hassan Nawaz, Abdul Samad, Haris Rauf, Usman Khan, Hussain Talat and Mohammad Ali.

FIFA lifts suspension on PFF

PFF confirms AFC Asian Cup participation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) welcomes FIFA's decision to lift the suspension imposed on February 6, 2025. The decision follows the unanimous approval of FIFA-proposed amendments by the newly elected PFF Congress in the PFF constitution during an Extraordinary Congress meeting held in Lahore on February 27, 2025, said a press release. With the suspension lifted, the PFF, under the leadership of Chairman Normalisation Committee (NC) Saud Hashimi, is now fully empowered to carry out its mandate in line with FIFA and AFC directives. "The NC Chair and members congratulate the entire nation and football

community on the suspension lifting," said PFF NC Chairman Saud Hashimi. "This is a historic day for Pakistani football, and we are committed to fulfilling FIFA and AFC's mandate to ensure a stable and progressive future for the sport in the country." The PFF extends its gratitude to FIFA, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), all Congress members, government and the football fraternity for their continued support and cooperation.

Murray to coach Djokovic in Indian Wells & Miami

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Andy Murray will reprise his coaching role with Novak Djokovic at the upcoming Indian Wells tournament and stay with the 24-time major champion for the Miami Open. Djokovic, 37, plans to compete at both ATP Masters events - played back-to-back and known as the 'Sunshine Double' - for the first time since 2019. Murray's team said the 37-year-old Scot flew out to the United States on Monday. The Indian Wells main draw starts later this week, with the Miami Open following on 19 March. Djokovic's last competitive outing was a first-round defeat by Italy's Matteo Berrettini at the Qatar Open on 18 February, when Murray was not present. Djokovic began working with his long-time rival, who retired from playing in August, on a trial basis at January's Australian Open. Djokovic reached the Melbourne semi-finals but

was forced to retire from his match against Germany's Alexander Zverev with a hamstring injury. Immediately after his exit, Djokovic said the pair would need to "cool off" before discussing the future. Three-time major champion Murray also refused to be drawn. But, speaking in Qatar last month, Djokovic said Murray had agreed to continue working with him and suggested they would team up in the US without confirming his plans. "It's indefinite in terms of how long we are going to work together but we agreed we are going to work most likely in the States and then some clay-court tournaments and see how it goes after that," Djokovic said. Why Djokovic is targeting Sunshine Double Djokovic, ranked seventh in the world, hopes to play both Indian Wells and Miami for the first time in six years. The carrot is the

chance of creating more history - at each event - by becoming the outright holder of the most men's titles. Djokovic has won a joint-record five Indian Wells titles alongside Roger Federer, while in Miami he has won six titles - a record shared with Andre Agassi. The former world number one has not won either tournament since 2016. The two events were not held in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic, while Djokovic pulled out when they returned in 2021. In 2022 and 2023, Djokovic was unable to play because he was not allowed into the United States unvaccinated. The former world number one made his Indian Wells return last year, suffering a shock defeat by Italian lucky loser Luca Nardi, before deciding to miss the Miami Open for "personal and professional" scheduling reasons.

'FIFA owed me this money' says Platini in appeals court



MUTTENZ (AFP): Michel Platini, the former head of UEFA, told a Swiss appeals court on Monday, where his acquittal on fraud charges is being examined, that FIFA "owed" him the two million Swiss francs (\$2.2 million) at the heart of the case. "I still don't understand why the public prosecutor's office is picking on me," the French three-time Ballon d'Or winner said at the start of his hearing. The special appeals court, sitting in Muttenz near Basel, is hearing a request by the country's Attorney General's office (OAG) to reopen proceedings against the 69-year-old Platini as well as former FIFA president Sepp Blatter, who turns 89 on March 10. The long-running legal saga began in 2015, when Blatter quit as head of FIFA in a corruption crisis. It

stems from the delayed payment of two million Swiss francs FIFA paid Platini, who was president of UEFA from 2007 to 2015, in 2011 for consultancy services. The pair were acquitted by the Swiss Federal Court in June 2022 of charges that included "disloyal management", "breach of trust" and "forgery of securities". The Federal Court concluded that fraud was "not established with a likelihood bordering on certainty" and gave them the benefit of the doubt. Back in court on Monday, Platini said he had been "surprised" when Blatter first asked him his salary expectations when he came on board as an advisor to help him win the presidency election in 1998. "As I didn't know this world, the world of FIFA, I

randomly said 'one million'," said Platini. "He asked me 'one million of what?'. I wanted to joke a bit and said 'one million of whatever you want: roubles, pesetas, lire'. And Mr Blatter said 'one million Swiss francs'." In 1999, Blatter allegedly told Platini, who had been advising without a written contract, that he could not pay him the million so the two men agreed a written deal for 300,000 Swiss francs. "He told me: 'I'll give you the balance later, when we have money at FIFA'," said Platini. His invoice, which he presented in 2011, was duly described by the public prosecutor as a "false invoice" designed to defraud the organisation. Platini insisted he would have taken legal action if FIFA had not paid the invoice. "A contract is a contract, a word is a word," he said. "FIFA owed me that money and I would have done anything to get it back." Blatter said on Monday that he had struck "a gentleman's agreement" with Platini but that the agreement had been purely oral, was made without witnesses and did not appear in FIFA's accounts.

