

2 more Mpox cases reported
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The provincial health department on Friday informed that two new cases of Mpox have been reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The affected individuals include a 42-year-old man and a 20-year-old, youth, both residents of Peshawar. The case of the 20-year-old is locally transmitted, Adviser on Health, Ihtesham, stated that the 42-year-old patient had traveled from S Arabia last year.



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Portfolios allocated to newly sworn-in federal cabinet members

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The newly sworn-in federal ministers, special assistants, and advisers were assigned their portfolios on Friday.

The Cabinet Division has issued the notification of the allocation of portfolios. It states that Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has been appointed as the federal minister for parliamentary affairs, while Ali Pervaiz Malik named the federal minister for petroleum.

Aurangzeb Khan Khichi has been appointed as the federal minister for national heritage while Khalid Magi will handle the Ministry of Science and Technology. Hanif Abbasi has been named as the minister of railways.

Muhammad Mueen Watoo has been appointed as the federal minister for water resources, and Muhammad Junaid Anwar will be the federal minister for maritime affairs.

Muhammad Raza Hayat Haraj has been assigned the portfolio of ministry of defence production while

Sardar Muhammad Yousaf has been allocated the ministry of religious affairs. Shaza Fatima Khawaja has been appointed as the federal minister for IT and Telecommunications.

Rana Mubashar Iqbal will be the federal minister for the Public Affairs Unit, while Syed Mustafa Kamal has been allocated the Ministry of Health. Rashid Ahmad Khan has become the minister Food Security and Research. Abdul Rehman Kanju has been appointed as the minister of state for power, with the additional charge of the Public Affairs Unit. Bilal Azhar Kayani has been designated as the minister of state for railways, and Aqeel Malik has been appointed as the minister of state for Law and Justice.

Khalid Das Kohistani has been appointed as the Minister of State for Religious Affairs, while Aoun Chaudhry will be the minister of State for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Development. Talal Chaudhry has been assigned the portfolio of minister of state for Interior and Narcotics Control, and Wajiha Qamar named as

minister of state for Education and Training.

Furthermore, Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer has been given the additional portfolio of the Ministry of Human Rights. Musaddiq Malik has been appointed as the federal minister for climate change while Khawaja Asif will continue to hold the Ministry of Defence, while Attaullah Tarar will be the Minister for Information, and Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui will be the federal minister for education.

Rana Tanveer Hussain has been appointed as the Federal Minister for Food Security, and Chaudhry Salik Hussain assigned the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Development. Abdul Aleem Khan has been given the Ministry of Communications, while Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh has been assigned the Ministry for the Investment Board. Former PTI leaders Pervez Khattak has been appointed as adviser to PM on interior while Mohammad Ali has been named as adviser on privatization.

Bilawal holds key diplomatic meetings F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held a series of high-level diplomatic meetings at Zardari House, Islamabad, on Friday, engaging with envoys from the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. The discussions focused on strengthening bilateral relations, expanding trade partnerships, and addressing mutual interests.

Bilawal met with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott to discuss Pakistan-UK relations and explore avenues for enhanced cooperation. Both sides emphasised the importance of expanding trade ties and economic collaboration. The meeting also covered regional stability and diplomatic engagements. PPP Secretary General Nayyer Hussain Bukhari was also present.

In a separate meeting, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari welcomed French Ambassador Nicolas Galey to discuss strengthening Pakistan-France trade relations and economic cooperation. The discussion highlighted the need for deeper collaboration in investment, commerce, and cultural exchange, alongside key regional and global issues of mutual concern.

Bilawal also met with US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie A. Baker to review Pakistan-US relations, focusing on enhancing economic and trade ties, fostering diplomatic cooperation, and promoting regional peace and stability. Both sides exchanged views on pressing regional issues, including security and economic development, and reaffirmed their commitment to deeper engagement in trade, investment, and strategic cooperation.

These meetings reaffirm PPP's commitment to engaging with the international community and strengthening Pakistan's diplomatic and economic partnerships. Chairman Bilawal emphasised the importance of fostering mutually beneficial relations with key global partners, particularly in trade, economic growth, and regional peace efforts. The engagements at Zardari House underscore Pakistan's proactive diplomatic outreach and PPP's dedication to promoting international cooperation.

Meanwhile, Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, in his message on the occasion of International Women's Day, extended heartfelt greetings to women in Pakistan and all around the world. He paid tribute to the strength, resilience, and invaluable contributions of women in every sphere of life and reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of women's rights.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

US thanks Pakistan for terrorist arrest — avoids comment on Imran's detention

Jaile Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: The United States has expressed gratitude to Pakistan for the recent arrest and handover of a wanted terrorist, a State Department spokesperson said Thursday.

Tammy, spokesperson for the department, confirmed the US appreciation while responding to a question from The Frontier Post. Asked whether anyone in the Trump adminis-

tration had directly called Pakistani officials to convey thanks, Tammy said the US extends its gratitude to the government of Pakistan. However, she did not clarify whether Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, or any other senior official, had personally reached out to Islamabad. "We have a common interest in fighting terrorism," Tammy added.

In a follow-up question, The Frontier Post asked

whether President Donald Trump was aware that Pakistan's most popular political leader, Imran Khan, has been jailed for the past three years. The publication also inquired whether the president planned to focus attention on reported human rights violations in Pakistan. Tammy did not address or acknowledge the question regarding Khan's imprisonment, leaving it unclear where the administration stands on the issue.

PM directs ministries to prepare, engage with businessmen

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the relevant ministries and authorities to engage with the businessmen and prepare within a week for biweekly sector-wise special meetings with business community he will chair to work out tangible action plans to boost national economy.

The prime minister was talking to the delegation of prominent businessmen from across the country who called on him at the Prime Minister's House. The prime minister announced that he was providing lead time of one week to the ministers and relevant authorities to engage with the businessmen to prepare for the sector specific meeting to be held on next Thursday to be chaired by him.

He said that a four member delegation from the businessmen community would represent their respective sectors whereas the government side would be led by the secretary of the relevant ministry. The meeting is aimed at holding focussed interactions and making decisions and the first such meeting will discuss the agriculture sector, he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the macroeconomic indicators were improving gradually whereas the government had set its priority to target exports, employment, agriculture and other critical sectors to revive the struggling national economy. "The government will only act as a catalyst to make enabling environment for businessmen to invest and attract global investors as investments is always led by local investors and then direct foreign investment ensues.

It is the businessmen who have to drive the wheel of economy and the government is their facilitators," the prime minister remarked. Referring to the Department for Plant Protection set up for research in rice crops, he said the plant instead proved to be a "plant of destruction" as it remained in shambles despite

Chinese ambassador calls on PM F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Friday. During the course of the meeting the prime minister conveyed his warm greetings and good wishes to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. He also congratulated the Chinese leadership and nation, on the successful convening of the "Two Sessions" of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

While expressing his satisfaction over the positive trajectory of Pakistan-China bilateral strategic relations, as manifested by the successful visit of President Asif Ali Zardari to Beijing last month, the prime minister thanked China for its longstanding and steadfast support to Pakistan on all its core issues. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's consistent and unflinching support to China on its core issues and said that the leadership and peoples of both countries remain determined in their shared resolve to further strengthen the Pakistan-China "All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" and elevate it to new heights. Progress on security and counter-terrorism cooperation between both countries was also discussed.

Chinese grant to Pakistan in 2005 for the state-of-the-art rice research facility in Karachi.

He regretted that the businessmen fraternity overlooked the matter which was of critical importance for them. On the occasion, the country's business community expressed its confidence in the policies of the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and paid tribute to the government for providing a conducive environment for the business community and investors.

"A sincere and honest business community is our valuable asset. You all invested your capital in this country even in difficult times for the country's industrial and economic development. Thanks to your efforts, the country's economy has been moving and people have found employment. With your advice and useful opinions, the country's economy will continue its journey of improvement and reforms in all sectors," the prime minister said. He added that the country's economy was moving in the right direction as the interest and inflation rates have decreased significantly.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the aim of the consultation with busi-

nessmen was to accelerate the development of the country's economy, whereas trade officers posted abroad were provided with clear targets for the promotion of trade and exports. In the meeting, the participants expressed full confidence in the government's business-friendly policies.

The participants paid tribute to the government for the establishment of the National Seed Development Authority to ensure the provision of quality seeds for the development of agriculture in the country. They also praised the government's Green Pakistan Initiative. The delegation included Gohar Ijaz, Syed Yawar Ali, Atif Sheikh, Fawad Mukhtar, Shahid Hussain, SM Tanveer, Mian Ahsan, Saleem Ghauri, Shahzad Malik, Usman Malik, Atif Inam and Shahzad Asghar. The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Ahad Khan Cheema, Jam Kamal Khan, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Attaullah Tarar, Ali Pervez Malik, Hanif Abbasi, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar, Coordinator to the Prime Minister Rana Ehsan Afzal, Chairman FBR Rashid Mahmood Langrial and relevant senior officials.

Court granted post arrest bails to 15 PTI activists F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A lower court on Friday granted post arrest bails to 15 PTI activists in a case pertaining to protest and vandalizing the public property on November 26.

Additional District and Session Judge Aamer Zia issued the written order regarding the approval of bails. The bails are accepted against surety bonds worth Rs20,000 each. The court also directed the accused to submit affidavit of assurance that they would not be part of such act in future.

The court said that as per the defence lawyers the accused are not nominated in the FIR. They adopted the stance that the legal formalities were also not met for the identification parade. The order said that the lawyers have stated that the complainant in the FIR was not authorized to register this case.

Arshad Sharif's murder case SC orders govt to submit daily progress report

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's constitutional bench on Friday ordered the government to submit a daily progress report in the case of the murder of senior journalist Arshad Sharif.

A six-member constitutional bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the suo motu case regarding the murder of Arshad Sharif. The bench included Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi, and Justice Shahid Bilal. At the start of the hearing, the federal government requested more time to finalise the mutual legal assistance agreement with Kenya.

The additional attorney general stated that the agreement would be ratified by the president within a month. He mentioned that

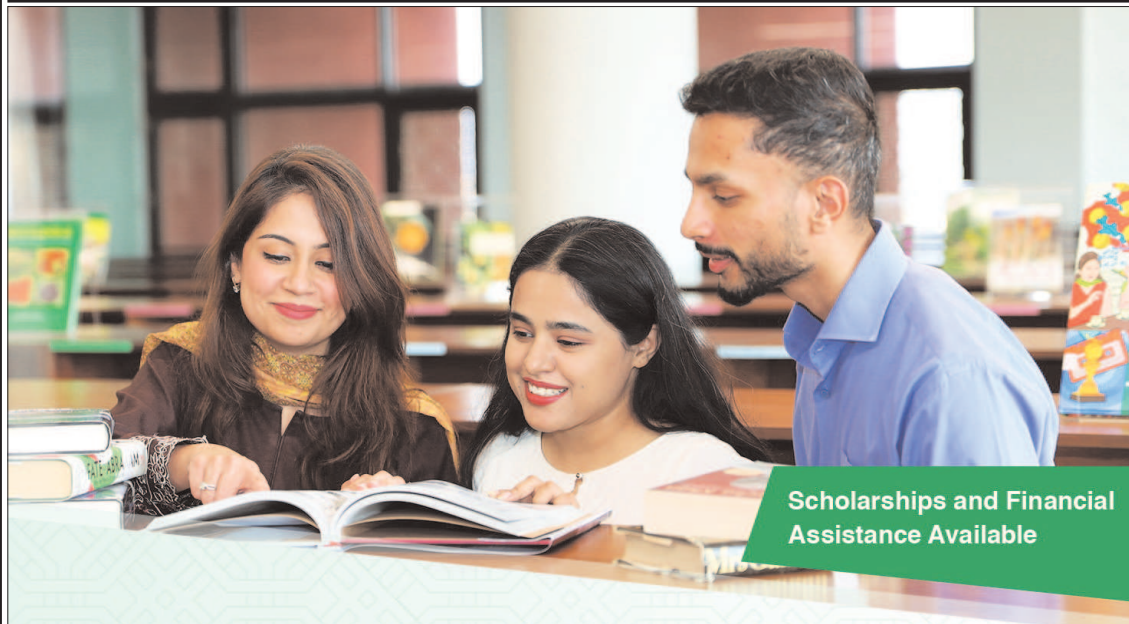
the mutual legal assistance agreement with Kenya had already been signed, and the ratification process was ongoing. The SC raised questions about the delay in the case's progress, asking why the agreement, which was signed on Dec 10 last, has not been ratified yet. The court questioned whether they should demand a daily progress report and noted that even after three months, more time was being sought. The joint secretary of the Interior Ministry informed the court that they had written a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for mutual legal assistance.

Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi remarked that from now on, a daily progress report should be submitted to court. Justice Aminuddin Khan expressed concern over the prolonged delay in the Arshad Sharif case, questioning why so much time had passed without significant progress. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar

inquired about who sent the summary to the president.

The additional AG responded that the Ministry of Interior would send the summary to the president after cabinet approval. He mentioned that he had not been able to contact the Ministry of Interior, to which Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that the Ministry of Interior officials are present in court. The joint secretary informed the court that the note was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after cabinet approval on Feb 27.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar asked whether the president could reject the agreement. The legal adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declined to comment on the matter. The lawyer representing Arshad Sharif's second widow, Javeria Siddique, appeared in court and stated that the High Court in Kenya had ordered action against the officials involved in the murder.



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LAHORE: People offer Friday prayer on the first friday of Ramadan ul mubarak while security personnels stand alert at Shimla Pahari Chowk. —APP Photo

LHC directs policy shift from diesel to electric buses

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday ordered the formulation of a policy for converting diesel buses into electric buses to prevent environmental pollution.

Justice Shahid Karim issued the orders while hearing a set of petitions filed by Haroon Farooq and others against ineffective measures to control smog.

At the start of the proceedings, Deputy Attorney General Asad Ali Bajwa, Deputy Director of Environment Ali Ijaz, representatives of the traffic department, the Lahore Development Authority (LDA), and others appeared before the court.

The LDA's counsel informed the court that the revamping of Tollinton Market would be completed within a

month. In response, the court emphasized the importance of improving the market, noting that it supplies quality meat to the entire city.

The court also stressed the need for a comprehensive traffic management plan to control congestion during school opening and closing hours. It suggested that large schools should have dedicated parking areas and urged citizens to take responsibility for maintaining cleanliness and beautification in their surroundings.

Highlighting the necessity of transitioning from diesel buses to electric buses, the court suggested implementing the change in phases, even if it takes two to three years. It also recommended converting rickshaws to electric models, citing suc-

cessful implementations in India and other countries.

At this stage, Deputy Director of Environment Ali Ijaz presented a report on the Mahmood Booti dumping site. In response, the court commended the Environment Department for its efforts, stating that its role would become increasingly crucial in the future. The court also recommended that the LDA issue appreciation certificates to developers constructing green buildings that meet international environmental standards.

Meanwhile, the WASA counsel submitted a report on efforts to place sewage drains underground. Subsequently, the court adjourned the hearing until March 14.

Minister suspends superintendent of examination centre

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat conducted a surprise visit to examination centres in Daska to inspect the examination process.

He checked the attendance and identification of staff as per the duty roster.

During the inspection, he suspended the superintendent of an examination centre at Government Graduate College, Daska, over a suspicious mobile chat related to candidate assistance and ordered an inquiry against him.

At another examination centre in Daska, the minister issued a warning to the superintendent for starting the exam late, stressing that strict action would be taken if exams were not conducted on time in the future.

Special squads are actively monitoring examination centres across all districts, with a particular focus on sensitive centres, said Hayat.

He emphasised that no leniency would be shown to any staff member found negligent in their duties.

Pakistan, Iran to enhance cooperation in health sector: Salman

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is focusing all her attention on improving the health sector, and cooperation with Iran will further strengthen bilateral relations.

He expressed these views during his visit to the Iranian Consulate on Friday, where he was welcomed by Iranian Consul General Mehran Mowahid. The minister presented a bouquet and sweets to the Consul General as a gesture of goodwill.

The meeting focused on enhancing collaboration in pediatric heart surgery, facilities for Iranian students in Pakistan, and other matters of mutual interest. The Health Minister highlighted Punjab's priorities in the health sector on behalf of the Chief Minister.

"Pakistan shares deep neighborly, educational, and spiritual ties with Iran. We admire Iran's excellent healthcare system and welcome their cooperation in pediatric heart surgeries in

Punjab," said Khawaja Salman Rafique. He added that under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, Pakistan is planning land and sea routes for enhanced connectivity with Iran.

The minister welcomed Iran's proposal for collaboration in pediatric heart surgeries, stating that Iranian surgeons will operate on children in Punjab suffering from congenital heart defects. He noted that Pakistan had recently hosted UK-based cardiac surgeons who successfully operated on nine children in Faisalabad. Dr. Ali Razaq has been designated as the focal person for this initiative.

Speaking on the occasion, Iranian Consul General Mehran Mowahid Far praised the Punjab government's efforts for public welfare and acknowledged Punjab's development under CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif's leadership. He expressed gratitude to the Punjab government for training individuals traveling to Iran for religious pil-

grimages.

He further stated that Iran has prepared an advanced cardiac surgery package for Punjab, expressing confidence that under PM Shehbaz Sharif and CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif, polio eradication efforts in Pakistan will gain momentum. He also announced plans to hold medical training seminars in Mashhad and Qom and assured continued support for Iranian students studying in Pakistan.

Chairman of the Chief Minister's Task Force, Dr. Farqad Alamgir, stressed that instead of sending every child to Iran for surgery, Iranian pediatric heart surgeons should perform procedures in Pakistan.

CEO of Punjab Health Initiative Management Company, Dr. Ali Razaq, stated that his organization is the executing agency for the Chief Minister's Children's Heart Surgery Program.

The meeting was attended by Special Secretary Development Zeeshan Shabir Rana, Chairman

CM Murad directs expedited completion of KB feeder, coastal highway projects

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a joint meeting of the Irrigation Department and Works & Services Department at the CM House, where he reviewed the progress of key development projects across the province and directed the Works Department to prepare a plan for dualizing the road from Jamshoro Phatak (railway crossing) to Hyderabad via Kotri Barrage.

Provincial Ministers Nasir Shah, Jam Khan Shoro, Ali Hassan Zardari, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Chairman P & D Najam Shah, Secretary Works Mohammad Ali Khoso, Secretary Irrigation Zarif Khoro, Zubair Channa of P & D, and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

While reviewing the K-IV water supply project, CM Sindh discussed the restoration of the KB Feeder and Keenjhar Lake, a Rs39.9 billion project, with the federal government contributing Rs19.4 billion. To date, Rs4 billion has been spent, and the Chief Minister urged authorities to expedite the work.

Emphasizing the importance of infrastructure and water projects for Sindh's development, Murad

Ali Shah directed all departments to ensure the effective execution and timely completion of initiatives aimed at improving public services across the province.

The Chief Minister was briefed on 799 ongoing development schemes under the Works & Services Department, with a total cost of Rs. 166 billion. He stressed the need for timely completion and high-quality execution, instructing officials to finalize all ongoing projects before the end of the financial year.

The CM stated that for the fiscal year 2024-25, the government has not introduced any new schemes but is focusing on completing existing projects. Of the Rs55 billion allocated this year, Rs. 37 billion has already been utilized, while the throw-forward liability stands at Rs111 billion. Major Infrastructure & Water Projects: Murad Ali Shah also reviewed the Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) system, a project initially estimated at Rs115.4 billion under the federal Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) but revised to Rs172 billion.

He directed officials to obtain approval for the project from the

Central Development Working Party (CDWP) and noted that no expenditure had been made so far. This year's allocation is Rs100 million.

Additionally, he instructed the dualization of the Jamshoro Phatak Road up to Kotri Barrage, calling it an essential infrastructure upgrade. "The construction of this road would accommodate light traffic in Hyderabad city," he said.

Discussing the Coastal Highway the CM was informed that the 36-kilometer extension of the Coastal Highway is facing cost overruns. The project, initially estimated at Rs16.2 billion, has seen its revised cost rise to Rs29.9 billion. The project has been allocated Rs3 billion, with Rs. 1 billion already released. However, the Steering Committee overseeing the project has raised issues with the bidding process.

A significant portion of the escalated cost, Rs6.851 billion, is slated to be covered by the Sindh government, with Rs6.5 billion already available as a matching grant.

The Steering Committee has mandated that the Works Department to address the bidding process. The CM directed the chairman of P&D to resolve the outstanding issue and resume the work.

Gang leader involved in forgery and fraud arrested

KARACHI (APP): In a joint operation, Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested a key suspect involved in a forgery and fraud racket from Gulistan-e-Johar.

The suspect, identified as Haroon Latif Mughal alias Raja, was caught with fake documents, including fake letters from sensitive agencies, fake NOCs, forged ID card verifications, counterfeit copies of paid bank challans, and numerous SIM cards from different mobile networks, said a news release on Friday.

FIA arrests three human traffickers

LAHORE (APP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Lahore Zone intensified its crackdown on human trafficking, arresting three suspects, including a notorious fugitive, in raids conducted in Lahore and Sialkot.

According to FIA spokesperson, the arrested suspects were identified as Qamar-ul-Zaman, Muhammad Anwar and Waseem Akram. They were involved in visa fraud and deceiving innocent citizens by promising to send them abroad.

Qamar-ul-Zaman, a notorious human trafficker, had been wanted since 2023 by the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Lahore.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION DOMEL DISTRICT BANNU

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Tehsil Municipal Administration Domel Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites bids from eligible firms/bidders in accordance with KPRA Procurement Rules 2014. The following schemes will be executed out of DDIADP No. 240319 Fund (2024-25).

S.#	Name of Scheme	E/Cost (M)	02% Earnest Money in (Rs)	Last date and time for submission of tender documents	Date and time of Technical bid opening	Period of completion
1	Solarization of existing pressure in area of Tehsil Domel	2.953	59060	25-03-2025 At 12:00 PM	25-03-2025 At 02:00 PM	As per work order
2	Construction of over head water tanks in the area of Tehsil Domel	5.358	107160	25-03-2025 At 12:00 PM	25-03-2025 At 02:00 PM	-do-
3	Instt: of Pressure Pumps and Solarization of Pressure Pumps in the area of Tehsil Domel	18.737	374740	25-03-2025 At 12:00 PM	25-03-2025 At 02:00 PM	-do-
4	Construction of Protections Walls, retaining wall and Culverts in the area of Tehsil Domel	13.214	264280	25-03-2025 At 12:00 PM	25-03-2025 At 02:00 PM	-do-
5	Construction of Community Center in the area of Tehsil Domel	2.450	49000	25-03-2025 At 12:00 PM	25-03-2025 At 02:00 PM	-do-
6	Instt: of Solar Road Lights in the area of Tehsil Domel	7.284	145680	25-03-2025 At 12:00 PM	25-03-2025 At 02:00 PM	-do-

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- As per notification No. SOG/LG/7-1/Miscellaneous/2025 dated 20.01.2025 and letter No. SOG/LG/7-1/Miscellaneous/2025 dated 21.01.2025, of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Local Government Election & Rural Development Department Section Officer (General). Tender Documents/detail of bids can be obtained from TMA Domel on cash payment of Rs. 0.03% on estimate cost (non-refundable) before 01 day tendering opening date during office hours after publication in the daily National Newspapers.
- Only eligible registered contractor can obtain tenders form.
- All the enlisted contractors of Local Council Board shall offer their bids by filling rates manually w.e.f the date of publication.
- Any tender or offer of works made by any enlisted contractors without filling bids manually shall be considered as null and void henceforth.
- The following documents must be attached with the bid such as (i) 2% earnest money in shape of original call deposit in the name of TMO, TMA Domel from scheduled banks for each scheme in a separate envelope highlighting name of work (written over the envelope).
- Technical proposal should accompany the following:
 - (i) National Identity Card (CNIC Photocopy)
 - (ii) Copies of valid Registration with PEC, NTN & KPRA.
 - (iii) Enlistment copy of Local Council Board for the year 2024-25.
 - (iv) Tax return certificate for the latest year.
 - (v) Any other documents to support your bid.
 - (vi) Last Three (03) Year Bank Statements.
- Sealed bids must be sent through courier service / Post Office before or on dated fixed for opening and bid will be opened on the same date at 02:00 PM in the presence of bidders / their representative by the tender committee. By hand submission of tender documents will not be accepted and such tender will not be entertained.
- Bidder who submitted their bids without a valid call deposit will be barred from participating in bidding process as per Govt. Policy.
- The tender shall be processed according to "above / below system" based on market rate system.
- The engineer estimate is framed on the current MRS 2024 (1st Bi-annual).
- Tender forms and BOQs must be signed by the original contractor.
- The successful contractors have to pay stamp duty along with all applicable Provincial / Federal Government Taxes issued from time to time.
- Bid security of some or all the bidders will be retained by the procuring entity till approval of tender / bid validity period.
- Complete bids must reach to TMA Domel on or before the fixed date as per instruction of the Provincial Government.
- Incomplete/conditional or telegraphic tenders shall not be accepted.
- The Department will not be bound to provide any machinery/testing laboratory and the total cost on it will be borne by the contractors themselves.
- Any bidders who provide incorrect information shall be disqualified.
- In case of bids become tie the award of contract shall be decided through evaluation which shall be bounded as final.
- The bidders should be enlisted with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue authority, as per KPRA rules.
- Other terms & conditions / guidelines, if required can be obtained from TMA Domel at any working day during official hours.
- In case of Solar Project, only those contractors bid shall be entertained, whose Firms have been awarded specified code of Solar and only approved / Registered Company Solar material will be installed.
- The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security to the extent of 2% of Engineer Estimate only. The contractor quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers Estimated 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 TMA Domel 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 Engineers Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers 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 TMA Domel and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. It is to clarify that additional security will be provided in shape of call deposit in name of TMO TMA Domel After commencement of work by successful bidders the procuring entity may replace the additional security with a bank guarantee of same amount from the scheduled Bank Furthermore, all other terms & conditions / regulation notified by the KPRA vide notification No. S.R.O(14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated 10-05-2022/6058-71 in letter and spirit.

Note:- Work orders of the aforementioned schemes will be issued to the contractor subject to release / availability of fund.

Tehsil Officer (I&S), TMA Domel
Tehsil Municipal Officer, TMA Domel

INF(P) 961/25

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Women play essential role in country's development

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan on Friday said that women played essential role in the development of any society and a prosperous and balanced society was unimaginable without them.

In his special message issued on the occasion of International Women's Day here, he said that this day was

dedicated to recognize the abilities, sacrifices and contributions of women.

He said, "Islam is the greatest protector of women's rights, granting them honor, equality and equal rights fourteen hundred years ago." According to Islamic teachings, women were fully encouraged and given complete freedom to play a positive role in all walks of life, he added.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL FOR REHABILITATION OF DISABLED PERSON (PCRPD) DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE, SPECIAL EDUCATION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

CORRIGENDUM

Reference Tender Notice INF(P)509/25 published in the Daily AAJ dated 13-02-2025 and subsequent corrigendum No. INF(P)764/2025 dated 20-02-2025. Bid documents have been uploaded on KP-PPRA and Social Welfare Department official website.

The Section-IV and Section-V of the bid document has been amended. The updated version of Bid Solicitation Documents (BSDs) may be downloaded from KP-PPRA and Social Welfare Department official website and can also be obtained from office of the Director Social Welfare/Secretary PCRPD.

The closing date: maybe read as 20-03-2025 instead of 11-03-2025.

INF(P) 974/25

Chairman Purchase Committee
Provincial Council Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (PCRPD)
Jamrud Road Opposite Islamia College Gate Peshawar
Phone No. 091-9224219

CS chairs high-level meeting on energy and power sector

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, presided over a high-level meeting at his office on Friday to review key issues related to the Energy and Power Department of the province. The meeting focused on the status of energy projects, provincial financial entitlements, and the implementation of decisions taken in the Council of Common Interest (CCI). Secretary Energy and Power Department, officials

from Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO), and officials from relevant institutions attended the meeting. During the session, authorities provided a comprehensive briefing on the province's outstanding arrears, ongoing hydropower projects, and the legislative matters concerning power generation that require attention at the federal level. The meeting also deliberated on crucial issues to be presented before the

Out-of-Box Committee, which included transfer of WAPDA hydropower stations to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; financing of WAPDA power projects from PSDP; and announcement of a second interim arrangement for the electricity generation tariff. Additionally, the meeting reviewed the status of World Bank-funded projects in the province. Special attention was given to the province's constitutional rights under Articles 154, 158, 161(1)(a), 161(1)(b), and

172(3) of the Constitution of Pakistan. Discussions also covered aspects of the Petroleum Policy 2012, and rights related to federal excise duty and windfall levy on crude oil. Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah directed the authorities of the Energy and Power Department to develop well-structured proposals and recommendations for consideration by the Federal Government, ensuring that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's constitutional entitlements are effectively represented.



PESHAWAR: Faithfuls offering first Friday prayer during the holy month of Ramadan. — INP photo

Providing relief to public in Ramadan priority: Qasim

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Social Welfare, Qasim Ali Shah, has stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is determined to provide maximum relief to the public during the holy month of Ramadan. On the government's directives, the district administration has launched strict actions

against profiteers and hoarders to ensure that essential food items are available to the public at reasonable and government-fixed prices.

He made it clear that no one would be allowed to exploit the public, and indiscriminate actions would continue in this regard. While addressing a meeting held in Peshawar regarding the availability of

food items at fair prices and the prevention of artificial inflation during Ramadan, the provincial minister instructed the concerned authorities to inspect markets daily and take immediate action against shopkeepers violating the law.

He emphasized that ensuring the supply of quality and affordable goods to the public is the government's responsibility, and

artificial price hikes will not be tolerated. He further stated that, in line with the provincial government's directives, the district administration is conducting a mega crackdown in various markets, taking strict measures against profiteers to prevent difficulties for the public during Ramadan. The meeting was also attended by relevant district officials.

PHC grants protective bail to district Nazim Attock

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted protective bail district Nazim Attock, Major (Retd) Tahir Sadiq till 17th April and directing him to appear before the relevant court, on Thursday.

The case was heard by a two-member bench of the Peshawar High Court, comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Sabit

Ullah. The counsel Alam Khan Adenzai, informed the court that Tahir Sadiq was abroad and has now returned to the country and is present before the court.

Justice Sahibzada Asadullah inquired about the case in which Tahir Sadiq is nominated. The counsel replied that although Tahir Sadiq was abroad, a case was registered against him, and it would be better if the court grants him bail.

The Assistant Attorney General, Dawlat Khan, informed the court that Tahir Sadiq has returned to Pakistan and has not been arrested by anyone.

Justice Sahibzada Asadullah stated that the court has already disposed of the previous application, and now the applicant has submitted a new plea. The court grants protective bail to the applicant, directing him to appear before the relevant court.

Floodlights tournaments to be held across KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continues its tradition of organizing thrilling floodlights tournaments across various locations in the province during the holy month of Ramadan.

As part of these events, a floodlights cricket tournament will be held at Bisaki Ground, Dera Ismail Khan, with Member National Assembly Faisal Amin Khan Gandapur and Mayor Dera Ismail Khan Umar Amin Khan Gandapur officiating the opening ceremony.

Similarly, the floodlights cricket tournament at Hayatabad Sports Complex, in Peshawar, is set to begin on March 12, featuring 24 of Peshawar's top teams.

The opening ceremony will be graced by Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jihan, Sports Secretary Muhammad Ziaul-Haq and Director General of Sports Abdul Nasir Khan. The tournament final will take place on March 25.

In Buner district, a floodlights cricket tournament will kick off at College Ground today, on March 8, with Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jihan as the chief guest.

Furthermore, the floodlights football tournament at Tehmas Khan Football Stadium in Peshawar, will commence on March 13.

The opening ceremony will be attended by the Provincial Minister for Sports, the Sports Secretary and the DG Sports, while the final match is scheduled for March 20.

Seminar on nursing ethics held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A seminar on nursing ethics was held at the Khyber Medical University Institute of Nursing Sciences, Peshawar, where topics such as euthanasia, organ transplantation, artificial intelligence in the medical field, surrogacy, and harassment against nurses were discussed.

Five groups presented posters and research materials during the seminar.

The keynote speaker, Syed Bakhtiar Ali Shah, highlighted the principles of nursing ethics and decision-making, emphasizing the importance of ethics in professional duties. The seminar saw active participation from students who engaged in meaningful discussions.

A group led by Sher Muhammad Hazara prepared posters, research articles, and brochures on the topic of euthanasia, covering its definition, types, and ethical and legal aspects. Participants showed great interest in the posters, asked questions, and shared their views.

Other groups presented research-based presentations on organ transplantation, artificial intelligence, surrogacy, and harassment against nurses, all emphasizing the significance of ethics in the nursing profession.

BoK reports Rs3.61bn profit

Aziz Buner

PESHAWAR: The Bank of Khyber (BoK) posted a profit after tax of Rs3.61 billion for the year ended 31 December 2024, reflecting a slight increase from Rs3.48 billion in 2023. With steady profitability and a dividend payout, the bank continues to strengthen its financial position amid rising operational costs.

The net markup/interest income rose to Rs16.49 billion, up from Rs13.89 billion in the previous year. The increase was driven by higher

up/return/interest earned, which reached Rs 65.22 billion, compared to Rs 59.07 billion in 2023.

The bank's Board of Directors, in its 198th meeting on 5 March 2025, recommended a final cash dividend of Rs 1.70 per share (17%) for the year. No bonus shares or right shares were announced.

Non-markup/interest income stood at Rs 1.77 billion, with Rs 529 million earned from foreign exchange income and Rs 177 million in gains on securities.

Meanwhile, operating expenses climbed to Rs

10.53 billion from Rs 8.56 billion, reflecting higher costs. The profit before taxation rose to Rs 8.13 billion, compared to Rs 6.70 billion in 2023. The bank paid Rs 4.51 billion in taxes, up from Rs 3.22 billion in the previous year.