Watson terms Champion Trophy 2009 high watermark of career

LAHORE (APP): Former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson has said that lifting the ICC Champions Trophy 2006 and 2009 editions is the high watermark of his career and the tournament left lasting imprints on his game. Reminiscing on his journey as a cricketer and coach with the ICC Media Zone on Monday, Watson credits Champions Trophy as the stage which helped him achieve great deal of success as far as personal and team milestones were concerned, adding that it was his first tournament in the baggy green. Shane Watson was player of the match (POTM) for Australia in both the

Champions Trophy finals 2006 in India and South Africa 2009 while his contribution in the 2009 semi-final was also excellent. He shared the journey to glory in the Champions Trophy 2006 and 2009 in detail and described this tournament was close to his heart. As the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 Pakistan enters the last week of action, he believes the love for cricket echoes throughout Pakistan and he witnessed people's immense passion for cricket for the past two weeks though their country did not fare well this year. "I could not represent my country in Pakistan but was lucky to play franchise cricket in the

Pakistan Super League (PSL) in the year 2019 and these were most memorable weeks of my life with Quetta Gladiators," Shane Watson added. Watson said that the group stages provided some excellent cricket but it's the knock-out matches that really count, and this week is going to be brilliant, adding that Pakistan will be ready for the off the field to watch some spectacular cricketing action in the Champions Trophy. "I was always a confident person, all athletes are, but it was in 2006 that I really knew I had the skill to perform for my country and help them win and that is a different confidence, it is a different feeling," he

reminisced. "When I started, I was just trying to contribute here and there because the team was so strong. We had Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath, Ricky Ponting, Brett Lee, the list just goes on. Most of those guys were still there in 2006 and delivering in that team, opening the batting with Adam Gilchrist and scoring an unbeaten 57 in the final, just proved to me I belonged," Watson said, adding, "It was the start of me being at my best as a fast-bowling all-rounder and to have that opportunity to bat with Adam and bowl the overs that I did was immense." Recalling the presence of the greats in Australian

set-up in 2006, he said, "I was brought into an all-time great team at the absolute peak of their powers and a lot of them were some of the best players that have ever played the game, so I was intimidated by their skill. I knew I had a lot of work to do before I could get my skills to a point where I felt I could come close to matching them and being where my team needed me, not just contribute a little bit. 2006 was that year". Recalling the Champions Trophy 2009 as a standout tournament for him, he shared he didn't get off to a good start, and neither did the team. The team scraped to a couple of wins but things just clicked for

us in that semi-final against England. They set us 258 to win and Ricky and I just knocked them off. I scored 136 not out and it was one of my favorite innings — not just because of how I did but also the occasion and batting with one of my heroes growing up. Ricky was a great leader and he backed me all the way from the age of 19," he shared. "In the final, we played New Zealand and I had this magical moment, where I hit a six to complete my century and also win the tournament. They are the moments you dream of." He said that he had a couple of really nice trophies from those days but his personal favorite was

the watch he got for being man-of-the-match in the final," adding "it is one of the most special things I have in my house. It brings back so many special memories. I have a painting of the 2015 World Cup celebrations, of me and Steve Smith in the middle when we hit the winning runs, but that watch is amazing — they are probably one of my two most prized possessions." One of the greatest white-ball all-rounders for Australia said, "The last two weeks have reminded us how special this tournament is and I hope that, in the years to come, those who have featured in it look back on it as fondly as I do now."



In brief

Rescue 1122 active amid rain

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Emergency Services Department Rescue 1122 Murree is active in the field during rain and snowfall in Murree. The rescue personnel have been directed to timely respond according to the emergency 'Cover Plan'. This was said by the District Emergency Officer, Kamran Rashid in a statement issued here on Monday. He said that the purpose of issuing an alert due to snowfall is to continue timely relief operations in case of any emergency. "Rescue personnel are performing their duties along with emergency resources at the points of Rescue 1122 stations as well as at the facilitation centers established by the district administration", he said. Kamran said that the personnel of Rescue-1122 Murree are performing their duties round the clock to ensure the safety of the public. He further said that Rescue-1122 personnel are ensuring the implementation of the emergency cover plan.

Police nab 7 outlaws

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police during operations against outlaws arrested seven accused, including drug peddlers, illegal arm owners and a kite seller. According to the police spokesman, the Wah Saddar Police held two accused Tanveer and Usman, recovering 1.6 kilograms and 800 grams of charas from them respectively. Similarly, accused Tayyab was nabbed by the Pirwadhai Police with 600 grams of the contraband item. Likewise, three suspects were captured for possessing illegal arms. Accused Ehsanullah was held by the New Town Police, Yasir by the Taxila Police and Mubeen by the Mandera Police with a 30-bore pistol each along with ammunition. Meanwhile, the Gujar Khan Police arrested accused Arsalan with 140 kites.

IGP orders crack-down on criminals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, chaired key meetings on Monday at the Central Police Office to review the crime situation and enhance law enforcement efforts through modern technology. A public relations officer told APP that the meeting was attended by DG Safe City Shakir Hussain Dawar, DIG Islamabad Mohammad Javed Tariq, SSP Operations, SSP Investigation, SP OCU, and other senior officers. The IGP held officers accountable for their performance and directed SDPOs to implement a comprehensive strategy to curb crime in their respective areas. He stressed the importance of using modern technology and available resources to conduct targeted operations against criminals involved in robbery, snatching, and other offenses. IG Rizvi also ordered a strict crack-down on absconders and proclaimed offenders, emphasizing that action should be taken against those providing them shelter. Additionally, he instructed police to act indiscriminately against vehicles with no number plates, tinted windows, and unauthorized lights. To strengthen street patrols, IGP Rizvi directed the Dolphin Squad to intensify their presence and ensure continuous patrolling. He underlined the importance of police officers being accessible to the public while maintaining a strong deterrent against criminals. In a separate meeting with DG Safe City and other officials, the IGP stressed the need to enhance crime detection using Safe City cameras.



ISLAMABAD: Children learning to recite Noorani Qaida from Qari at Jamia Masjid Al-Noor during the holy fasting month of Ramadan at G-7 in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

NAB recovers Rs. 1.5 billion from four housing projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has successfully recovered Rs. 1.5 billion from the management of four residential projects within a year, Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir said on Monday. During a cheque distribution ceremony, Nasir handed over refund cheques to individuals affected by fraudulent housing schemes.

A ceremony was held at the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Headquarters in Islamabad to distribute recovered funds to the victims of housing society scams. The event was chaired by NAB Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir. Substantial cheques

were distributed among victims of four housing projects in Rawalpindi and Islamabad- Ghauri Town, Arain City, Gulshan Rehman, and Jeddah Town.

Deputy Chairman NAB Sohail Nasir, Prosecutor General Accountability Syed Ehtisham Qadir Shah, Director General NAB Rawalpindi Mirza Muhammad Irfan Baig, and other officers distributed the cheques among the victims.

In his address on the occasion, Deputy Chairman NAB Sohail Nasir stated that comprehensive measures are being taken to prevent corruption under the leadership of the Chairman NAB, with the prompt return of public looted funds to the affected

is the top priority. He advised citizens to only invest in legally approved housing projects after thorough scrutiny and knowledge to protect themselves from fraud and deception.

He said that NAB's public awareness campaign regarding safe investments in real estate is ongoing, however, it is the duty of citizens to take all possible precautions to avoid fraud. Deputy Chairman NAB Sohail Nasir said that NAB's crackdown against those who loot public funds has been intensified.

He distributed shields among NAB officers who demonstrated excellent performance and paid tribute to the services of NAB

investigation officers who played a crucial role in recovering the funds of the victims in these four housing projects through their day and night efforts.

Director General NAB Rawalpindi Mirza Muhammad Irfan Baig, while outlining the performance of NAB Rawalpindi, stated that NAB Rawalpindi has so far recovered Rs 38,059 billion in housing fraud cases. Out of this, Rs 32.825 billion have been returned to the public or deposited into the national treasury. DG NAB Rawalpindi further informed that since January 2023, 23,896 billion rupees have been returned to 8,000 victims.

AIOU holds admissions' test

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the directive of Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mehmood, the admission tests for MPhil and PhD programs offered in the Spring 2025 semester were conducted at the main campus of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), as well as at its regional offices in Quetta, Karachi, Multan, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The primary objective of this initiative was to facilitate local candidates who were unable to travel long distances.

According to details, the Directorate of Regional Services, in collaboration with the Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASR) and relevant faculties, conducted online monitoring of the admission tests from February 24 to February 27, 2025, ensuring transparency in the process.

To enhance efficiency, coordination meetings were held at the Directorate of Regional Services, and pre-test arrangements were completed under the supervision of Deputy Director Regional Services (DDRS) Dilawar Sultan.

To ensure a fair testing environment, CCTV cameras were installed in the test halls, and continuous monitoring was carried out for three days from the Council Hall of the Directorate of Regional Services.

Admission tests were conducted for various faculties, including the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, and Faculty of Sciences.

Director General of Regional Services, Dr. Malik Tauqeer Ahmad Khan, appreciated the entire process and acknowledged the efforts of all stakeholders in ensuring the successful organization of the admission tests.

Additionally, he expressed gratitude to the Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mehmood, for his trust and support in the directorate and regional network.

A total of 158 candidates participated in the admission tests, comprising 25 PhD and 133 MPhil applicants. This initiative marked a significant milestone in making higher education more accessible to students from different regions, reinforcing the institution's commitment to academic excellence and inclusivity.

Overseas Pakistanis an asset: Syedaal Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan Nasir, has termed overseas Pakistanis in Thailand as a valuable asset and true ambassadors of the country.

He urged them to uphold Pakistan's reputation by demonstrating exemplary conduct, adhering to local laws, and conducting their businesses with honesty and integrity.

According to a statement issued by the Senate Secretariat, Syedaal Khan, while addressing the Pakistani community in Thailand, acknowledged their significant contribution to Pakistan's economic stability and global image.

He said that every overseas Pakistani, regardless of their location, represents the country and must promote a

positive national identity through their actions.

He lauded the hard work, honesty, and business acumen of overseas Pakistanis, noting that their dedication is a source of pride for the nation. He further urged expatriates to respect the laws of their host countries and uphold Pakistan's honor through ethical practices.

The Deputy Chairman of the Senate commended Pakistan's Ambassador to Thailand for her commendable diplomatic efforts in strengthening Pakistan-Thailand relations. He highlighted her proactive role in supporting the Pakistani community and enhancing bilateral ties between the two nations.

He also praised Pakistani Consul Tanveer Ahmed for

his unwavering efforts in assisting Pakistani citizens in Thailand, acknowledging the embassy's dedication to facilitating the expatriate community in legal and business affairs.

Syedaal Khan reiterated the government's commitment to the welfare of overseas Pakistanis and assured them of continued support. He urged the community to foster unity, respect local laws, and maintain a positive image of Pakistan.

Expressing optimism about Pakistan-Thailand diplomatic, trade, and people-to-people relations, he assured expatriates of the embassy's full support. He encouraged them to reach out to the mission for assistance in any matter, ensuring that their concerns would be promptly addressed.

IHC orders FIR against Police over unlawful detention of citizen

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday ordered the police to register a case against the Superintendent Police CTD, SHO Secretariat and other police officials in a case against for allegedly keeping a citizen in illegal detention.

The IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani heard the case wherein DSP Legal Islamabad Police appeared before the court.

The DSP legal proposed that the department would form a joint investigation team (JIT) on alleged illegal detention of citizen Ali Muhammad.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani rejected the request and remarked that there is no JIT, if one person can understand a matter, then

there is no need for three.

He questioned that has there ever been an investigation without registering an FIR? Justice Kayani of the Islamabad High Court heard the petition of the father of citizen Ali Muhammad. The court was informed that the statement of Ali Muhammad, who was allegedly kept in illegal detention by the police, has been recorded before the magistrate.