The basic and diluted earnings per share increased to Rs 3.12, compared to Rs 3.01 in 2023.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the bank will be held on 28 March 2025 at BOK Tower, Peshawar. The share transfer books will remain closed from 21 March to 28 March 2025.

Plantation drive at NIPA/PARD/PPSA held



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A plantation drive was successfully conducted at the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA), Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARD), and Provincial Public Services Academy (PPSA) under the leadership of Director General Capt. (Retd.) Usman Gul. The event emphasized the critical role of trees in sustaining human life and preserving the environment.

Addressing the gathering, Director General Capt. (Retd.) Usman Gul underscored the significance of afforestation in combating climate change in Pakistan.

He highlighted that the campus currently houses 4,500 trees, and under his administration, more than 1,000 trees have been planted over the past three years. He further announced that approximately 300 trees would be planted this year as part of the ongoing green initiative.

The plantation drive witnessed active participation from faculty members and officers in training. Chief Instructor of the Senior Management Course (SMC), Tariq Bakhtiar, Chief Instructor of the Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC), Dr. Muqem-ul-Islam, and chief instructors from PPSA and PARD also

planted trees on this occasion, reinforcing their commitment to environmental conservation.

Trainee officers of the 37th Senior Management Course (SMC), the 42nd Domain-Specific Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC), and the 93rd PMS Pre-Service Course of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated in the event. Faculty members and chief instructors from the three training institutes were also in attendance.

The plantation drive reflects the institutions' dedication to sustainability and aligns with national efforts to tackle climate challenges through reforestation and environmental preservation.

White Coat ceremony welcomes new MBBS, BDS students at PMC

PESHAWAR (APP): Renowned health expert and educationist, Prof. Dr. Najibul Haq, while emphasizing the importance of professional competence and ethical values, urged students to align their personal vision with the institution's vision for meaningful progress in the medical field. He highlighted the role of purpose, commitment and character building in achieving success. He was addressing the White Coat Ceremony at Peshawar Medical College (PMC), held to welcome the new batch of MBBS and BDS students on Friday. The ceremony, attended by students, faculty members, and parents, marked a significant milestone as the students took the professional oath, symbolizing their commitment to ethical medical practice and compassionate patient care. Addressing the gathering, Prof. Dr. Hafeez Ur Rahman, Dean, PMC, encouraged students to cultivate an attitude of gratitude and uphold the dignity of the medical profession. He stressed the need for dedication and compassion in serving humanity. Other distinguished speakers included Prof. Dr. Ayesha Abdullah, Vice Dean, PMC, Prof. Dr. Mohammed Aman Khan, Principal, PMC and Prof. Dr. Mohammed Raza, Principal, PDC, who shared words of encouragement and inspiration with the students.

Newly appointed ICP Vice Chancellor welcomed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The teaching staff of Islamia Collegiate School warmly welcomed the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of Islamia College, Peshawar, Professor Dr. Ziaul Haq, today.

A meeting was held between the Teaching Staff Association, Islamia Collegiate School and the new Vice Chancellor, where President Kafel Ahmad Khalil presented a



bouquet of flowers to Professor Dr. Ziaul Haq. Teaching Staff Association General

Secretary Dr. Muhammad Shehzad extended an invitation to the Vice Chancellor to visit Islamia

Collegiate School, which was graciously accepted. The Vice Chancellor promised to visit the school soon to receive a briefing on its activities and achievements.

The cabinet members of the Teaching Staff Association thanked the Vice Chancellor and expressed their good wishes, hoping that under his leadership, Islamia College would make rapid progress and achieve new heights.

Empowering Minority Entrepreneurs A call to action for the government of KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The recent visit by Haroon Sarab Diyal, Chairman of the All Pakistan Hindu Rights Movement, and Rajni Mohan, Vice Chairperson, to the Smart Karobar Business Training Center in Peshawar marked a significant milestone in empowering Pakistan's minority community.

Inspired by the China Model and Minority Entrepreneurs Training Associations Inc, USA which has successfully promoted economic development and social inclusion through small-scale industries and business training centers, this initiative aims to provide business training and support to minority entrepreneurs, promoting economic development and social inclusion.

During the visit, 60 instruments of 60 small home-based businesses were observed, valued between Rupees 20,000 to 200,000, requiring training periods ranging from 15 days to 3 months. This presents an ideal opportunity for the provincial and federal governments to fund and promote local businesses and skilled citizens, fostering economic growth and social inclusion. The initiative can be easily replicated to support poor and

middle-class youth and women.

To further empower minority entrepreneurs, we urge the Minority Affairs Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (GOKP), to take concrete steps.

We demand that the GOKP establish similar business training centers across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, providing comprehensive support to minority entrepreneurs.

Collaboration with organizations like Smart Karobar Business (SKB) is also essential to leverage their expertise and resources in empowering minority-owned businesses. Additionally, providing

access to resources, including capital, networks, and markets, will help minority entrepreneurs overcome common obstacles and become self-sufficient.

By supporting minority entrepreneurs, the GOKP can play a vital role in fostering a more inclusive and prosperous society. Economic empowerment is key to promoting social inclusion and reducing poverty among marginalized communities.

We urge the Minority Affairs Department, GOKP, to take proactive steps in supporting minority entrepreneurs and promoting their economic empowerment.

Islamia College's economic revival plan Commissioner directs reclaiming land for commercial use

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: To address the financial challenges of the historic Islamia College and make it a self-sustaining institution, a decision has been made to reclaim and commercially utilize the college's valuable land in Peshawar, Charsadda, and Swabi. This follows the successful recovery and commercial use of 55 kanals of prime land in Charsadda.

A high-level meeting was chaired by Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsud, with the participation of officials from district administrations of Peshawar, Charsadda, and Swabi, the University of Peshawar, Islamia College administration, Peshawar police, and the revenue department. During the meeting, the commissioner was briefed on the Islamia College properties in these districts, which

have been leased out at extremely low rates.

One of the key decisions includes the redevelopment of 14 kanals of Islamia College's land in Khyber Bazaar, Peshawar, where 222 shops and offices currently exist in a deteriorated state.

These structures, deemed hazardous, will be demolished to construct a commercial tower, generating substantial revenue for the

college.

Furthermore, in Charsadda's Tangi and Tarnab areas, 4,500 acres of valuable college land, previously leased at an undervalued rate of PKR 4,000 per year, will be reclaimed and leased at the current market rate of PKR 65,000 per year. This will increase the college's annual revenue from PKR 20 million to PKR 2.9 billion. Similarly, 4,000 acres of prime land in Swabi's

Hund area will also be retrieved from illegal occupants and leased at market rates.

Additionally, on Peshawar's University Road, a 28-kanal historic property known as "Burj Hari Singh Nalwah," once used as the residence and governor's house of former Sikh governor Hari Singh, will be partially reclaimed. Under the Peshawar Uplift Program, the property's front section will be restored to its original grandeur, generating income for Islamia College.

Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud instructed the district administrations of Peshawar, Charsadda, and Swabi to complete the initial groundwork and present their reports by Monday. He reiterated that all illegally occupied government lands would be reclaimed and handed over to institutions to ensure financial sustainability.





In brief

Traffic personnel killed in mishap F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: A traffic police personnel was hit and killed by a carelessly driven truck on Peshawar-Karachi Highway in Lakki Marwat district, said police on Friday. A police official said Constable Siraj Khan was performing duty on the busy highway to regulate traffic when a truck loaded with cement bags coming from DI Khan side ran over him. He said that the cop was seriously injured and died on the spot. He said that the accident occurred near Darra Pezu town in the limits of Shaheed Haibat Ali Khan police station. The official said that the body of the deceased cop was taken to the police lines for funeral prayers after completing medico legal formalities at the District Headquarters Hospital at Tajazai. An alert police contingent presented a final salute to their colleague who lost his life in the line of duty. Deputy Commissioner Zeeshan Abdullah and police officials placed floral wreaths on his coffin and prayed for his high ranks in the final abode. Later the deceased cop was laid to rest at a graveyard in his ancestral Tajazai Village. The official said that police had impounded the truck and registered a case against the driver who escaped the scene, under relevant sections of law.

2000 kg palm oil confiscated F.P. Report

MARDAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority (KP-FS&HFA) conducted a joint operation and seized a vehicle supplying 2000 kg of open palm at Bakhshali Interchange Gaddar, on Friday. The action was taken based on a report received, according to which the palm oil was being supplied to a Namco manufacturing factory. The use of open palm oil is a violation of food safety laws and may be hazardous to public health. Legal action will be taken against the involved parties and fine will be imposed under the KP-FS&HFA Act. The district administration is committed to ensuring that citizens have access to quality and safe food and strict action will continue against the sale of substandard and illegal items.

DPC meeting held F.P. Report

LARKANA: Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Larkana Nasir Aftab Pathan for five districts of the Range including Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Larkana, Kashmore at Kandakot, Qamber Shahdadkot, on Friday. After conducting an interview with the ASIs and Head Constables of the range presented under the leadership of DIGP Larkana and after checking the complete service record, further promotion orders were issued. DIG congratulated the officials and officers who were promoted to the next grade in DPC expressed hope that they will dedicate the services of the police department to the public and will strive to ensure the security situation. Meanwhile, Sindh High Court Bar Association (SHCBA) Larkana, staged a sit-in protest against the illegal construction of 6 canals from the Indus River and against the 26th constitutional amendment and the PECA Act, they raised slogans against the construction of the canals, on this occasion president of SHCBA Larkana Advocate Athar Abbas Solangi, Vice president Nooruddin Mahesar, Advocate Ashiq Dahamrah and others protested.

Jl expresses concern over deteriorating law and order in KP

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The worsening law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is alarming, and the recent terrorist incidents in Bannu and Akora Khattak are condemnable and unacceptable. These views were expressed by Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (North) chief Inayatullah Khan during a press conference at the Chakdara press club.

He emphasized that ensuring law and order is the responsibility of the provincial government, yet its priorities lie elsewhere. Jamaat-e-Islami provincial vice-emirs Bakhtiar Maani and former MPA Muhammad Amin, JI provincial general secretary Haleem Bacha, former MNA Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, former provincial minister Shah Raz Khan, and provincial information secretary Engineer Yaqoob-ur-Rehman were also present at the press conference.

Inayat stated that it was deeply concerning that neither hujras (community gathering places) nor mosques were safe anymore. "Raising voices against this situation is a moral, political, and religious duty", he added. Inayatullah Khan affirmed that Jamaat-e-Islami would represent the public's concerns regarding security, as increasing lawlessness and unemployment are pushing the youth towards negative influences.

Speaking about the tax issue in Malakand Division, Inayatullah Khan revealed that preparations for imposing taxes in the region were underway, with tax offices being established. He pointed out that the tax exemption for Malakand Division is set to expire on June 30, adding that Jamaat-e-Islami will not allow its implementation under any circumstances and will not abandon the people of the region. He announced that

Jamaat-e-Islami has formed a committee under the leadership of Shah Raz Khan to resist the tax imposition. The party plans to unite political leadership across all parties and convey their collective stance to Parliament. He reiterated that Jamaat-e-Islami has always been a significant political force in Malakand and remains so today. Although the party is not currently in Parliament, it secured the second-highest number of votes in the region.

Inayatullah Khan further announced that after Eid, Jamaat-e-Islami will convene a stakeholders' conference in Malakand Division, inviting lawyers, traders' associations, journalists, and skilled professionals to discuss the issue. He also hinted at organizing a grand peace march and a national movement if necessary. He firmly stated that under no circumstances would Jamaat-e-Islami allow the imposition of taxes in Malakand Division.

Balambat Irrigation Channel reopened

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: In a major development for the agricultural sector, water was released into the Balambat Irrigation Channel after nearly three years of extensive construction and repair. This long-awaited restoration has brought immense relief and joy to local farmers and residents, as it is expected to improve irrigation for crops and orchards while also replenishing dried-up springs and wells.

According to Engineer Shahid Ali Khan, Executive Engineer (XEN) of the Irrigation Department, Lower Dir, water has been released into the Balambat Canal from Kunai Khwar on an emergency basis to serve the public interest. "This initiative will not only ensure the irrigation of thousands of acres of farmland but also help alleviate the region's drinking water shortage by refilling wells and natural springs", Mr Shahid added.

He explained that the construction work faced delays due to a blockage near Akhagram Head caused by floodwaters.



However, he assured that as soon as weather conditions become favorable, the remaining construction will be completed swiftly. Once the final phase of the project is finished, water from the Panjkora River will be released into the Balambat Canal, further enhancing irrigation facilities and benefiting thousands of farmers in the region.

He further highlighted that the Balambat Irrigation Channel spans an extensive 76 kilometers and has the capacity to irrigate approximately 11,363 acres of farmland. The reopening of this vital irrigation channel is expected to boost agricultural productivity, improve local livelihoods, and contribute to food security in the area. Local residents and farmers have expressed

their gratitude for the restoration of water flow, emphasizing that the revival of the irrigation system will lead to a prosperous agricultural season.

The successful rehabilitation of the Balambat Irrigation Channel is being regarded as a crucial milestone in the region's agricultural and water management efforts. Authorities remain committed to ensuring the smooth functioning of the canal and addressing any remaining challenges to maximize its long-term benefits.

With the completion of the remaining construction work, the system is expected to operate at full capacity, strengthening irrigation infrastructure and improving water accessibility for both agriculture and domestic use.

Financial embezzlement disclosed at Govt Girls School Dabkot

F.P. Report

WANA: A large-scale corruption scandal has been uncovered at Government Girls High School in Dabkot, South Waziristan. According to sources, an amount of Rs470,000, allocated for the school's renovation, has allegedly been embezzled with the collusion of the Lower Waziristan Education Department. In reality, only one classroom has been repainted.

Students, speaking on condition of anonymity, revealed that the school

lacks basic facilities such as clean drinking water, electricity, and washrooms. Additionally, due to the absence of a watchman and Class-IV staff, both students and teachers face security risks.

Parents have accused the administration of hiring unqualified private individuals—who failed eighth and fifth grade—as teachers instead of appointing permanent government teachers. As a result, the education of middle school students is severely affected.

Furthermore, sources disclosed that valuable

equipment from the school's computer lab has mysteriously disappeared, yet no action has been taken at any level. Local residents and parents have demanded immediate action from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Department and the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to address the corruption and lack of facilities at Government Girls High School Dabkot. They urge authorities to punish those responsible and ensure a better learning environment for students.

Empower, elevate, and accelerate change

Marya Haleema

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions—whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political. This year, under the theme "Accelerate Action," the focus is on driving meaningful change, breaking barriers, and advancing gender equality with urgency and commitment. It is a call to move beyond discussions and take concrete steps toward empowering women in all spheres of life.

In our society, women are respected and honored, but it is also a reality that in the same society, women face all kinds of violence. If a daughter raises her voice, if a wife speaks up, or if a sister demands her rights, or if a mother expresses herself, she is sometimes reduced from being a symbol of paradise to merely a burden. When we talk about

women's rights, we are not referring to those who already know how to claim and secure their rights, like the women in the Aurat March. We are talking about those women who are not given the right to speak or who do not even realize they have this right. The irony is that those who oppress women.

Examples have been set: when a daughter enters the house, one should stand in respect. Hazrat Ayesha (RA) was made one of the greatest scholars, receiving such profound religious and intellectual education that the leading scholars of her time sought her opinion. Look at the honor of Hazrat Khadija (RA); even in the era of ignorance, she had the right to choose the Prophet (PBUH) as her life partner.

Yet, those who claim to follow the same religion often treat their daughters as inferior to their sons. Sons are made heirs, while daughters are raised for a few years and then married off, as if a burden has been lifted. Sisters are not given their rightful share

in inheritance, wives are treated as mere possessions, and mothers are sometimes seen as burdens—neglected, left unacknowledged, or even abandoned in old age homes.

In Pakistan, the status of women exists in dual extremes—on one hand, they are praised as symbols of honor, and on the other, they face discrimination and suppression in their everyday lives. A woman is celebrated as a mother, yet when she grows old, she is often neglected or sent to an old age home. She is taught patience and sacrifice as a wife, but rarely given the same respect and consideration in return. Daughters are cherished in words, yet in practice, their education, choices, and inheritance rights are often compromised. The contradiction between cultural expectations and the reality of women's treatment remains a significant challenge.

Despite religious and ethical teachings that emphasize equality and justice, patriarchal traditions continue to dictate the lives of many women. A girl's ability

to think and express herself is discouraged from a young age, ensuring she grows into a woman who hesitates to demand her rights. The concept of honor is unfairly tied to a woman's choices and actions, while men are seldom held to the same standards. Women who step beyond societal norms—whether to pursue careers, voice opinions, or fight for their rightful place—are often met with resistance, labeled as rebellious, or shamed into silence.

Real change will only come when respect for women is not conditional—when they are valued not just as daughters, wives, or mothers but as individuals with their own rights, dreams, and aspirations. A progressive society is one where women do not have to struggle for the basic dignity and fairness that should be theirs by default.

In Pakistani society, women are often placed on a pedestal in theory but struggle for basic rights in reality. They are expected to be obedient daughters, sacrificing wives, and selfless moth-

ers, yet when they assert themselves, they are seen as stepping out of their "traditional" roles. A woman who seeks education beyond a certain level is questioned, a wife who asks for respect in marriage is considered demanding, and a mother who wishes for financial security in her old age is sometimes seen as a burden. The cycle of inequality continues because it is woven into the fabric of everyday life—normalized to the extent that many women accept it as their fate.

Cultural traditions often override the very religious teachings that emphasize justice and fairness for women. Islam granted daughters a rightful share in inheritance, yet many families still consider giving property to a daughter an act of generosity rather than obligation. Women were given the right to consent in marriage, yet countless girls are forced into unions without their say. The same society that praises Hazrat Khadija (RA) for her strength and independence often discourages women from finan-

cial independence today. Selective interpretation of values has created an environment where women are taught to serve rather than to lead, to compromise rather than to challenge.

A woman's worth should not be measured by how much she endures but by the contributions she makes, the dreams she pursues, and the rights she holds. Until society recognizes this, progress will remain an illusion, and respect for women will be conditional—granted only when they conform to rigid expectations rather than when they stand as individuals with equal rights.

As we celebrate International Women's Day under the theme "Accelerate Action," let us commit to transforming words into impactful change. True progress lies in creating opportunities, amplifying voices, and ensuring that every woman has the support and resources to thrive. By working together, we can build a more inclusive and equitable world where women's contributions are acknowledged, valued, and celebrated every day.



LOWER DIR: Students of a public sector high school attempt their annual exam paper on a sunny day at Talash here on Friday. Schools' internal exams are in progress these days. — F.P. photo

Add DG FDA assumes charge F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Under the orders of the Punjab Government, Qaiser Abbas Rind has taken charge as Additional Director General (DG) Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA). Earlier, he was serving as Deputy Secretary in the Forest, Fisheries and Wildlife Department Punjab.

Immediately after assuming charge, he met Director General Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Muhammad Asif Chaudhry and discussed official and administrative matters. Director IT Yasir Ijaz Chatta and other officers were also present on the occasion. FDA Director General, while welcoming his appointment by the Punjab Government, said that full advantage will be taken of his services to further improve the quality of the services of the authority.

DG informed the newly appointed Additional Director Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) about the administrative and development goals and said that taking forward measures regarding urban development and prompt service delivery are among the priorities, for the implementation of which the Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) team will remain more active and the ADG is an important part of this team. He asked the ADG that special attention should be focused on immediate resolution of public issues and complaints because it is our mission to gain the full trust of the public by making this institution complaint-free.

The new Additional Director General FDA Qaiser Abbas Rind expressed his determination that no effort will be spared in achieving the set goals and to make the FDA a stable and strong institution, he will perform official duties diligently with the entire team. In this regard, no detail will be left unturned in making administrative and reform measures effective.

Two killed in separate mishaps

F.P. Report

BUNER: A truck driver named Shamsheer of village Kowga, Buner was died on the spot when the load truck turtled from road at the Nansir marble mine, located in Salarzai after Iftar. The local and rescue team rushed and evacuated the body from the wrecked and shifted to the headquarters hospital.

The body was handed over to the heirs after fulfilling necessary legal and medical procedures. It should be noted that hundreds of natural marbles verities are found in Salarzai area. There are hundreds quarries from where thousands of trucks

are loaded daily and supplied to different parts of the country.

Sadly, it is also known that for the workers and loaders excavators truck drivers and cleaners who died in Salarzai marble mines, the compensation and treatment law is being not followed and the facilities are not being provided on which the workers, excavator loaders and truck drivers and cleaners pile up complaints to the media after such accidents and the district administration and mines and labor authority also give consolation, but later complaints of inadequate compensation are also brought forward, which the provincial gov-

ernment should take serious notice this time.

Motorcyclist killed: A motorcycle, namely Muhammad Asif died on spot and his colleague Usman seriously injured while collided with a tanker parked on the road side in Shaheedi Sir top, tourism spot in Chaghorzai tehsil Buner after Iftar.

According to reports, the injured have been taken to the hospital and his condition is said to be out of danger, while the funeral of the young boy who died in the accident has been performed in which a large number of relatives and friends and people from the village have participated.

Eight shopkeepers jailed for overpricing

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: As part of a strict price control drive during Ramadan, the Abbottabad district administration on Friday has taken decisive action against profiteering, resulting in the arrest of eight shopkeepers for violating the official rate list.

On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Sanaullah Khan, special teams have been deployed to monitor markets daily, ensuring that essential food items are sold at government-approved rates and addressing public complaints without delay.

Additional Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Arshad Mehmood, led surprise inspections across various markets, where he and his team checked meat, fruit, vegetable, grocery, and poultry vendors. Violators were immediately arrested and now face legal proceedings.

Meanwhile, Additional Assistant Commissioner Havelian, Lubna Iqbal, carried out similar operations in Havelian's marketplaces, imposed heavy fines on shopkeepers found overcharging and instructed them to strictly comply with the designated rates. Further tightening the

grip, Additional Assistant Commissioner Shamim Ullah, accompanied by Livestock Specialist Dr. Sajjad, visited Birot and Bakot markets. A mobile lab was used for on-the-spot milk quality testing, and additional fines were imposed on shops flouting pricing regulations.

Deputy Commissioner Sanaullah Khan has made it clear that no leniency will be shown towards those exploiting the public during Ramadan. Citizens have been urged to report violations to the district administration's price control desk for swift action.

Security alert issued for Quetta

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Authorities in Balochistan have raised alarms over a potential threat as a terrorist group allegedly plans to target high-profile locations and government buildings, particularly in Quetta.

According to the Counter Terrorism Department Balochistan, a letter from the

Deputy Inspector General of Police, dated March 06, 2025, has been issued to the Inspector General of Police Balochistan. The letter warns of plans by the ex-BLA/BLF Alias BIRAS group to execute attacks using two vehicles, Toyota Axio Hybrid color white and Toyota Revvo color black, which have enter the city premises. In the light of

above, all are requested to take extra ordinary precautions and safety measures to prevent such occurrence, the letter said.

The department has urged all entities to implement extraordinary precautions and safety measures. CTD officers have been instructed to prioritize the safety of personnel and conduct a fresh security audit.



EU leaders to hold emergency Ukraine talks

BRUSSELS (AP): European Union leaders plan to hold emergency talks to agree ways to quickly increase their military budgets after the Trump administration signaled that Europe must take care of its own security and also suspended assistance to Ukraine. In just over a month, President Donald Trump has overturned old certainties about US reliability as a security partner, as he embraces Russia and withdraws American support for Ukraine.

Trump ordered a pause to US military supplies to Ukraine as he sought to press President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to engage in negotiations to end the war with Russia, bringing fresh urgency to the EU summit in Brussels. "Europe faces a clear and present danger on a scale that none of us have seen in our adult lifetime. Some of our fundamental assumptions are being undermined to their very core," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen warned in a letter to the EU's 27 leaders, who will consider ways to access more money for defense spending and ease restrictions on it.

But perhaps the biggest challenge for the EU will be to take a united stance at a moment when it's fractured, since much of what the bloc does requires unanimous support. Whatever happens, the meeting is not expected to address Ukraine's most pressing needs. It is not aimed at urgently drumming up more arms and ammunition to fill any supply vacuum created by the US freeze. Nor will it unblock the estimated 183 billion euros (\$196 billion) in frozen Russian assets held in a Belgian clearing house, a pot of ready cash

that could be seized. Ukraine's armed forces, meanwhile, are still battling to slow Russia's advances along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, especially in the eastern Donetsk region. Tens of thousands of soldiers and more than 12,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed. The focus of summit will be finances, and how to set the EU up as quickly as possible to provide for its own security, and help Ukraine, while breaking with decades of dependence on the US defense umbrella. "In view of the increasing threat situation, it is clear to us that Europe ... must now very quickly make very big efforts, very quickly, to strengthen the defense capability of our country and the European continent," Germany's likely next chancellor, Friedrich Merz, said.

The prospective partners in Germany's next government are seeking to loosen the nation's rules on running up debt to allow for higher defense spending. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte - who fears that Russia's armed forces might be capable of launching an attack on another European country by the end of the decade - has warned that US allies will have to spend more than 3% of gross domestic product on their military budgets. The Trump administration is demanding that the Europeans spend as much as 5%, well beyond the NATO benchmark of at least 2%. Seven European allies still fall short of even that target. The US spends around 3.4%, according to NATO figures, and a Pentagon audit that could reduce that is pending.

Von der Leyen has proposed that the EU's executive branch, the European

Commission, raise up to 150 billion euros (\$161 billion) on financial markets that would be loaned to member countries buy new military equipment for themselves, or to send to Ukraine. The commission would also aim to free up funds from other sectors of the bloc's massive long-term budget and to relax its stringent debt rules so that each country could invest up to 1.5% more of their GDP on defense, should they want to.

The leaders will also discuss whether to place more arms contracts with Ukraine's defense industry, and to help integrate it into the European industrial network. Production costs in Ukraine are much lower, providing a relatively fast way to supply more arms and ammunition.

"Last year alone, thanks to Ukrainian and partner efforts, we produced over 1.5 million drones of various types. Ukraine is now the world leader in drone warfare. This is our success. But it's also your success," he said earlier this month at the Munich Security Conference. Possible EU support for a future force to police any peace agreement in Ukraine will also be weighed. Britain and France are leading that effort, which could involve several other European countries. The summit comes as the EU is arguably at its weakest point, fragmented by the steady rise of a hard right that is often pro-Russian.

Hungary and Slovakia have routinely undermined support for Ukraine. Hungary is threatening to veto a joint statement drafted for summit but would not be able to block any major security or financing decisions. Meanwhile, many larger countries face uncertainties at home.

Romania declares Russian mly attache, deputy personae non grata

BUCHAREST (Reuters): Romania declared the Russian embassy's military attache and his deputy personae non grata for what it said were acts contravening diplomatic rules, a move Russia said it would respond to.

The step is the latest sign of tension between Bucharest and Moscow over the war in Ukraine and allegations of electoral interference. Romania cancelled a presidential election before a second round in December due to accusations that Russia had meddled in the electoral campaign, something Moscow denied.

"Romanian authorities have decided to declare persona non grata the military air and naval attache to Bucharest of the Russian Federation as well as his deputy for acts which contravene the Vienna Convention," the foreign ministry said in a statement. It did not give further details of the acts in question. The Vienna Convention governs diplomatic relations. Russia said it would respond to Bucharest's move, the state RIA news agency reported. Russia declared one Romanian embassy official persona non grata in July. Bucharest said at the time that this was an unjustified response to Romania declaring a Russian diplomat persona non grata in May.

Rescuers find Philippine fighter jet's wreckage

MANILA (AP): Rescuers found the wreckage of a Philippine fighter jet and the bodies of its two pilots in a mountainous region in the country's south where they had been deployed on a nighttime mission to fight communist guerrillas, military officials said.

The FA-50 jet lost communication during the combat mission with other air force aircraft after midnight before reaching a target area in southern Bukidnon province. The other aircraft were able to return safely to an air base in central Cebu province after carrying out assaults, military officials said. The FA-50 jet was deployed with other air force aircraft to provide combat support to troops battling dozens of suspected New People's Army guerrillas near Cabanglasan town in Bukidnon, the military said.

"It was a total wreck," regional military commander Lt. Gen. Luis Rex Bergante said of the fighter jet's wreckage, which he said was found by Filipino special forces in a jungle on Mount Kalatungan in Bukidnon. A regional military spokesperson, Lt. Col. Francisco Garelllo, said without elaborating that the bodies of the two air force pilots were found near the wreckage.

Pilots can eject from the supersonic jets in case they encounter any problems but the Philippine air force said it remained unclear if the two pilots aboard the FA-50 ejected as it plummeted. It was also not immediately clear what caused the crash of the supersonic jet, which was acquired by the Philippine government from a South Korean company about a decade ago. An investigation was underway, the air force said.

The rest of the country's 11 FA-50s were grounded following the incident, according to the Philippine air force. The Philippines acquired 12 FA-50s multi-purpose fighter jets starting in 2015 from South Korea's Korea Aerospace Industries Ltd. The 18.9 billion peso (\$331 million) contract had been the biggest under a military modernization program that has been repeatedly stalled by a lack of funds. The Philippines has plans to acquire another 12 fighter jets from South Korea.

The military estimates about 1,000 communist guerrillas remain after decades of battle setbacks, surrenders and factional fighting. Peace talks brokered by Norway collapsed under previous President Rodrigo Duterte after both sides accused the other of continuing deadly attacks despite the negotiations.



WEST BANK: Israeli troops stand guard at the checkpoint in Deir Sharaf, near Nablus.

'Allies will fight if China restricts flights over South China Sea'

MANILA (AP): The Philippines and its security allies would take measures to counter any attempt by China to impose an air defense zone or restrict freedom of flights over the South China Sea, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said, following confrontations between Chinese aircraft and those of his country, Australia and the United States.

Teodoro told The Associated Press in an interview that China's increasing aggression in the disputed waters was now considered the greatest threat to the national security of the Philippines and should also be regarded as a global threat because it could choke a key trade route crucial for global supply chains. "The greatest external threat actually is Chinese aggression, Chinese expansionism and the attempt by China to change the international law through the use of force or acquiescence...or its attempt to reshape the world order to one that it controls," Teodoro said. There was no immediate reaction by Chinese officials.

Confrontations over the strategic waterway, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety, have spiked between Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy forces in the last two years. The long-seething territorial standoffs over the hotly-disputed shoals also involve Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Recent brushes involving Chinese military aircraft firing warning flares or flying dangerously close to drive away US, Australian and Philippine patrol aircraft have set off fresh alarms.

Teodoro said defense officials have discussed the possibility of China imposing a so-called Air

Defense Identification Zone or any exclusion zone to restrict foreign aircraft movement in what Beijing regards as its airspace over the South China Sea. "That is a very serious transgression of international law, which will demand our response," said Teodoro, a US-educated lawyer and a licensed commercial pilot.

"The Philippines will take a combination of measures singularly and with like-minded nations to counter-act" any such action by China, he said. "We have formulated contingency measures to respond or to have proper courses of action." He did not elaborate. Last month, a Chinese navy helicopter flew within 10 feet (3 meters) of a Philippine patrol turbo-prop plane it warned had encroached in what Beijing calls its airspace over the disputed Scarborough Shoal, prompting the Filipino pilot to warn by radio: "You are flying too close, you are very dangerous."

An AP journalist and other invited foreign media on the plane witnessed the tense 30-minute standoff as the Philippine plane pressed on with its low-altitude patrol around Scarborough with the Chinese navy helicopter hovering close above it or flying to its left in cloudy weather. The Chinese military, referring to Scarborough Shoal by its Chinese name, said at the time that the plane had "illegally entered the airspace of China's Huangyan Island without the Chinese government's permission."

Australia separately protested last month after accusing a Chinese J-16 fighter jet of firing flares that passed within 30 meters (100 feet) of an Australian P-8 Poseidon surveillance jet in daylight and in international air

space over the disputed waters. China's foreign ministry responded by accusing the Australian military aircraft of "deliberately" intruding into what it called Chinese airspace over the disputed Parcel Islands.

The US military has also reported encountering such dangerous maneuvers by Chinese air force aircraft in the past over the disputed waters, where it has deployed fighter jets and navy ships to promote freedom of navigation and overflight. In 2013, the Chinese Defense Ministry announced that it has set an Air Defense Identification Zone over the East China Sea that covers the airspace above a chain of islands disputed by China and Japan.

Beijing then issued a set of rules for the zone, saying all aircraft must notify Chinese authorities and are subject to emergency military measures if they do not identify themselves or obey orders from Beijing. Japan, the United States, Australia, South Korea and other countries ignored China's declared air defense zone and rules. Teodoro said blocs of security alliances among Asian and Western countries, including the Philippines, the US, Japan and Australia, have emerged and could band together in a broader coalition in the future against China's aggression.

China has accused the US along with its treaty allies of "ganging up" against Beijing and threatening regional security and harmony. But Teodoro said "it is China's own behavior that is the best motive for like-minded countries to band together because what it is doing is entirely unacceptable to a majority of the countries in the Indo-Pacific."

Hamas moves to control prices in Gaza after Israel suspends deliveries

CAIRO/GAZA (Reuters): Israel's block on deliveries into the war-stricken Gaza Strip has led to price increases and fears of food shortages, prompting punitive measures from the Hamas-run authorities against merchants, according to Hamas sources and witnesses.

Members of the Hamas-run police force were deployed in local markets across Gaza, asserting their presence on the ground despite a 15-month Israeli aerial and ground offensive against the Palestinian militant group. They questioned and detained merchants, ordering them not to raise prices during a standoff over a ceasefire deal, and seized supplies that were later resold at lower prices, the four sources and witnesses said.