Petitioner's lawyer Sher Afzal Marwat read out Ali Muhammad's statement under 164. DSP Legal said that we have not yet received a copy of Ali Muhammad's Section 164 statement. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani remarked that he should tell the IG to

register a case against the police officials upon receiving this copy and arrest all the accused officials including the SP CTD.

The court instructed that an FIR should be registered by the next hearing. Then we will see where the investigation goes. If they are innocent, it would be cleared in investigation, he said. The court directed that the IG Islamabad should report on the next hearing as to what action he took.

The court said that the IG will be called at the next hearing and then we will see who should conduct the investigation. The court ordered the registration of a case and adjourned the hearing of the case till March 11.

Malaysia HC holds an academic discourse with students of Riphah

ISLAMABAD (APP): High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, held an academic discourse session with students of Riphah International University, Islamabad.

Upon arrival, Prof Dr Anis Ahmad, Founding Vice Chancellor of Riphah International University warmly welcomed the High Commissioner and his delegation, said a press release issued here on Monday.

The event was attended by academicians, staff, and approximately 100 students from the public administration and international relations disciplines.

During the session, Ambassador Dato' Azhar gave a brief on the background of Malaysia from independence to modern times. He emphasised the strong bilateral relations between Malaysia and Pakistan, highlighting the excellent outcome of the

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's Official Visit to Pakistan in October 2024 in elevating strategic partnership in all areas of cooperation.

The presentation also addressed various aspects of Malaysia's foreign policies, underscoring its role as the ASEAN Chairman 2025 and its commitment to regional stability and development. Additionally, Ambassador Dato' Azhar elaborated on the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program (MTCP), which is pivotal in capacity-building and development cooperation between Malaysia and Pakistan.

A significant portion of the session focused on promoting educational opportunities in Malaysia for Pakistani students. Ambassador Dato' Azhar highlighted that Malaysia offers an ideal environment for students, with modern facilities and globally recognised education stan-

dards, all within a Muslim-friendly setting. He proudly mentioned that, as of December 2024, nearly 5,000 Pakistani students are pursuing their studies in various higher education institutions across Malaysia. The event concluded with a Question-and-Answer session.

Following the session, the audience had the chance to experience the rich flavours of Malaysian cuisine, where Nasi Lemak Ayam Goreng was served. This culinary offering aimed to introduce Pakistani students to Malaysia's diverse culinary heritage.

The session is part of the ongoing efforts by the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad to strengthen bilateral ties through educational and cultural exchanges within Pakistan's institutions of higher learning, fostering people-to-people contact between Malaysia and Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Petroleum, Momin Agha visited areas of low gas pressure complaints, issued orders for resolution. —APP Photo

Meeting reviews work on Ring Road project

RAWALPINDI (APP): Sub-grade 34 km of the Rawalpindi Ring Road project has been completed, while work is in process on 4.3 km. All out efforts are being done to complete the project timely.

This was briefed by the officials from Frontier Works Organization (FWO), during a review meeting on the Ring Road project, chaired by the Commissioner Engr Amir Khattak, here on Monday.

The meeting was apprised of the developmental updates on the project Sub-base 18 km has also been completed, while work was ongoing on the remaining 16 km. It was also briefed that the financial progress of the project was 50%. Engr Amir Khattak stressed for the timely completion of the project.

"The project is our top priority, efforts

are being made to complete it before the deadline", he said. The commissioner I formed the meeting patients that required funds have been released by the government. He directed that no slackness in the project would be tolerated.

The commissioner urged the concerned quarters to keep him updated about the project on a daily basis, since December 2025 is the project completion deadline. It was decided that the Commissioner would inspect the project site after every three days, and the entire route every week.

The commissioner said that the revised PC-1 of Ring Road project has been cleared by CDWP and would be presented in the ECNEC meeting. He directed that project pace and quality of work should be ensured.

Afghans facing food insecurity

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says that millions of people in Afghanistan are facing food insecurity this Ramadan, and many of them don't know where their next meal will come from. The UN agency wrote on X that 14.8 million people in the country are currently suffering from food insecurity. OCHA added that 3.1 million people across Afghanistan are in an emergency phase.

47 Afghan detainees released

KABUL (Amu TV): Pakistan has released 47 Afghan citizens from various detention centers. The individuals, who had been detained for lacking legal residency documents, returned to Afghanistan. The detainees had spent approximately 45 days in Pakistani prisons before their release. This latest release brings the total number of Afghan citizens freed from Pakistani jails this month to more than 550, based on figures from the ministry.

Afghanistan exported 296,000 tons of fresh fruit in 11 months

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce says that over the past 11 months, around 296,000 tons of fresh fruit, worth more than \$143 million, have been exported to various countries. Pakistan, India, the United Arab Emirates, China, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the United States, France, Australia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Canada have been among the largest buyers of Afghanistan's fresh fruit this year. "The total export of Afghanistan's fresh fruit this year has reached approximately 296,000 tons, valued at \$143.11 million. These exports include apples, grapes, pomegranates, fresh figs, apricots, cherries, mulberries, melons, black mulberries, and other fruits," stated Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Meanwhile, the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock emphasized the need for greater support for farmers and the modernization of the agricultural sector to boost the country's exports. "We must expand standardized and quality exports to European markets so that they are accepted by countries like Germany, the Netherlands, and other European

Municipalities sign cooperation agreement



BALKH (TOLONews): The municipalities of Balkh and Nangarhar provinces have signed a cooperation agreement to strengthen bilateral collaboration and expand urban connections. According to this agreement, both sides will cooperate in urban development, improving city order, and beautification of cities. "This agreement was signed to connect communities, strengthen friendships, preserve cultural and historical values, and improve urban structures," said Mohammad Ishaq Saeed, the deputy mayor of Jalalabad. "We will establish committees within our departments to review and implement the provisions of this agreement to ensure the proper execution of the planned programs," said Mohammad Nasib Abid, the deputy mayor of Mazar-e-Sharif. Officials from the advisory boards of both municipalities consider such agreements an effective step toward improving urban services and emphasize the continuation of this cooperation. "The more experiences and information are shared between these two institutions, the stronger the cooperation will become, leading to improved urban services," stated Mohammad