Local authorities also urged residents to report misconduct by merchants, saying that food supplies in Gaza would last just two weeks. "Punishing junior sellers in markets is good, but Hamas must act against the big merchants who control what we eat," said one witness, asking not to be named for fear of retribution.

Israel announced that it was stopping the entry of goods into Gaza, citing a dispute with Hamas over how to proceed with the phased, US-backed ceasefire that brought a halt to heavy fighting in January. Hamas has urged mediators to pressure Israel to begin talks on the second stage and reopen Gaza's crossings.

Israel's foreign minister said that Hamas had been using aid to continue fighting Israel. Israel says Gaza has enough food for many months. Humanitarian agencies, however, say supplies for food, medicine and shelter in Gaza are limited and that stranded aid might spoil.

Philippe Lazzarini, head of UN Palestinian relief agency UNRWA, said Israel's suspension of deliveries threatened lives among Gaza's 2.3 million population, exhausted by war. "Aid and these basic services are nonnegotiable. They must never be used as weapons of war," Lazzarini said in a post on X. At a soup kitchen in Gaza's Khan Younis, where dozens of children holding pots lined up to receive soup, organizers said the suspension of deliveries would hit their provision of free meals for 20,000 people.

The meals were meant to cover the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which began. But merchants had raised meat prices, meaning the menu had to change. "The kitchen's administration prepared a plan for the month of Ramadan, but the closure of the crossings has disrupted all the plans," said one of the organizers,

Abu Omar. "On the first day of Ramadan, we served approximately 1,200 to 1,400 portions of meat and rice, but the closure of the crossings and the disappearance of goods in the markets led to us serving 'mujadara' (a rice and lentil dish) and soups today," Abu Omar told Reuters. The war began when Hamas-led fighters attacked southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and capturing more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's campaign has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to local health authorities, and displaced most of the population. Arab states met in Cairo to try to advance a longer-term plan for Gaza that would counter US President Donald Trump's proposal for a Middle East Riviera in the territory.

HK court overturns convictions of three former organizers

HONG KONG (AP): Hong Kong's top court overturned the convictions of three former organizers of an annual vigil in remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown over their refusal to provide information to police, marking a rare victory for the city's pro-democracy activists.

Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-kyong - core members of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China - were convicted in 2023 during Beijing's crackdown on the city's pro-democracy movement. They received a sentence of 4 1/2 months and have already served their terms. The alliance was long

known for organizing candlelight vigils in the city on the anniversary of the Chinese military's crushing of the 1989 pro-democracy protests in Beijing. But it voted to disband in 2021 under the shadow of a sweeping national security law imposed by China.

Critics said the shutdown and the case showed that the city's Western-style civil liberties were shrinking despite promises they would be kept intact when the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Before the group dissolved, police had sought details about its operations and finances in connection with alleged links to pro-democracy groups overseas, accusing it of being a foreign agent.

But the group refused to cooperate, insisting it was not.

Judges at the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal unanimously ruled in the trio's favor. Chief Justice Andrew Cheung announced the decision in court. The prosecution needed to prove that the alliance was a foreign agent, the judges wrote, adding that the lower courts "fell into error" in holding that it was sufficient merely that the police commissioner said he had reasonable grounds to believe the alliance was a foreign agent.

In their appeal, the appellants also took issue with crucial details that were redacted, including the names of groups that

were alleged to have links with the alliance. The top court's judges ruled that by redacting the only potential evidential basis for establishing that the alliance was a foreign agent, the prosecution disabled itself from proving its case.

"Non-disclosure of the redacted facts in any event deprived the appellants of a fair trial so that their convictions involved a miscarriage of justice," they wrote. After the ruling, Tang told reporters outside the court that he hoped the top court's ruling proved that the alliance was not a foreign agent and that in the future they could prove that the 1989 movement was not a counter-revolutionary riot.

Rwanda asking UK for \$63m over cancelled asylum deal

NAIROBI (Reuters): Rwanda is asking Britain for a 50 million-pound (\$63.62 million) payment over a cancelled asylum deal, a source close to the government in Kigali said, after London paused some bilateral aid to the African country over the war in Congo. On taking office last July, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer scrapped the prior Conservative government's asylum plan, under which Rwanda would have been paid to take in migrants who had illegally arrived in Britain.

Incoming Interior minister Yvette Cooper said that month that the plan had already cost UK taxpayers 700 million pounds (\$890 million). A British government spokesperson said in an emailed statement Cooper had been clear that the Rwanda asylum partnership had wasted taxpayer money and should not continue.

"As stated clearly in notes verbale between the UK and Rwanda, no further payments in relation to this

policy will be made and Rwanda has waived any additional payments," the spokesperson said. A source close to the Rwandan government told Reuters that Kigali was asking for 50 million pounds over the cancelled agreement.

Yolande Makolo, Rwanda's government spokesperson, said the demand was driven by Britain's stance towards Kigali, including what she described as inflammatory comments by Britain's Minister for Africa. "The UK had asked Rwanda to quietly forego the payment based on the trust and good faith existing between our two nations," Makolo said in a post on X.

"However, the UK has breached this trust through the unjustified punitive measures to coerce Rwanda into compromising our national security," she added. Last week, Britain said it would pause some bilateral aid to Rwanda and impose other diplomatic sanctions over its role in the conflict in neighbouring

Congo, a move Kigali called "punitive".

Rwanda is facing global pressure over accusations that it supports the M23 rebel group which, since January, has captured swathes of eastern Congo including the cities of Goma and Bukavu, and valuable mineral deposits. Kigali denies backing the rebel group but says its own troops are acting in self defence against hostile groups based in Congo.

Under the asylum deal, Britain was due to make payments of 50 million pounds to Rwanda in April this year and next, parliament's spending watchdog the National Audit Office (NAO) said last year. The NAO said Britain or Rwanda could activate a break clause that would take effect three months later. This meant Britain would not have to make further payments, apart from covering costs associated with people who were relocated, the NAO said. Britain only sent four people to Rwanda under a voluntary scheme.

Taiwan turns to companies in Ukraine

TAIPEI (Reuters): Taiwan is learning from companies in Ukraine which continue to operate during the country's fight against Russia, a senior Taiwan official told Reuters, as the island speeds up contingency planning amid heightened Chinese threats.

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, despite the objection of the government in Taipei, and has ramped up its military pressure against the island in recent years, including holding several rounds of major war games. "We hope to learn from Ukraine's first-hand experiences - how private companies helped build the resilience of its government and society during wartime," said a senior Taiwan security official, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

The official pointed to companies in Ukraine including Uber and Microsoft which continued to provide

critical services. Among the ideas Taiwan is taking inspiration from Ukraine for include how to incorporate supermarkets into the government's supply distribution network and utilising taxi services for medical emergencies such as blood donations when the health system is overwhelmed.

The official said the government was working to connect companies in Taiwan with their counterparts in Ukraine in order to help Taiwan firms quickly boost their contingency planning. "We have the will to fight, and now we must also look closely into our work to prepare," the official said. Taiwan is revamping its air-raid alert and shelter systems, taking into account lessons by northern European countries and Baltic states, the official added.

A closed-door workshop on preparations including stockpiling and civil defence training was held in Taipei

this week, which was attended by Taiwan security officials and senior diplomats from countries including the US, Japan and Australia. Andy Hunder, who heads the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine and is a speaker at the workshop, told reporters the Taiwan government must establish backup online systems, pointing to Russian cyber attacks aimed at paralyzing Ukraine infrastructure before the first missile attacks.

"What we have seen is that during World War Two, the safest place for critical infrastructure is down in the tunnels. Today, the safest infrastructure is in the clouds," Hunder said, adding payment services such as Mastercard and Visa continued to operate and ensured financial stability. "Technology, banking, food, delivery, retail - how do you keep the economy running?" he said when asked how the Taiwan government should prepare itself.

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Starmer is at his best right now

KEIR Starmer, it turns out, is at his best in a crisis. He has faced two since he became prime minister last year, one domestic, the other international. The first came with the riots that followed the Southport killings, when Starmer's response was impressive and effective. The second is Donald Trump's attempt to stitch up Ukraine, where Starmer has been surefooted in trying to hold the line against a sellout to Russia. In both cases, he has looked like the right person in the right place at the right time.

There was another example of this deftness on Wednesday in the Commons, when Starmer went out of his way to mark the anniversaries of the deaths of UK service personnel in 2007 and 2012. A total of 642 died in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars alongside their US allies. They would not be forgotten, he said. The name of JD Vance was not mentioned. Nor was the US vice-president's contemptuous "some random country" insult this week. But Starmer's reprimand was unerring. It is far too soon to say whether Starmer's response to Trump's embrace of Russia and to the US administration's denunciations of Europe will be effective in the long run. What can be said is that, in public and private, the prime minister has so far led with tact and clarity and has scored one or two apparent successes against the run of play. Nevertheless, these are very early days. Trump boasted to Congress on Tuesday night that he was "just getting started".

Starmer's ability in a crisis is an unexpected contrast with his leadership in the ordinary business of politics. Since July 2024, Starmer's calm, methodical, long-game approach has succeeded only in squandering much of Labour's election-winning goodwill, and in making him seem out of his political depth. But his deployment of these same unflashy tactics at moments of acute crisis, as in the case of Ukraine, could be gold dust. It has at least given the prime minister's ratings a boost. There are echoes here of the rallying around Boris Johnson at the start of Covid. But remember where that ended up. It is useful to note that this low-key approach marks a notable break. Throughout the postwar period, British leaders faced with international crisis modelled themselves on Winston Churchill in 1940. Margaret Thatcher saw herself this way during the Falklands war. Tony Blair echoed it after 9/11 and over Iraq. Johnson pretended he was Churchill when Russia invaded Ukraine. Starmer's calm approach evokes Clement Attlee more than Churchill. In every way he is unTrump.

Yet Starmer has not got much to be calm about. The world of 2024 no longer exists. Trump has triggered a crisis in the North Atlantic alliance. At stake are two epochal things. First, whether Russia's main western border will henceforward be with Ukraine, with Poland or with Germany. Second, whether the US accepts any role in ensuring future European stability. These are not small questions. There are three levels on which Starmer can try to deal with Trump, both now and for the coming four years. All of them tacitly and sometimes openly recognise the vast seriousness of the moment. All of them are predicated on the undesirability of what Trump is doing and the need to create alternatives. All of them, however, also rest on a determination not to make an enemy of the US.

The first is to firefight the immediate problems that Trump creates. This involves constantly engaging with the US administration by whatever means are available to prevent or mitigate crises. It means building up defence spending. It means working with allies and so-called coalitions of the willing. It means using any leverage to earn a hearing. Essentially, it is an attempt to manoeuvre Trump to follow a different or less extreme course, while avoiding confrontation or denunciation. But it is all done under the pretence that nothing fundamental has changed. This is essentially the strategy that Starmer is now pursuing on Ukraine. It is why he keeps talking to Trump — three times in the past week, perhaps contributing to Trump's relatively polite mention of Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the speech to Congress. It is why he deploys King Charles's soft power. It is why, perhaps, he will soon return to Washington with Zelenskyy and Emmanuel Macron in an overwhelmingly important effort to restore military aid and intelligence support to Ukraine.

The second approach is to decide to suck it all up for four years, in the hope that things will then get easier. This means accepting the likelihood, though never saying so publicly, that Trump is always going to be destructive and mean-spirited. At the same time, it means working to keep US links — especially military and intelligence links — strong enough to be revived more effectively after 2028, when Trump is due to step down. For Starmer, this could mean a lot of firefighting over the next four years, without any certainty of a post-Trump dividend or British public approval. Such fires could break out on any number of issues, including not just Ukraine but also the Middle East, bilateral trade, Nato, US-EU relations and, judging by this week's speech, Canada, Greenland and the Panama canal. Much will depend on Friedrich Merz and on Macron's 2027 successor, too. Starmer and his national security adviser, Jonathan Powell, are also likely to have an intense under-the-radar interest in the candidates vying to succeed Trump.

Which leaves the third strategy. This is to accept that Trump's approach is now the US's new normal and that there will be no comforting return to past arrangements. Whoever comes after Trump may be friendlier, more rational and less rude. Either way, US exceptionalism, isolationism and disengagement from Europe are likely to be here to stay. So too are the immensely tough consequences for countries like Britain, which can no longer rely on a US security and intelligence shield against Russia or any other hostile states. Rearmament is back. This will require something close to a war economy, and it cannot be created overnight. At present, Starmer has one foot in the first approach and another in the second. But it is the third approach that will loom largest as an option as the next four years unfold. None of these is a soft option, and all of them overlap. Starmer is right, for example, to oppose false binary choices between Europe and the US. Nevertheless, if Trump's speech to Congress is to be taken seriously, this is a president who has changed sides in the battle of values between democracy and authoritarianism. Starmer may feel he has to tell Europe that Trump will still "have our backs". But Trump could just as soon stab Europe in the back too. After all, that's exactly what he just did.

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HRs violations in Israeli prisons

Raed Mohammed Mahmood Amer

SINCE its establishment, Israel has been accused of policies aimed at displacing Palestinian communities and altering the demographic landscape of the occupied territories. The occupation has employed lethal tactics against Palestinians including killings, torture, and arrests. Since 1967, over 1 million Palestinians have been prosecuted under Israel's military court system and subjected to detention.

For decades, Palestinian political prisoners have been used by the Israeli occupation as bargaining chips during negotiations of the so-called "peace process." They have exercised all forms of brutality and torture against Palestinian prisoners in interrogation and detention centers in an attempt to extract confessions -- whether true or false -- by force, using both psychological and physical methods against them, in a blatant disregard for international law and countless international treaties and laws related to human rights. The current level of abuse, torture, and maltreatment of Palestinian detainees is unprecedented in terms of scale and frequency.

After Oct. 7, 2023, Palestinians saw a severe spike in the occupation's long-standing violent policies and practices. The crisis extends beyond Gaza. Reports indicate systematic abuses within Israeli prisons and military camps, amounting to crimes against humanity, as defined under international law. At least 58 Palestinian political prisoners, including 37 people arrested from Gaza, have been murdered and martyred in the occupation's custody since Oct. 7, 2023, including through torture, lethal beatings, starvation, and severe deprivation of medical treatment. The 58 people killed are only the ones whose identities have been revealed by the occupation. Dozens more have been killed and subject to enforced disappearance in Israeli custody with authorities refusing to reveal their identities. All of this is occurring amid international inaction, with the UN, and international human rights institutions and bodies, proving their inability to protect the Palestinian

people and their rights.

It is worth mentioning that Israeli occupation authorities are committing the severe crime of enforced disappearance against thousands of Palestinian detainees who have been arrested from Gaza since the start of the genocide, particularly from the beginning of the ground invasion. Thousands of civilians, including men, women, and children, have been abducted from different parts of the Gaza Strip, as well as thousands more who were working as laborers in the 1948-occupied territories prior to the outbreak of the war.

The crime of enforced disappearance is one of the main features of the genocide that went on for close to 500 days. Additionally, dozens of medical personnel were targeted with arrests during the Israeli army's repeated invasions of hospitals, the largest of which was the invasion of the Shifa Hospital. Numerous videos circulated on social media showing Palestinian detainees in degrading conditions, including being stripped naked, blindfolded, and shackled in overcrowded spaces. Many were forced into tight groups in open areas, on the streets, and in military transport vehicles while restrained and exposed. They appeared in conditions that were highly degrading to human dignity and showed a severe disregard and contempt for Palestinian lives.

The Israeli judicial system has contributed to cementing the crime of enforced disappearance, further enabling the use of torture against detainees who were abducted from Gaza. Thousands of detainees from the strip were arrested and detained based on the "illegal combatants" law issued by the Knesset (Israeli parliament) in 2002, which fundamentally violates fair trial procedures and human rights. At the start of the genocide, the occupation made legal amendments to the "illegal combatants" law, which is similar in nature to its "administrative detention" military order used in the occupied West Bank.

Among the most significant amendments made to the illegal combatants law were as follows: Extending the detainee's initial deten-

tion period for 45 days, judicial review after 75 days, and prohibition of detainees from meeting with their lawyers for 180 days. It is important to note that since the start of the genocide, the occupation has continued to refuse to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit detainees and prisoners in jails and camps as per its mandate. These amendments further institutionalized policies associated with enforced disappearance, as Israeli authorities continue to withhold information on detainees from Gaza, including their identities and locations. As a result, several human rights organizations filed petitions to the Israeli Supreme Court demanding the identities of the detainees and their places of detention. In every instance, the Supreme Court affirmed its long-standing role as a fundamental tool in cementing crimes against Palestinians.

To this day, there is no clear or accurate information about the total number of Palestinians arrested from Gaza, including women and children, nor about the martyrs who were killed through torture or executions. The only available data, up until the beginning of February 2025, shows that at least 1,882 Palestinians arrested from Gaza are categorized as "illegal combatants," and this data does not include all of the detainees held in military camps.