Gardens of Babur: Historic legacy of Kabul



KABUL (TOLONews): Gardens of Babur is one of the oldest and most historic gardens in Kabul, with a history spanning nearly five centuries. It is recognized as a symbol of Afghanistan's history and cultural identity. This garden was built at the order of Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, on the hillside of Sher Darwaza in southern Kabul of Afghanistan. Today, it houses seven historical monuments. Officials of the garden say that Babur Shah had a great love for nature and gardens, and according to his wishes, he was buried in this very garden. Masood, the manager of Babur Garden, spoke about the historical landmarks of this site, stating: "The Queen's Palace, Babur Shah's tomb, Shah Jahan's tomb, the historic wall, the water canal, and the caravanserai are

Industrial park road condition prompts complaints

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): A number of industrialists in northern Balkh province complain about the deteriorating condition of the road leading to the Amir Ali Sher Nawai Industrial Park in Mazar-i-Sharif, urging the government to repair it. Amir Ali Sher Nawai is one of the largest industrial parks in the province, currently home to dozens of large and small factories. Mohammad Ismail, who owns a large salt refining factory in the park, said they had been facing multiple difficulties due to the lousy condition of the road. He added heavy cargo trucks frequently travelled to and from the park, but in winter, snowfall and rain made transportation nearly impossible. He urged the caretaker government to reconstruct the road. Ghulam Sakhi Qurbani, another industrialist, also complained about the road, saying they had been facing serious challenges. He explained the movement of large vehicles raised dust in summer, while in winter, accumulation of mud and water impeded access to the industrial park. Meanwhile, Chamber of Commerce and Investment chief Imamuddin Sanai-zada promised the interim government would address the issue. He said they had continuously shared the concerns of industrialists with the government. He recalled the road leading to Shadian Industrial Park in Mazar-i-Sharif was constructed this year. He added they had discussed the problem with local officials and assured the road would be properly reconstructed in the upcoming year. Deputy Director of Commerce and Industry Nasir Ahmad Niazi assured industrialists their concerns would be addressed. He said the industrial sector played a crucial role in the country's economic growth. He reaffirmed the IEA commitment to supporting domestic production and resolving industrialists' problems. Currently, two large industrial parks are operating in the province. Additionally, construction work on a new one has also been initiated by the government.

Asif Shinwari, a member of the Jalalabad Municipality Advisory Board. "We must utilize each other's experiences in areas such as reconstruction, urban management, green space development, and increasing municipal revenues," said Qudratullah, a member of the Mazar-e-Sharif Municipality Advisory Board. Previously, multiple meetings had been held between the municipalities of Jalalabad and Mazar-e-Sharif to discuss bilateral cooperation and exchange experiences, which have yielded positive results. **Growers donate saplings to green Qush Tepa canal** PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Farmers from central Logar province have donated 170,000 saplings to support efforts for greening the Qush Tepa canal, an official announced on Monday. Abdul Basir Shahid, spokesperson for the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, told Pajhwok Afghan News farmers from Pul-i-Alam, Baraki Barak, Mohammad Agha, and Charkh districts contributed the saplings. He said the donated saplings, supporting the department's initiative to bring greenery to the major canal, included fruit-bearing, decorative and flowering seedlings. He added the saplings had been handed over to National Development Authority (NDA) officials for plantation along the canal. Shahid praised the farmers for their contribution and encouraged residents to continue planting trees to enhance greenery and environmental sustainability in the coming year. Abdul Waris, a local grower, told Pajhwok the initiative was a collective effort and urged farmers in other provinces to make similar donations. In collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Logar's farmers plan to plant thousands of fruit-bearing and other saplings in the solar year 1404.

Afghanistan, Iran agree on enhanced cooperation



KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghan and Iranian diplomats have underscored the need to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties between Kabul and Tehran. The Afghan ambassador in Tehran and the director-general of South Asia desk at the Iranian Foreign Ministry arrived at the agreement at a meeting. In a statement, the Afghan embassy in Tehran said Ambassador Maulvi Fazl Mohammad Haqqani met Director General of South Asia Desk at the Iranian Foreign Ministry Mohammad Reza Bahrami. It said: "Both sides exchanged views on the latest developments in bilateral relations, issues related to Afghan migrants residing in Iran and the strengthening of diplomatic and economic ties". At the meeting, emphasis was placed on accelerating the process of joint cooperation. Afghan refugees living in Iran have repeatedly complained of ill-treatment and harassment by people and police of the neighbouring country. Recently, Haqqani met the head of Foreigners Affairs Office at Iran's Ministry of Interior and had discussed issues related to Afghan refugees, including their voluntary return to Afghanistan and legal residence in Iran. Both sides agreed to establish a joint committee to address the problems of the migrants.