Prisoner rights groups highlighted that the occupation built and restored special military camps used to detain Palestinians abducted from Gaza, alongside the existing central prisons. Among the most notorious of these military camps was the Sde Teiman camp, where detainees were subject to severe sexual assault, including rape. Other military camps being used to hold detainees from Gaza are the Anatot and Ofer camps, which have also witnessed extreme violations against Palestinian prisoners. In November 2023, when the occupation began releasing laborers from Gaza who had been held in Israel's military camps, the prisoners' testimonies began to reveal the level of inhumane and humiliating violations they endured. This included severe beatings, starvation,

dehydration, denial of medical treatment, and keeping detainees blindfolded and handcuffed 24/7, causing many of them to need limb removal surgeries.

As time went on and more prisoners were released from Israeli custody, the testimonies only increased in terms of how horrific and shocking the crimes being committed were. The images of the detainees upon their release serve as a living testimony to the unfathomable violations committed against them. These revelations continued through several reports and journalistic investigations conducted about the Sde Teiman camp, including the leaking of a video showing soldiers gang-raping a Palestinian detainee.

As the genocide continues, some legal teams and human rights lawyers have been allowed limited access to a small portion of Gaza detainees. Their reports confirm systematic crimes, including extrajudicial executions, torture, and enforced disappearance. In this context, the Israeli occupation is employing the severe crime of enforced disappearance against thousands of detainees abducted from Gaza, which constitutes a crime against humanity according to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. This convention defines enforced disappearance as "the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law."

We reiterate our call to the international human rights system to overcome its ongoing impotence in the face of this genocide, and to take clear decisions and actions to hold the Israeli occupation accountable. This all-out war and aggression against our people, including those held in the occupation's military camps and central prisons, must be halted now, and not a second later.

Türkiye's balancing act in global diplomacy

Samuel Doveri Vesterbye

THIS past week marked a turning point in US-Ukraine relations, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy openly confronted US hypocries in the Oval Office. Ukraine lost a preliminary mineral agreement and hopes of immediate US security guarantees. The televised meltdown will go down in history as a defining moment of the transatlantic split.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas, a traditionally strong ally of Washington, expressed concerns on social media this weekend, stating: "It became clear that the free world needs a new leader. It's up to us, Europeans, to take this challenge."

Meanwhile, European diplomats privately voiced deeper anxieties over the situation. An EU officer said: "First you arm them, then you abandon them. Who still believes in American security guarantees?" Echoing similar worries, a Turkish diplomat noted: "A collapsing Ukraine is against our security interests in the Black Sea, the Caucasus, Syria, and Central Asia."

A weakened Ukrainian leadership would significantly strengthen Russia's position, with potential geopolitical consequences for countries ranging from Türkiye and Finland to France and Poland, according to many analysts. When trying to predict an adversary, it is important to put yourself in their shoes. Moscow perceives the past four decades as "active aggression against Russia and the Soviet Union." It blames NATO and much of Eastern Europe. Since the election of US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin likely feels empowered and vindictive.

Some have interpreted the new rapprochement as Trump's idea. That's misleading. It's the new administration's strategy to alienate China by driving a wedge between Beijing and Moscow. Russia is allowed to regain some power, while keeping limited "spheres of influence" in for example Central Asia and the Caucasus -- primarily at the expense of Türkiye. Its chances of success are debatable, but the "reverse Kissinger doctrine" is well-documented.

Supporting Russia, however, also serves another purpose. Trump uses it to re-bargain other interests in Europe. The logic is simple: Russia poses a threat, and Washington conveniently holds the proverbial "keys to fix the problem." In terms of bargaining power, it could not get any better for Trump. Trump strengthens Putin's geopolitical leverage while renegotiating with European leaders individually, securing American business, technology, and fossil fuel interests. It remains unclear what Washington is willing to offer in return, if anything. But it is safe to say that US-backed financial support to Ukraine is off the table. For the United States, the goal is most likely to cut spending (e.g. US budget) and focus on its own priority, China, while threatening others in

Europe with higher tariffs and lower intel-military sharing. In return, he expects support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and distancing from China, while opening up markets to fossil fuels, big-tech, and defense.

According to Lili Pike, a staff writer covering China for foreign policy: "In the wake of Trump's wrecking ball, China is now probing opportunities to build its own united front with Europe." One example could be that Beijing holds back on dual-use exports to Russia in order to counter Washington's rapprochement with Moscow. This will make it more difficult for Trump to ask Europeans to support a future trade war with China.

While Trump publicly confronts Zelenskyy, France is actively forging new security agreements with other nations. Quadri-lateral intelligence sharing is growing and a new defense commissioner has been tasked with European military procurement. In tandem, President Emmanuel Macron and Germany's newly elected Chancellor Friedrich Merz are discussing industrial coordination, extending French nuclear deterrence and issuing Eurobonds.

The new Franco-German alliance will -- inevitably -- take into account Türkiye. Despite deep divisions between Paris and Ankara, the reality remains that Türkiye is a major trade partner and Europe's first supply-chain hub for industrial manufacturing, specific minerals and energy transit. It is also unimaginable for Ankara to disengage from the Franco-German alliance, since over 40% of Turkish trade goes directly into the EU, as opposed to for example 5% US-trade and 11% Russia-trade.

After a first meeting in Riyadh, last week saw Istanbul host the US-Russia follow-up meeting. Both meetings allowed for technical exchanges about normalization and embassies being reopened. Türkiye has long positioned itself as a neutral player in the Ukraine peace talks. It appears that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has successfully leveraged Türkiye's geo-strategic position and personal relations with all three leaders: Trump, Putin, and Zelenskyy. Ankara is willing to provide boots on the ground in Ukraine: a compromise which could heighten Türkiye's status across Europe. Both Russia and Ukraine may consider this option -- contingent on US endorsement. But whether Poland, France, and the Nordics are as easily convinced or not, remains to be seen.

The inclusion of Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan at Sunday's London Summit is very reassuring. It represents the natural inclusion of Ankara, an EU candidate and NATO's second-largest army, at the table of European security leaders. Whether Britain, France, Germany, and Türkiye have the foresight to properly coordinate remains to be seen. It would undoubtedly benefit Ukraine, as well as geo-economic stability across the continent.

Who are winners and losers of Trump's split with Ukraine?

Eugene Finkel

THE rupture between the Trump administration and Ukraine — the Oval Office confrontation, followed by the suspension of US military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine — is painful, but not entirely unexpected for Kyiv and its supporters. It portends a break between Ukraine and its European partners such as France and Britain, which tried but ultimately failed to prevent this outcome.

After the meeting, Republican politicians rushed to praise Trump for his supposed defense of US interests, and putting America first. Yet looking at the bigger picture and the main actors involved in the war — the US, Ukraine, Russia, Europe and Britain — the outcome of the last several weeks of escalating tensions between Trump and Ukraine is certain for just one of them: the United States lost — and it lost badly.

In the short term,

President Trump failed to achieve any of the things he sought. His desire to freeze the war and quickly resolve the conflict now seems unattainable. He was also unable to get a much-desired stake in Ukraine's rare earth minerals or sideline and potentially remove Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whom he strongly dislikes, from office. Associates with his first impeachment in 2019 and had recently called a "dictator." The step to US aid to Ukraine is about cutting losses and hoping that pressure might achieve what diplomacy could not, but no US aid also means much decreased US leverage going forward.

Beyond Trump, the longer-term consequences for the US are less certain but still overwhelmingly negative. The administration's policies of undermining the existing transatlantic security structures and alienating and threatening allies while cozying up to President Vladimir

Putin's Russia are bound to create a more dangerous, chaotic and unpredictable world. Simultaneously, dismantling the existing instruments of soft and hard power, foreign affairs expertise and state capacity writ large makes navigating or even surviving this more dangerous world much harder for the US.

For Ukraine, which is clearly exhausted after three years of brutal fighting, the most desirable outcome of engagement with the Trump administration would have been a commitment to continued military support and a ceasefire agreement that included the prospect of NATO membership or, barring that, meaningful security guarantees that would reduce the risk of further Russian aggression. Trump, however, is clearly unwilling to offer such a deal.

The worst possible outcome for Ukraine would

have been a bad deal that gives Russia control over occupied territories and keeps Ukraine weakened, exposed, potentially economically exploited by the US and deprived of Western security umbrella. The rhetoric of both Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance suggests that this was precisely the agreement they had in mind. Such an outcome, however, is a sure recipe for a future war once Putin had a chance to regroup and a likely subjugation of Ukraine by the Kremlin. This catastrophic outcome Zelenskyy was able — at least for now — to avoid.

What Ukraine is left with, therefore, is neither a win nor a total surrender but a continuing struggle, for now with no US support but a hope for a better outcome down the road. For now, Ukraine should be able to hold on. But in the long run will have to heavily rely on the increased

support of its British and EU partners. Here, Ukraine also has reasons for optimism. Faced with Trump's bullying, the Europeans are now mobilized and seem more determined to invest in their own security than ever.

For Putin, an ideal outcome would have been a ceasefire along the lines envisioned by Trump. That would allow him to wait, rearm and strike again. While this option is currently off the table after the confrontation between Trump and Zelenskyy, the Kremlin is also content with a continued war against a now weakened Ukraine. For Putin, the status quo is vastly preferable over a ceasefire agreement that includes security guarantees for Ukraine that would limit the Kremlin's ability to subjugate Ukraine in the future. The Russian economy is struggling but not yet collapsing — and thus while Putin has not, or at least not yet, won much from the rupture between the US and

Ukraine, he has gained something and certainly has not lost anything.

The final actor is Europe — the EU and Britain. They, after the US, are the second-largest losers of the current crisis. The realization that Trump's America is not a reliable ally and possibly even a hostile power is a shockingly painful new reality for a continent that has become accustomed to relying on Washington's security umbrella. These days are likely over. But while the United States is busy destroying what it already possesses, Europe has a chance to build its own new, powerful and durable security structures that would not depend on the whims of US voters and their representatives. Whether it will happen it is up to the Europeans and their ability to fully understand that a new era is coming and rise to the occasion.

The Moscow Times

Kremlin accountability for MH17 essential for a credible peace

Sander van Luik

THE trust between a parent and child is unparalleled, built on natural affection and honesty. This relationship starts with parents teaching their children not to lie. If we do not accept lies from our children, why should we accept them from politicians shaping their future?

Exactly eleven years after Russia started its aggression against Ukraine, there is talk of peace. We should keep in mind that the first two attempts — the Minsk Protocols I and II — failed miserably. There were many reasons why. However, one overarching factor was the complete lack of trust shared between the signatories. Trust-building must precede peace-making.

It has been eleven years since my brother Klaas Willem boarded Malaysian Airlines flight MH17. He and his 297 fellow passengers became one of the first international victims of Russian weapons on Ukrainian soil. The same soil where our loved ones, some eighty of them children, met their deaths. All equally defenseless and caught unaware of the impending danger, making this atrocity even more heinous.

The harrowing pictures from the crash area brought the war to millions of living rooms, leaving viewers in shock. How could this have happened? It must have been an accident, surely? We still thought, our civilized imagination failing us. With everything that followed in Bucha, Kramatorsk, Mariupol and so many other places, I am not so sure. I cannot be because the shootout was followed by a crime that was nearly equally as cruel: Russia lied, hid suspects and witnesses, forged so-called evidence and obstructed justice in any way they could.

Despite Moscow's efforts, we know for a fact the downing of Flight MH17 was an act of murder, a flagrant violation of human rights and a possible breach of the laws of war.

After years of work by an international investigation team, a Dutch Court of Justice sentenced two Russians and a Ukrainian to life imprisonment for the murder of 298 passengers. The verdict said that "the Buk missile that shot down MH17 was supplied by the Russian Federation and that the actions of the convicted persons directly led to the death of 298 civilians," and that the missile was probably launched by members of the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade of the Russian military.

Immediately after the crime, the Kremlin went out of its way to shun responsibility, coming up with one fictitious scenario after another and spinning a web of lies. To this day, the Russian Federation denies responsibility, despite the compelling evidence and indisputable facts concerning their crime. This did not prevent us from eventually knowing what happened. But there are still families wondering why their loved ones came to die. Was it an accident or intentional? We know the names of three culprits, but they did not act alone. Who else is culpable? All answers still lie in the Kremlin's vaults. This persistent denial not only undermines the bereaved families' pursuit of justice but has also prolonged and deepened their grief. Putin's refusal to acknowledge this crime has added to the already unbearable burden of our loss. The perpetrators' impunity is a permanent insult to human dignity.

Relatives have long called for Russia to acknowledge their role, apologize and launch a public investigation into all those involved and the reasons behind the downing of the aircraft. They have tried to reach Moscow multiple times, to be rebuffed. Since 2017, every year relatives have responded to Russian silence on MH17 by organizing an

equally silent protest.

Each year, on the weekend of Russia Day in June, relatives set 298 empty chairs in front of the Russian embassy in The Hague in remembrance of the three hundred voices that were cruelly silenced. For now, it seems there will be empty chairs in The Hague for a long time to come. How can there be talk of peace while that is the case? MH17 proved to be a turning point in the Donbas War. The intensifying violence was no longer a local conflict. Nations that had kept their distance could no longer look away as families demanded answers from their governments in The Hague, Canberra, Kuala Lumpur, Berlin and London.

More notably, MH17 was a turning point in the Kremlin's foreign policy. At the time, the occupation of Crimea was still meticulously covered in a shroud of ambiguity. Russia denied that the "little green men" were their occupying forces and claimed their seizure of the peninsula was the outcome of a legitimate referendum. This is evidence that the Kremlin obviously still thought international law mattered.

Shortly after, they used the same playbook for the war in Donbas, with Russians staging a separatist uprising. They presented it as a civil war rather than admitting it was a Russian invasion, a blunt attempt at occupying a neighboring country's land. This charade fell apart in July 2014. The shoot-down of MH17 and especially the subsequent lies and ludicrous denials marked the Russian regime's definitive choice to no longer pretend to honor any international law and principle of justice or universal human rights.

Consequently, MH17 families feel as much part of this war as everyone else personally affected by it. As our tragedy was part of this very war, MH17 relatives believe that our

demands should be heard and be part of any potential peace settlement, too. If they are not, any chance of accountability will vanish and Russia's consistent trampling on human dignity will be rewarded. Lies will prevail. But lies cannot be part of lasting peace.

To leave the lies behind, we families of MH17 victims firmly believe that any sincere peace settlement with Russia must include explicit recognition of their role in taking down MH17. But words will not suffice. They must be accompanied by concrete and tangible action that demonstrates accountability. This would encompass a formal apology, thorough and public investigations into why this crime happened, identification of all involved and appropriate reparations. The memory of our lost loved ones must be honored. Accountability is essential not only for our healing and the restoration of justice but also for the prevention of such tragedies in the future. Most of all, it is the foundation for building trust.

The MH17 disaster stands out, partly because in hindsight it marked the beginning of much worse to pass. However, we don't claim to be special. Sadly, indeed we are not. Our grief was followed with much more, heartbreaking tragedies, outright massacres and war crimes, with unimaginable suffering that we only got a taste of. As we are united in grief, all affected by this senseless war should unite in demanding the principle of accountability be a foundation for the pursuit of peace. What is true for MH17 is true for all atrocities committed since then. Our message to the men, the parents sitting at the negotiating table, the same ones who teach their children not to lie, is simple: accountability must be part of any peace agreement. With lies enduring, there cannot be trust. And without trust, there can be no credible peace.

Trump dreams of a Maga empire

Alexander Hurst

chain of command.

A decade later in 1994 Ukraine, which had the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world, relinquished its nuclear warheads as part of a complete nuclear disarmament. It did so in exchange for iron-clad security guarantees from the US, UK and Russia. Donald Trump's betrayal of Ukraine (or, worse, active sabotage by cutting it off from some intelligence sharing) and in-process realignment of the US with Vladimir Putin's geostrategic objectives guarantees that no state will ever do anything similar in the future.

For months, maps floating around the Maga-sphere have shown quite clearly what the Trump regime's vision of the world is, and what its intent is. It's a vision Trump has made little effort to conceal. As if they were playing the board game Risk, they have decided that the "winning strategy" is to take and hold North America. The first economic shot has been launched at forcibly making Canada the "51st state" — and during his address to the US Congress, Trump was equally explicit that Greenland ("we're going to get it one way or another") and the Panama canal will be next.

Their dark vision is that an imperial America will do as it wants in its corner of the world, as will China and Russia in theirs. The European Union, however, will be a special target of their hostility, ire and predation because it stands for everything that they appear to want to bury: the rule of law, constraints on the powerful, equal sovereignty for the small, government as a bulwark against corruption rather than its enabler, multilateral action to tackle grave ecological and climate crises instead of the wanton spoliation of the earth.

With the US under Trump rapidly backsliding on democracy, drawing from an authoritarian playbook and verging on open hostility towards its former allies, the logical conclusion with regard to nuclear weapons — almost miraculously limited to just a handful of states today — doesn't take much stretch of the imagination. Japan, South Korea, Australia and Canada all have clear reasons to pursue them, and if

Iran reached the breakout point, Saudi Arabia would quickly join the race.