Paktia residents urge establishment of proper museum

PAKTIA (TOLONews): Several cultural activists and residents of Paktia are calling on officials to establish a well-equipped museum to preserve the historical artifacts of the province. According to them, Paktia has many historical relics that need to be properly collected and safeguarded. Bahai Jan Naibkhil, a cultural figure from Paktia, emphasized the necessity of building a museum in Bala Hisar Gardez: "Bala Hisar Gardez is a historical site, and a museum should be built there so that people can visit. Currently, the museum of the Directorate of Information and Culture is very limited and has only one cupboard. There are many historical artifacts in villages and various areas that should be collected and preserved in a proper museum." "Paktia has a rich historical background, with many royal dynasties having ruled here. The museum of this province should also reflect this rich heritage. So far, little work has been done, but more effort is needed. At present, the Paktia museum is housed in a small room, whereas a dedicated building should be constructed for it," said Kandahar Mashal, another cultural activist in Paktia. Noor Afzal Haqqar, a resident of Paktia, also stresses the importance of collecting and documenting historical artifacts, saying: "In our village, children have found some historical relics, but the Directorate of Information and Culture should investigate and identify these artifacts to enrich the Paktia museum." Shafiqullah, another visitor to the Paktia museum, expressed surprise at its current state, saying: "I thought the museum would be a large space where each historical artifact would have its own display case with related descriptions, but that was not the case." However, local officials have announced plans to enrich the province's museum. "We have requested a technical committee from the central government to register and verify these artifacts. In the future, we will enhance the museum and have already held various meetings regarding this. Since the return of the Islamic Emirate, 54 valuable items have been transferred to this museum," stated Sawab Jan Islamiyar, the head of Paktia's Directorate of Information and Culture. According to the Paktia Directorate of Information and Culture, the museum was established two years ago and currently houses 150 different historical artifacts. Officials have also requested the Ministry of Information and Culture to send a specialized team to assess and determine the historical significance of these artifacts.

Former negotiator calls Doha agreement a 'terrible setback'

KABUL (Amu TV): President Biden in August 2021. During his campaign in 2024, Trump distanced himself from the deal, claiming it was nullified after the Taliban failed to uphold their commitments. Trump, speaking on September 11, 2024, said, "To be clear, they broke the deal. There were conditions they had to meet, and they didn't. We canceled the agreement because they didn't honor their commitments." As the agreement marks its fifth anniversary, the Taliban have also moved away from it. In a rare statement, their spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, said on February 28, 2025, that the Doha Agreement is no longer relevant. "The agreement was for a phase," Mujahid said. "Now, we have our own government. We no longer operate under that agreement; we move forward based on our system." A major part of the agreement, intra-Afghan talks aimed at forming a new government and ending the war, was never implemented. Zalmay Khalilzad, the former US envoy who negotiated the deal, has repeatedly called for all parties to return to the agreement to resolve Afghanistan's ongoing crisis. However, some international affairs experts argue that the Doha Agreement is no longer a viable framework for addressing Afghanistan's challenges and that a new roadmap is needed.



Uzbekistan denies reports of lowered electricity export rates to Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): Uzbekistan's electricity supply company has said there has been no changes to tariffs for electricity exports to Afghanistan. According to a statement issued by the National Electric Networks of Uzbekistan, no plans have been made to amend the tariffs although an agreement was reached to expand the project to build the Surkhon-Pul-e-Khumri 220-500 kV power transmission line by constructing additional substations and networks. Last months, "a delegation headed by the acting Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, visited our country. "During the bilateral meetings, issues of further expansion of mutually beneficial relations, consistent development of cooperation in trade, economic, energy, transport and other spheres were discussed in detail," the statement read. "As a result of the project optimization and the increase in the share of localized materials in construction, a preliminary agreement was reached to reduce the construction cost from 252 million to 222 million US dollars. "The contract is currently in the process of being agreed upon and will be signed after the negotiations are completed. "At the same time, no official changes were made to the tariffs for electricity supplies to Afghanistan," the statement read. In December last year Uzbekistan extended its agreement to export electricity to Afghanistan for 2025. After talks in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan's energy company Uzenergosotish and Afghanistan's DABS signed a power purchase agreement for electricity supplies this year. The sides also conducted "comprehensive and detailed" technical discussions regarding the construction of the Surkhon to Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul power line. Once operational, the project is expected to supply Afghanistan with 24 million kWh of electricity daily, amounting to 6 billion kWh annually. The transmission line will span 245.6 kilometers, with 45 kilometers on Uzbekistan's side and 200.6 kilometers within Afghanistan. Currently, Afghanistan produces only 20% of its electricity domestically, importing the remaining 80% from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Iran. Agreements with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were renewed in late November and early December, respectively. In September 2019, Uzbekistan's National Electric Networks signed a 10-year contract with DABS for electricity exports. At the time, deputy energy minister Sherzod Khodjaev stated that initial supplies would amount to 4.2 billion kWh annually, with plans to increase the volume to 6 billion kWh over time. Uzbekistan has been supplying electricity to Afghanistan since 2002. Over the years, the volume of supplies has grown significantly, from 62 million kWh in the initial years to 2.6 billion kWh by the end of 2019. In 2023, Uzbekistan exported 1.82 billion kWh of electricity to Afghanistan, valued at \$91.18 million (approximately 5 cents per kWh).

Section 94 will apply to those who are under Army Act: Justice Mandokhail

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail on Monday remarked that Section 94 would apply only to those who are under the Army Act. Justice Mandokhail gave the remarks during the hearing of the intra-court appeal against the military trial of civilians in the Supreme Court. A seven-member constitutional bench, headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, is hearing the case.

The bench included Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarat Hilali, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. As the hearing began, civil society's counsel Faisal Siddiqui argued that the issue was not how the selection of 105 accused for military trial was made. But the real issue was whether the law permits this. Justice Khan remarked that the matter of handing over the accused is a matter of record. He questioned the counsel has he challenged Section 94 of the Army Act?

Advocate Siddiqui replied that when the accused were handed over [to military], the crime had not been determined. He submitted that he challenged the unlimited discretionary powers under Section 94. He argued that the officer deciding the military handover of the accused had unlimited authority. The prime minister does not have unlimited powers in this country, he added.

He said that the powers under Section 94 should be structured. Justice Rizvi questioned him whether the police investigators were less efficient than the military's. Whether there was material [evidence] available at the time of the accused's handover, the justice continued.

Advocate Siddiqui replied that whether or not the material was on record was not the issue; the core issue was the unlimited power in the handover of the accused. He said that under Section 94, the commanding officer submits the request for the handover. Justice Mandokhail inquired whether the anti-terrorism court could reject the request for handover. The counsel responded that the court had the authority to reject the request for the handover.

Justice Khan remarked that this defense could have been adopted by the accused before the anti-terrorism court or in an appeal. Justice Mazhar added that the anti-terrorism court had not even issued notices to the accused and had decided the matter suo-motu when the commanding officer's request came. Justice Mandokhail observed that Section 94 will apply only to those under the Army Act. After the decision of the anti-terrorism court, the accused came under the Army Act. The anti-terrorism court could have rejected the commanding officer's request.

Faisal Siddiqui argued that the decision for court martial should have

been made before the handover of the accused. He questioned how the handover could take place if the decision for court martial had not been made. Justice Rizvi inquired whether the reasons for the handover were mentioned in the commanding officer's request. Advocate Siddiqui responded that no reason was given in the request.

Justice Afghan remarked that reasons were indeed given in the handover request. The officer stated that the accused were involved in crimes under the Official Secrets Act. Justice Mandokhail observed that the procedure for filing a complaint under the Official Secrets Act is clearly defined in the Criminal Procedure Code. The request goes to the magistrate, who records statements and decides whether an investigation should be conducted.

Advocate Siddiqui said that the request could also be in the form of an FIR. It is established that under the Official Secrets Act, only the federal government can file a request; no private person can file a complaint under this act. The counsel also mentioned that complaints under the Official Secrets Act can also be made under Army Rules. Justice Mandokhail remarked that, according to Army Rules, an investigation should take place first. But even for the investigation, a complaint is necessary, the justice added. Later, the hearing was adjourned until today.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur chairing a meeting of C&W Department.

Arrest warrants issued for Omar Ayub

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A local court in Islamabad on Monday issued arrest warrants for opposition leaders Omar Ayub, Aamir Dogar, and Aamir Mughal over their failure to appear in two cases related to the violation of Section 144.

Judicial Magistrate Shahzad Khan, who presided over the hearing, accepted exemption pleas filed on behalf of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan and Shoaib Shaheen. However, arguments on the acquittal applications of the accused could not be presented during the proceedings.

The cases against Barrister Gohar and other PTI leaders were registered at the I-9 police station in connection with alleged violations of the prohibitory order. The court subsequently adjourned the hearing till April 23.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Islamabad granted post-arrest bail to 56 PTI workers against surety bonds of Rs5,000 each. ATC Judge Abul Hasnat Muhammad Zulqarnain issued the ruling on bail applications filed by the detainees, who were arrested in cases registered at Tarnol and Kohsar police stations following the November 26 protest. Advocate Sardar Busy represented the PTI workers during the proceedings.

It may be recalled that PTI had launched a march from Peshawar to Islamabad on November 24, 2024, under the leadership of Bushra Bibi and the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, demanding the release of party founder Imran Khan. The march reached the federal capital late on November 25, culminating in clashes between PTI supporters and law enforcement agencies the following day.

KP govt committed to eradicate graft: CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has achieved a significant milestone in its digitization efforts.

The Communication and Works (C&W) Department has developed an advanced online system, the Public Works Management Information System (PWMIS), aimed at streamlining the implementation of development projects, financial management, and other related processes.

During a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Gandapur on Monday, officials from the C&W Department provided

a detailed briefing on the new system. The meeting was attended by KP Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, administrative secretaries of various departments, and other key officials.

According to the briefing, PWMIS will enable all development project-related processes to be handled online. A dedicated dashboard will be set up at the Chief Minister's Office, provincial departments, and the Accountant General's Office to facilitate real-time monitoring of development projects. The system is designed to ensure strict adherence to approved PC-1s, efficient utilization of allocated funds, and enhanced transparency. Additionally, the new system will minimize human

intervention, allow for performance evaluation of field engineers, and reduce the margin for errors.

It will also ensure the quality of development projects, secure record-keeping, and timely availability of information. Speaking at the meeting, Chief Minister Gandapur hailed the launch of PWMIS as a commendable initiative. He emphasized that the provincial government is committed to eradicating corruption and ensuring transparency by accelerating digitization across all government departments. The C&W Department's implementation of PWMIS is a significant step in this direction, with plans to extend the system to all works-related departments in the future.

Pakistan, IMF launch talks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Negotiations between Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the release of a \$1 billion loan tranche have officially begun. A nine-member IMF review mission, led by Nathan Porter, arrived in Islamabad on Monday for the first economic review of Pakistan's \$7 billion bailout package.

According to the well-placed sources in the ministry, the talks will proceed in two phases: first, technical discussions, followed by policy-level negotiations.

Sources said Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb will lead Pakistan's delegation in policy-level talks, while IMF officials will engage with key institutions, including the Ministry of Finance, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the Power Division, and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The sources further said that the IMF team will also hold discussions with the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Planning, OGRA, and NEPRA.

Pakistan is expected to present a compliance report on the conditions of the \$7 billion bailout program, covering the first half of the current fiscal year. The delegation will also assess Pakistan's economic performance and make recommendations for the next fiscal year's budget.

The IMF mission will stay for two weeks, with talks concluding on March 15. With economic uncertainty looming, these discussions are critical for securing the next loan installment and ensuring Pakistan's adherence to IMF conditions.

Car drives into crowd, killing one

MANNHEIM (Reuters): A car drove into a crowd of people in the western German city of Mannheim on Monday, killing at least one person, injuring several others and overshadowing carnival celebrations in the region where police had been on alert for security attacks.

Police detained the car's driver and later said he had acted alone, with no broader threat seen for the public. People were seen lying on the ground at the scene and at least two were being resuscitated, an eyewitness told Reuters. Bild newspaper reported that two people were killed and 25 injured, 15 of them seriously, citing security sources.