Europe's leaders seem to have understood the seriousness of this swift-moving moment. "I want to believe that the United States will stay by our side, but we have to be prepared for that not to be the case," said Emmanuel Macron in a broadcast to the French nation on Wednesday night. Macron opened the door to the "European dimension" that France has historically maintained with regard to its nuclear deterrent being made more explicit. France is the only EU country with nuclear weapons.

However, even if in the short term France's deterrent — so wisely kept fully independent — is extended to the rest of the EU, would that be sufficient for European states under more immediate threat? Faced with an imperialist Russian regime that has repeatedly invoked nuclear blackmail in its war on Ukraine, chances are the EU will have to seek its own EU-level deterrent at some point in the future.

This is the tragedy that Donald Trump has wrought: the world will rearm, defence stocks will soar. Perhaps we'll find a new balance; if not, there will be war. Precious resources that should have been used to heal, feed, educate, create, conserve and explore will be redirected to a world order the United States once knew well enough to do away with. It wasn't just nightmares when I was a kid — I also dreamed of going to space.

As we all try to grapple with the shifting of what we thought our world was, and would be, I find myself thinking about these reckless, dangerous, small-minded men — Putin, Trump, Musk — obsessed with ideas power and grandeur. I would trade my own childhood dream of orbiting the Earth for them to go to space instead, in the hope that they too would look back at our bright blue orb of a planet and be transformed in the way so many real astronauts have been. Perhaps they would come away with a lesson Samantha Harvey offered us in her Booker prize-winning novel about astronauts, Orbital: "Some metal separates us from the void; death is so close. Life is everywhere, everywhere."

The Guardian

Why the Gulf must evolve or risk becoming obsolete

Adrian Monch

SAUDI Arabia's Seha Virtual Hospital is more than just a breakthrough in medical innovation. As patients receive artificial intelligence-powered diagnoses from home — leapfrogging half a century of infrastructure development in a single technological stride — we are witnessing more than just a healthcare revolution. This is a nation actively shaping its post-petroleum future.

This leapfrogging strategy mirrors the breakthroughs unfolding in a cutting-edge Parisian lab, where GenBio scientists are not just discovering new drugs — they are rendering the pharmaceutical industry's plodding timeline obsolete. Their AI organism, AIDO, simulates millions of molecular interactions, transforming decades of research into mere days.

GenBio's genius, however, lies in its geographic arbitrage: European scientific rigor, Silicon Valley's capital engine, and Abu Dhabi's ambition form an innovation triangle that the Gulf states would be foolish to ignore. The Gulf is at a crossroads familiar to anyone who has ever faced obsolescence. The vast oil wealth — the economic miracle that transformed desert kingdoms into global financial powers — now carries an expiration date. The carbon economy is terminal, even if the patient can still sit up in bed. Its leaders understand this with a clarity that eludes many in the West: adapt or die.

The UAE has launched Falcon 2, its home-grown generative AI model. Not content with importing foreign technology, Abu Dhabi is building its own. Why? Because buying innova-

tion keeps you permanently second-rate. It is the difference between owning the means of production and merely consuming what others create. History judges harshly those who miss technological inflection points. The Ottoman Empire, once the world's superpower, failed to embrace the printing press for political and religious reasons. Within centuries, it was dismembered by European countries that used the technology to accelerate learning and innovation. Today's printing press is AI, and those who master it will write tomorrow's rules.

The Gulf's advantages are substantial: centralized decision-making that cuts through bureaucratic dithering, sovereign wealth that can fund ambitious projects, and, most crucially, freedom from legacy systems. When Kenya introduced M-Pesa mobile payments, it vaulted past the Western banking model because it had no established infrastructure to protect. Similarly, the Gulf can implement AI-native systems without fighting entrenched interests.

But ambition alone is insufficient. A 2024 Boston Consulting Group study found the Gulf's digital maturity below global averages despite showcase projects and splashy conferences. The region suffers from a crippling talent shortage, fragmented data infrastructure, and an innovation ecosystem that remains more aspirational than actual. Too many initiatives remain gleaming facades without functioning interiors. What would real transformation look like?

First, a talent revolution. Like

GenBio, which draws researchers from several continents, the Gulf needs diverse intellectual capital. China's AI surge came when thousands of engineers educated at Stanford and MIT returned home. The Gulf needs to create similar knowledge pipelines — not just importing foreign experts but developing sovereign technical capability. Without this, every vision statement is merely an expensive wish list.

Second, the Gulf must leverage its "no legacy" advantage. New hospitals, government services, and urban developments should be AI-native, not retrofitted. When Estonia gained independence in 1991, it rejected Finland's free analogue telephone system, opting instead for a digital-first future. Such bold choices separate visionaries from managers.

Third, rather than diffusing efforts across every AI domain, the Gulf should target strategic niches where its unique position offers advantages. Saudi Arabia could dominate in AI for energy optimization and climate adaptation — areas where its experience and challenges provide unparalleled datasets. The UAE might focus on supply chain optimization and Arabic language AI, addressing market gaps ignored by Western developers. The fundamental question is whether Gulf leadership possesses the intellectual courage to build truly new systems rather than shiny versions of Western ones. GenBio succeeded because it did not replicate existing pharmaceutical models — it reimagined them entirely. The Gulf must do

the same with its economies and institutions. Singapore's Smart Nation initiative works because it integrates technologies into an overarching vision rather than treating them as separate showpieces. Every sensor, algorithm, and database serves a coordinated purpose. This systemic thinking remains rare in the Gulf, where too many projects exist in isolation.

When Kenya revolutionized mobile banking, it was not because the government announced grand plans — it was because regulators allowed an ecosystem to emerge, stepping back as telecom companies, banks, and startups collaborated to solve real problems. The Gulf's top-down approach to innovation often substitutes announcement for achievement. Time is not the Gulf's ally. The window for technological leapfrogging closes rapidly as AI infrastructure solidifies globally. Two futures await: one where Saudi Arabia and the UAE become dynamic centers of innovation, exporting solutions rather than just importing them; another where they remain wealthy consumers of technology developed elsewhere, perpetually one step behind.

The latter is not merely suboptimal — it is fatal in a post-oil world. The achievements in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi today are no mere modernization projects; they are early indicators of whether these nations can reinvent themselves. The question is not whether they can transform — it is whether they are bold enough to create rather than copy, to lead rather than follow. The answer may determine whether the Gulf's moment in history extends beyond the age of oil.

Trump bullish but America divided

Dr Amal Mudallali

PRESIDENT Donald Trump declared on Tuesday that "America is back" at the start of his first speech to a joint session of Congress in his second term. He proclaimed: "America's momentum is back. Our spirit is back. Our pride is back. Our confidence is back," before adding that the American dream is "unstoppable." But a look at the headlines of the last few days shows a different America and a different world than the one the president boasted about.

The country is split down the middle about his policies and that was visually obvious during the speech to Congress. The Department of Government Efficiency and its leader Elon Musk are under attack by Democrats and government employees who have lost their jobs. The opposition, Congress and the courts are battling the president in what some have dubbed a constitutional crisis over the president's authority.

The relationship between the US and its neighbors is tense due to the president's tariffs against Canada and Mexico, while China is threatening a trade war. There are fears over the long-term damage being to America's relations with its neighbors and to global trade. The relationship with America's allies in Europe, America's closest allies and NATO partners, is rife with tension over the war in Ukraine, how best to end it and how to deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In his speech, the president presented a different picture on all these issues and events on the ground show that his strategy is winning so far. The president invited Musk to his congressional speech and praised him for the accomplishments of the

Department of Government Efficiency, which has been tasked with overhauling the federal government. Musk and his team have been making drastic cuts to federal agencies, leading to job cuts, the elimination of agencies like the US Agency for International Development and funding freezes, fueling protests and an outcry by Democrats. Several of the federal employees who have lost their jobs were in the gallery as guests of the Democrats. The president said Musk is "working very hard. He didn't need this" and was not apologetic about the work of the department.

While the president boasted about his success in securing the border, his tariff battle with America's neighbors is capturing the headlines. The tariffs have caused a crisis in America's relationship with Canada and Mexico and are threatening to upend global trade, while affecting the livelihoods of everyday Americans. Experts are warning that the tariffs could lead to greater inflation and affect the president's domestic and economic agendas, while causing recessions in Canada and Mexico.

But Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick announced that the crisis with the two neighbors may be resolved this week and Trump will "probably" announce a deal that will reduce the tariffs, following lengthy phone calls between their representatives and the commerce secretary. The dispute between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his European allies also seems on its way to being resolved. The president softened his tone after he received an "important letter" and expression of regret by Zelensky over

the Oval Office argument with the American president and Vice President J.D. Vance. The letter expressed Ukraine's willingness to come "to the negotiating table as soon as possible to bring lasting peace closer," President Trump said as he read from it. Trump also quoted the Ukrainian president assuring him that he was ready to sign the "agreement on minerals and security."

The US president did not back down from his intention to "reclaim" the Panama Canal or shy away from a new expansionist foreign policy. As proof that Trump's strategy seems to be working, it emerged that a consortium of companies including American investment firm BlackRock was set to buy shares from the Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison Holdings that would give it control of the ports at either end of the canal. This would give Trump, who raised the alarm about potential Chinese interference with shipping operations in the strategic canal, a victory.

Greenland is also still in the sights of the American president. After telling Greenland, "we strongly support your right to determine your own future," he said: "One way or the other, we're going to get it," citing its vitality to American and international security. But the response from Greenland's Prime Minister Mute Bourup Egede was categorical. "We are not for sale and cannot be taken. Our future will be decided by us in Greenland," he wrote after the speech.

Trump did not say much about the Middle East, except to speak of the Abraham Accords that were agreed in his first term, which he described

as "one of the most groundbreaking peace agreements in generations." He said a "lot of things are happening in the Middle East ... a rough neighborhood, actually."

But his administration seems to have already rejected the plan for rebuilding Gaza that was approved by the Arab summit in Cairo this week. National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes told The Times of Israel that Trump "stands by his vision to rebuild Gaza free from Hamas." He added that the Arab plan "does not address the reality that Gaza is currently uninhabitable and residents cannot humanely live in a territory covered in debris and unexploded ordnance." But he kept the door open for more talks "to bring peace and prosperity to the region."

Does Trump's agenda have the backing of the American people, whether domestically or on foreign policy? He spoke to a divided country. The Congress chamber looked like a split screen, with Republicans standing up and cheering and Democrats sitting down and protesting with signs like "it's a lie," "resist" and "Musk steals." But the Democrats seemed more like students protesting in the streets than a political party that has a strategy or a roadmap on how to oppose Trump's agenda.

The president said more Americans now believe that the country is going in the right direction. At least one poll supported this statement, with 47 percent of Americans believing this, up 10 points from December, as Newsweek reported. The Democrats are not seen as a credible opposition with a strategy, while the president is on a winning streak and he is "just getting started," as he said in his speech.

IN 1965, the British government blocked the BBC from broadcasting The War Game, a pseudo-documentary film it had commissioned depicting just what a nuclear attack on the UK would entail. The film, the government judged, was simply too "horrifying" for the public. Two decades after that, The War Game finally aired, prior to the release of the 1984 film Threads, which, in imagining the aftermath of a nuclear attack on the UK, was the first movie to deal with the scientific reality of nuclear winter.

When I was 11, I had nightmares for a few weeks after seeing a trailer for a nuclear doomsday film (The Sum of All Fears) that ran prior to a cinema screening of The Fellowship of the Ring (I had just read the three Lord of the Rings volumes). The Nazgul were disturbing, of course, but they were not of the real world, unlike nukes. This January, I was confronted with The War Game at an exhibition on The Atomic Age at Paris's Museum of Modern Art; I finished the exhibit in near silence. A week later, I watched Threads; it ruined the remainder of my afternoon.

Both films are the bleakest things I have ever seen — enough to induce nightmares in any adult. It is fitting that words fall short of the power of their imagery in revealing the pointless atrocity that would end healthcare, agriculture and even language itself for the mentally ruined, deformed, illiterate generations that would linger on, subsisting through a collective non-life.

During the cold war, the world narrowly escaped that fate more than once. Among the near misses, two are particularly harrowing. In 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis, 36-year-old Vasili Arkhipov, a senior officer on a Soviet submarine, averted nuclear conflict after his two fellow commanders thought non-lethal depth charges exploding around them were the outbreak of war. In 1983, the Soviet officer Stanislav Petrov refused to believe that a launch warning flashing on a radar system was actually an American first strike, and simply decided not to report the incident up the

Katja Freitas

LAST week, US President Donald Trump threw the diplomatic world into chaos when he posted on Truth Social that Zelensky was "a dictator without elections" and falsely claimed that his approval rating had dropped to four percent.

Although he later claimed to be surprised he had ever said it, Trump's headline-grabbing statement was seized upon by Russian politicians to amplify the narrative of Zelensky's illegitimacy. Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council, eagerly echoed Trump's remarks, underscoring how Trump's comments directly played into the Kremlin's propaganda efforts and agreeing with him "200 percent" on X. "If you'd told me just three months ago that these were the words of the US president, I would have laughed out loud," he added.

By aligning with the Kremlin's narrative, Trump furthers its primary objective of inciting unrest among Ukrainians by pushing for elections in Ukraine, which would throw the country into chaos and play into Russia's hands.

EU High Representative Kaja Kallas asserted during her visit to Ukraine on the third anniversary of the war that Russia's narrative is "strongly represented" in the messages coming from the US.

Following Trump's allegations, Western leaders like British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz reacted quickly to reaffirm their support for President Zelensky, underscoring recognition of his legitimacy. Despite the fact that the war has forced Ukraine into difficult democratic compromises, the unity displayed by its institutions and people shows that the country's political

system has remained resilient in the face of existential threats.

A survey released on Feb. 19 by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology — one of Ukraine's leading polling organizations — showed that 57% of Ukrainians trust Zelensky, a five-point increase on December's results. This result directly contradicts the narrative of Zelensky's illegitimacy.

Further demonstrating solidarity, on Feb. 24, the Ukrainian Parliament overwhelmingly reaffirmed Zelensky's mandate. Out of 268 members present, the vote was unanimous, with only 12 deputies absent. The resolution declared that Zelensky's presidency remains legitimate, reaffirming the Ukrainian people's trust and the Verkhovna Rada's support for the leader elected in free, transparent, and democratic elections.

Although the postponement of elections is not ideal, the extraordinary circumstances of the ongoing war provide robust justification. Beyond legal considerations, logistical and legitimacy challenges make holding elections under current conditions highly impractical. Millions of Ukrainians are displaced abroad or internally, while others remain under Russian occupation. Many soldiers are serving on the front lines — factors that would severely undermine the credibility of any election.

During a recent press conference, Zelensky addressed these concerns: "This is just not right. How can we call an election in which half of the population of the country won't be able to vote? How will they be able to vote? How will military personnel be able to vote? There's no way. How can we vote normally when today we were attacked with 267 drones?"

Meanwhile, according to legislation and Ukraine's Constitution, holding elections during martial law is not permitted. However, it is not entirely accurate to claim that the Constitution explicitly prohibits presidential elections during this period. Instead, the Constitution extended the mandate of the Verkhovna Rada (the unicameral Ukrainian parliament), meaning that elections have been postponed and must be held within one month of the end of martial law.

There is a broad consensus among Ukrainians that elections should only take place after this period. The decision on when and whom to elect remains solely with the Ukrainian nation, reflecting its sovereign right to shape its democratic future.

Holding elections during wartime would compromise the constitutional right of every citizen to participate in free and fair elections by secret ballot without threats or intimidation. Russia's ongoing aggression renders any election impractical and would prevent every member of society. To uphold the integrity of the electoral process there needs to be a sustainable ceasefire, followed by the lifting of martial law and thorough logistical preparations, including setting up voting infrastructure.

The Kremlin is bound to amplify the narrative of Ukraine's alleged illegitimacy throughout its talks with the US. However, it is extremely ironic that an authoritarian regime — whose leader manipulated the Constitution to cling to power until 2036, robbing its own people of free and fair elections — is lecturing sovereign nations on democracy. Russia's attempt to weaponize democratic discourse only exposes its hypocrisy and blatant disrespect for its own citizens' fundamental rights.



International Women's Day NBP pledges to accelerate action on gender equality



F.P. Report

KARACHI: National Bank of Pakistan commemorated International Women's Day by inviting Dr. Shehla Najeeb Sidiki, Dean of Faculty of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Ziauddin University, Karachi and Muqaddas Abdul Rasheed, a young football player from Lyari to a session at NBP Head Office, Karachi.

The session was attended by female staff of the Bank, including many who are part of the senior management. Mr. Rehmat Ali

Hasnie, President & CEO NBP, Mr. Asim Baig, Group Head HRMG NBP, and the senior leadership team of the Bank were also present on the occasion.

Dr. Shehla Najeeb spoke at length about her life journey, breaking biases in the professional field, and the unwavering support she received from the family. She underscored the growing role of women in leadership across various sectors and emphasized the need for equal opportunities in educational institutions.

Her professional advice

to all women was to work hard towards their dreams and believe in themselves.