It was unclear whether the driver acted deliberately or if there was any connection to Germany's carnival celebrations, which culminated on Rose Monday with a number of parades, although not in Mannheim, which held its main event on Sunday. The Focus Online website reported that the man detained by police was a 40-year-old from the neighboring state of Rhineland-Palatinate and that he was receiving hospital treatment, citing security sources.

PDWP approves 46 development projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 13th meeting of the Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) was held under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary of the Planning and Development Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ikram Ullah Khan. Following special directives from Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, the forum approved a key project aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity in the merged districts.

The meeting was attended by PDWP members and officials from relevant departments. The forum granted approval for 46 crucial projects across various sectors, including agriculture, tourism, health, education, environment, forestry, science and technology, and information technology.

Among the approved projects were soil fertility mapping in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the establishment of a seed industry, promotion of climate-smart and mechanized farming, tele-farming and digital service platforms, and enhancement of agricultural productivity for food security and livelihoods.

In the education sector, the projects included the provision of additional infrastructure and renovations in existing colleges, functionalization of newly constructed and established colleges with transport facilities, construction of BS blocks, additional classrooms, and security facilities in government colleges. Other projects included upgrading secondary schools such as Government Middle School Sangarai in Shangla, recruitment of teachers for primary, middle, high, and higher secondary schools in merged districts, and feasibility studies for the establishment of a Girls' Cadet College in Dera Ismail Khan.

For the health sector, PDWP approved secondary healthcare facility revamping, strengthening of District Headquarters (DHQ) hospitals, improving accident and emergency units in newly merged districts, and enhancing the province's capacity to combat future pandemics. It also sanctioned the establishment of a DHQ hospital in Ghaziabad, Kolai Palas district.

Israeli fire kills two Palestinians in Gaza

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli fire killed at least two people in Rafah and injured three others in Khan Younis in the south of Gaza, raising fear among Palestinians that the ceasefire could collapse altogether after Israel imposed a total blockade on the shattered enclave.

A first phase of a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas that began in January ended over the weekend with no agreement on what will happen next. Hamas says an agreed second phase must now begin, leading to a permanent Israeli withdrawal and an end to the war. Israel has instead offered a temporary extension into April, with Hamas to release more hostages in return for Palestinian detainees, without immediate talks on Gaza's future.

Two Israeli government officials said mediators had asked Israel for a few more days to resolve the standoff. Israel raised the stakes on Sunday by imposing a total blockade on all supplies, including food and fuel, to sustain the 2.3 million Gazans living among the ruins after the 15-month conflict.

Hundreds of lorries carrying supplies were backed up in Egypt, denied permis-

sion to enter. Gaza residents said shops had been swiftly emptied of all supplies and the price of a sack of flour had more than doubled overnight. "Where will our food come from?" said Salah Al-Hajj Hassan, a resident in Jabalia, on Gaza's northern edge where families have returned to destroyed homes to live in the rubble. "We are dying, and we don't want war or the alarm bells of displacement or the alarm bells of starving our children."

Residents said Israeli tanks stationed near the eastern and southern borders of Gaza intensified gunfire and tank shelling into the outskirts throughout the night, raising fears among the population that fighting could resume. A Palestinian official with a group allied to Hamas told Reuters a state of alert had been declared among fighters.

At least two people were killed by an Israeli drone fire in Rafah, and three people were wounded by a helicopter that fired on Khan Younis, medics said. In a statement, the Israeli military said its forces fired at a motorboat in the coastal area of Khan Younis, violating security restrictions in the area and posing a threat.

The military said in another incident in southern Gaza, its forces identified two suspects who were moving toward them and posing a threat. Israeli forces "fired at the suspects to eliminate the threat and identified casualties," it said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Sunday it had adopted a proposal by US President Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, for a temporary ceasefire for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and Jewish feast of Passover, ending around April 20.

The truce would be conditional on Hamas releasing half of the remaining 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 hostages could be released only under that plan. The Hamas-run Gaza interior ministry called on residents to provide information about merchants raising food prices in the wake of the new blockade.

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notices to the provincial and federal governments, seeking their response in 10 petitions regarding the recovery of missing persons. During the hearing of the petitions, Acting Chief Justice SM Attique Shah remarked that the authorities should provide detailed reports on the missing individuals, including their background, business, and other relevant information, on Monday.

During the hearing, Additional Advocate General, Deputy Attorney Ubaid Ullah Anwar and superintendent of police & focal person Kamal Hussain appeared before PHC. Justice SM Attique Shah asked the police Focal Person why so many people were going missing. The focal person replied that most of the missing persons had gone into hiding themselves, some due to personal enmities, others due to debt, and some to evade

arrest.

Justice SM Attique Shah expressed concerns over the increasing number of missing persons cases, saying that the police should be aware of the reasons behind the disappearances. He remarked that the police and other authorities should not just submit reports stating that the missing person is not in their custody, but should provide detailed information about the missing individual.

The additional advocate general agreed with the court's suggestion, stating that it would help in investigating the cases more effectively. He said that the SHO should collect comprehensive information on each missing person, including their background, business, and other relevant details.

The court emphasized the need for more detailed reports from the police, saying that it would help in tracing the missing persons. The Peshawar High Court has directed the provincial and federal governments to

submit their responses to the petitions by the next hearing date.

Court suspends OGRA price hike for industries in KP: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Sabit Ullah has suspended increase in gas tariffs for industrial consumers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, directing industries to pay gas bills at the old rates, on Monday.

The petitions filed by Lakki Cement, Charat Cement, and other industries. During the hearing, the petitioners' counsel, Shumail Ahmed Butt, argued that the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) had issued a notification on January 26, 2025, increasing the gas tariff for industrial consumers from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 3,500 per MMBTU.

During the hearing, SNGPL lawyer Asad Jan and Assistant Attorney General Rahat Ali Nahqi appeared before PHC on behalf of respondents.

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