National football player Muqaddas Abdul Rasheed shared her journey of struggles and achievements in the sports field, encouraging young women to pursue their dreams with determination.

She stands as a beacon of hope, proving no matter where you come from or how impossible your dreams may seem, with enough perseverance, you can turn them into reality.

Commenting on the occasion, Mr. Rehmat Ali

Hasnie, President & CEO, National Bank of Pakistan, highlighted the importance of providing a conducive environment where women can thrive professionally. He emphasized that women are integral to society and the national workforce.

Mr. Mirza Asim Baig, Group Head Human Resource Group, reiterated the bank's commitment to promoting women's advancement in the banking sector and increasing their inclusion within the institution. He stressed that efforts for women's rights must continue at individual, institutional, and governmental levels.

The session concluded with a collective thought of fostering a collaborative work environment, and promoting gender partnership through equity and inclusion within workplaces across Pakistan. NBP remains committed to empowering women, enhancing their participation in the workforce, and strengthening their role in a progressive society.



FAISALABAD: Farmer family busy in their routine work in a field. — APP photo

Futuremakers Women in Tech programme Standard Chartered boosts investment in its across Africa, Middle East and Pakistan

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Standard Chartered announced a partnership with Village Capital to continue and expand its Futuremakers Women in Tech Accelerator across Africa, the Middle East, and Pakistan.

Part of Futuremakers by Standard Chartered (Futuremakers), the Bank's global youth economic empowerment initiative for disadvantaged young people, and with funding from the Standard Chartered Foundation, Futuremakers Women in Tech Accelerator will provide specialised training, catalytic funding, and access to a global network of peers, finance providers, industry leaders, and ecosystem partners.

Over three years, 400 women entrepreneurs will receive support to build thriving microbusinesses, create jobs, and drive lasting social and environmental impact. The initiative aims to:

Provide more than 32 catalytic grants totalling almost USD1.9m

Enable and support over 1,200 jobs.

Delivered in collaboration with local expert

implementing partners, the Accelerator will be available across 12 of Standard Chartered's markets, continuing in Bahrain, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia*, South Africa*, UAE, and Zambia, and expanding to two new markets - Uganda and Egypt.

Tanuj Kapilashrami, Chief Strategy and Talent Officer at Standard Chartered, said: "Empowering women is critical to economic growth, and central to our stand of lifting participation by unleashing the financial potential of women and small businesses. We believe equitable access to funding and resources is essential to fostering innovation and driving meaningful social impact - whether it be through our Futuremakers philanthropic programmes, our banking propositions such as the SC Women's International Network, or the work we do towards supporting a diverse supplier base.

Through the Futuremakers Women in Tech Accelerator, we are addressing the systemic challenges women microbusiness owners

face, creating pathways for them to scale their businesses which will, in turn, help drive positive change in their communities."

Highlighting the partnership's impact, Rachel Crawford, Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer at Village Capital, said: "Our partnership with Standard Chartered is a gamechanger for women-led start-ups across Africa, the Middle East, and Pakistan. By providing critical resources, catalytic capital, and market-level support, we aim to drive inclusive economic growth and ensure that women entrepreneurs can scale their businesses and impact communities at a transformative level."

Commenting on the impact of the programme, a Women in Tech alumna, Priscilla, CEO and Co-Founder of Rhea, a microbusiness based in Kenya, said: "The Women in Tech programme has been a gamechanger for my company. It not only provided access to crucial capital, but also a start-up support system that is tailored for women entrepreneurs to ensure they can align their businesses for impact. I've gained the financial tools, mentorship, and network needed

to scale my business with confidence."

Launching Futuremakers Women in Tech

Applications for the 2025 Futuremakers Women in Tech Accelerator will open in late April. Participants will receive investment-readiness training, personalised development plans, and expert mentorship, working with advisors and industry leaders to strengthen their business models and access networking opportunities. More than USD600K in grant funding for entrepreneurs will be distributed annually across markets.

Since launching more than a decade ago, Women in Tech has helped more than 4,000 women across 17 of Standard Chartered's markets. Today's news follows the announcement that Futuremakers Women in Tech is continuing in the US, with applications already underway.

Futuremakers Women in Tech is one of several programmes that aim to tackle inequality and empower disadvantaged young people. Since launching in 2019, Futuremakers has enabled and supported more than 88,900 jobs.

Hajj 2025 e-Balloting successfully conducted for PAA employees



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) successfully conducted the e-Balloting for Hajj 2025 for its employees today. The balloting took place at PAA Headquarters in

Karachi, where Director General (AVM) Zeeshan Saeed initiated the process by clicking the "Start Balloting" button. Members of the Management Committee and other officials were also present at the event.

The Director of Human Resources announced the names of the successful candidates selected through e-Balloting. On this occasion, the Director General congratulated the selected employees and assured that the number of

successful candidates would be increased in the future. Due to technical reasons, the event could not be live-streamed on the official Facebook page, and we sincerely regret any inconvenience caused.

PSX holds gong ceremony for listing of Barkat Frisian Agro Limited

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) celebrated the successful listing of Barkat Frisian Agro Limited (BFAL) with a prestigious Gong Ceremony. The event was attended by key stakeholders, including Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Chairperson of PSX, Mr. Farrukh H. Sabzwari, MD & CEO of PSX, Mr. Muhammad Adil Ali, Founder & CEO of Barkat Frisian Agro Limited, Mr. Shahid Ali Habib, CEO Arif Habib Ltd, Directors of PSX and BFAL, senior management and representatives of BFAL, market participants, and distinguished guests from the corporate sector.

Barkat Frisian Agro Limited, a joint venture between the Netherlands-based Frisian Egg Group and Pakistan's Buksh Group, specializes in the production of pasteurized eggs. The company's Initial Public Offering (IPO) concluded with an impressive oversubscription of 16.25 times, reflecting strong investor confidence in its vision and growth potential.

With its successful listing on PSX, Barkat Frisian Agro Limited aims to expand its operations, increase productivity, and contribute to the development of Pakistan's poultry

sector. This milestone not only underscores the company's commitment to innovation and quality but also highlights the growing interest in agribusiness investments within Pakistan's capital market.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairperson PSX, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, particularly appreciated Shahid Habib for his support in structuring and bringing to listing the issue. Shahid Habib is well recognized for his investment management and research competence. Investor participation and financial inclusion are key drivers of market growth, and this IPO has been a significant step in that direction.

"I commend Mr. Adil (Founder & CEO of Barkat Frisian Agro Ltd) for pioneering the pasteurized egg market and successfully breaking new ground, crossing borders, and paving the way for increased foreign exchange earnings for Pakistan."

At PSX, we remain committed to broadening investor participation and making inroads into new sectors."

"We extend our gratitude to the management, Securities & Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), and all market participants for their contributions to the success of this



IPO."

Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director & CEO of PSX, Mr. Farrukh H Sabzwari, congratulated Barkat Frisian Agro Limited on its successful listing, highlighting the importance of poultry sector for the nation's economy.

He remarked, "At PSX, we strongly believe in the power of young entrepreneurs to drive innovation, economic growth, and market expansion. The successful listing of Barkat Frisian Agro Limited is a testament to this vision, as it is led by a dynamic young entrepreneur

who has set an example for others to follow.

We congratulate Barkat Frisian Agro Limited on its successful IPO and welcome it to the Pakistan Stock Exchange. This achievement not only strengthens the capital markets but also paves the way for more young business leaders to take the helm and contribute to Pakistan's economic progress."

At the ceremony, CEO of Barkat Frisian Agro Limited (BFAL), Mr. Muhammad Adil Ali, expressed gratitude to investors and stakeholders for their trust and support. He stated,

"We are thrilled to witness exceptional participation in Barkat Frisian Agro Limited's Initial Public Offering (IPO), from a diverse investor base, which contributed to substantial oversubscription."

The offering attracted a diverse pool of investors, including mutual funds, brokerage firms, financial institutions, development finance institutions (DFIs), and individual investors, underscoring broad-based confidence in the company's vision and long-term potential.

We founded Barkat Frisian

Agro Limited to pioneer innovation in the agro food processing industry and lead transformative change. As the sole player and market leader in Pakistan's pasteurized egg segment, we are honored by the overwhelming trust investors have placed in our capabilities and growth strategy.

"The remarkable 16.2 times oversubscription reflects strong confidence in our company's ability to achieve groundbreaking results and further solidifies our position as an industry leader."

Moreover, this IPO highlights the strength of Pakistan's capital markets. Its outstanding success is expected to encourage a wave of future IPOs at the Pakistan Stock Exchange, further enriching the market landscape and expanding investment opportunities."

"We are deeply grateful for the trust and support of our investors and remain committed to delivering long-term value for all stakeholders."

Giving his remarks, Mr. Shahid Ali Habib CEO Arif Habib Ltd said, "We are excited to see the IPO of Barkat Frisian Agro Limited achieve a historic oversubscription of 16.2x. With total demand reaching PKR 15.5 billion and participation from 8,500 investors, it stands

among the highest investor turnouts for any IPO in Pakistan. The offering attracted a diverse mix of institutional investors, mutual funds, insurance companies, banks, family offices, corporate investors, and a significant number of individual investors. On its first day of listing, the stock surged 10%, marking the highest first-day gain for any IPO since the book-building process began in 2010.

As the first consumer-sector IPO in five years, it also secured the maximum 40% premium in bidding, reflecting strong investor confidence. This success sets a new benchmark and is expected to open doors for more IPOs at the Pakistan Stock Exchange, further enriching the capital market landscape."

The listing of Barkat Frisian Agro Ltd underscores PSX's role in facilitating businesses to raise funds and achieve long-term sustainability through the capital market.

The Gong Ceremony with the symbolic ringing of the bell, signified the commencement of trading in Barkat Frisian's shares on PSX. This milestone marks the beginning of a new chapter for Barkat Frisian Agro Limited & its investors.

Investors seek clarity on tariffs from White House

NEW YORK (Reuters): Seesaw tariff announcements have unnerved Wall Street, as investors said flip-flopping moves by the Trump administration to roll back levies on trading partners were causing confusion rather than bringing relief.

The S&P 500 (.SPX), opens new tab is down 4.3% since President Donald Trump took office on January 20, with tariffs being one key concern for investors as many believe they can harm economic growth and be inflationary.

"The administration seems to be trying to play a ping pong game by

announcing something and then pulling it back on tariffs, but this time it's not working," said Art Hogan, market strategist at B. Riley.

A punishing selloff in stocks on Thursday came as Trump exempted goods from Canada and Mexico for a month from the 25% tariffs that he had imposed earlier this week. The Nasdaq (.IXIC), opens new tab is down 2.6% on the day, showing it has been in a correction since its record high close on December 16.

The latest tariff announcement came as only a partial relief to stocks, as Wall Street traders question

how a trade policy based on tariffs will impact the broader economy.

Trump sees tariffs as a way to increase the country's revenue and boost growth as well as a negotiating tool with other countries, but investors fear the trade policies may weaken consumer confidence and freeze companies' capital spending.

"The rational economic response to business leaders when there's such a high degree of uncertainty is to sit on their hands and just defer making decisions," said Bill Sterling, global strategist at GW&K Investment Management.

PSX continues with bullish trend

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 685.52 points, a positive change of 0.60 percent, closing at 114,398.70 points as compared to 113,713.18 points on the last trading day.

A total of 404,365,056 shares were traded during the day as compared to 373,093,763 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs27,842 billion against Rs26,249 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 433 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 219 of them recorded gains and 151 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 63 companies remained unchanged.

اطلاع عام
عوام اپنا کوٹھل کیا جاتا ہے کہ پلاٹ نمبر 01 بنگلہ 777، 778، 779، 780، 781، 782، 783، 784، 785، 786، 787، 788، 789، 790، 791، 792، 793، 794، 795، 796، 797، 798، 799، 800، 801، 802، 803، 804، 805، 806، 807، 808، 809، 810، 811، 812، 813، 814، 815، 816، 817، 818، 819، 820، 821، 822، 823، 824، 825، 826، 827، 828، 829، 830، 831، 832، 833، 834، 835، 836، 837، 838، 839، 840، 841، 842، 843، 844، 845، 846، 847، 848، 849، 850، 851، 852، 853، 854، 855، 856، 857، 858، 859، 860، 861، 862، 863، 864، 865، 866، 867، 868، 869، 870، 871، 872، 873، 874، 875، 876، 877، 878، 879، 880، 881، 882، 883، 884، 885، 886، 887، 888، 889، 890، 891، 892، 893، 894، 895، 896، 897، 898، 899، 900، 901، 902، 903، 904، 905، 906، 907، 908، 909، 910، 911، 912، 913، 914، 915، 916، 917، 918، 919، 920، 921، 922، 923، 924، 925، 926، 927، 928، 929، 930، 931، 932، 933، 934، 935، 936، 937، 938، 939، 940، 941، 942، 943، 944، 945، 946، 947، 948، 949، 950، 951، 952، 953، 954، 955، 956، 957، 958، 959، 960، 961، 962، 963، 964، 965، 966، 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In brief

Gillespie slams Gavaskar's 'nonsense' comment

KARACHI (Web Desk): Former Pakistan head coach Jason Gillespie has slammed Sunil Gavaskar over his comment on the Pakistan cricket team. Following Pakistan's dismal outing in the Champions Trophy 2025, the former India batter asserted that the side will find it hard to beat India B or C team. "I think a B team (from India) certainly (can give Pakistan a run for their money). C team, I am not too sure. But a B team will be very, very hard to beat for Pakistan in their current form," Sunil Gavaskar said after Pakistan crashed out of the Champions Trophy 2025. His comments did not sit well with former Australia pacer Jason Gillespie who served as Pakistan cricket team's head coach for a brief period before his sudden departure. The former Pakistan coach called Sunil Gavaskar's comments "absolute nonsense," saying that they can beat any side with the right combination. "I don't buy this rhetoric. I saw some comments from Sunil Gavaskar about the Indian B team or Indian C team would beat the Pakistan top team. That's nonsense, absolute nonsense," Jason Gillespie said during a recent interview. According to the former Australia pacer, Pakistan cricket had the ability to overcome any challenge if they pick and stick with the right players. "I've got no doubt about that. They just got to pick the right high-end talent and support them and be patient with them," he said. It is to be noted here that Pakistan, defending champions and hosts of the Champions Trophy 2025, were knocked out of the tournament after two successive losses to New Zealand and India.

Man City ban 165 fan accounts

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester City have banned the accounts of 165 supporters for ticket touting following an investigation. After reports of away supporters in home areas in games against Feyenoord, Manchester United and Real Madrid the club looked into how tickets are becoming available. As a result, 165 accounts have received a ban for touting with 354 suspended and 223 being 'closely monitored'. City told a meeting with the City Matters Fan Network, external that they want all general admission seats in home areas to be occupied by Manchester City fans, and they never knowingly sell tickets to away fans. A security expert told the BBC two years ago that the black market of Premier League ticket touting was worth more than £50m per year. Rivals Manchester United said they cannot "completely eliminate" the possibility of away fans obtaining tickets in areas designated for home supporters at Old Trafford after Rangers fans were seen celebrating a goal in January. City have 37,000 season-ticket holders, and fans are able to transfer tickets to other supporters if they cannot attend a match. The club said that, on average, a home Premier League match sees 15% of season-ticket members transfer their ticket to a friend or family member, 10% list them on the club's official ticket exchange and 8% do not attend. City's next home game is against Brighton on 15 March.

Pak team featuring in World Winter Special Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani team has arrived in Turin, Italy to feature in the 16th World Winter Special Games 2025 commencing Saturday, at the Inalpi Arena. Delegations from various countries, including Pakistan, have arrived in Turin to participate in the grand opening ceremony, said a press release. Earlier, the Special Olympics Italy officials warmly welcomed the Pakistani contingent upon their arrival at Milan Airport. The World Games will take place from March 8 to 15 in Turin, Italy, featuring over 1,500 athletes from more than 93 countries, along with 2,000 volunteers. Pakistan is represented by a 25-member delegation, including 10 athletes (5 men and 5 women), along with coaches, officials, medical staff, and youth leaders. The

Pakistani athletes will compete in Snowshoeing and Cross-Country Skiing. Additionally, six female members of the delegation will represent Pakistan at the Global Youth Leadership Summit (GYLS). Upon arrival in Italy, Pakistani athlete Muhammad Afaq Khan expressed his excitement, saying, "Representing Pakistan at the international level is a great honor for us." Meanwhile, athlete Muhammad Moazzam Iqbal said, "We have come with the spirit of victory for Pakistan." Special athlete Tabassum Ahmed shared his enthusiasm, saying that he is "fully motivated and determined to deliver a great result for the nation." Pakistani coaches Erum Majeed and Muhammad Irfan emphasized that participating in such a mega event will enhance the

skills and experience of the athletes. They praised the Pakistani players for their talent, dedication, and eagerness to learn, highlighting the rigorous training they underwent for the Winter Games. Head of Delegation, Farukhanda Jabeen, said Pakistani athletes have prepared extensively for the World Winter Games. Chairperson of Special Olympics Pakistan, Ronak Lakhani, expressed her confidence, stating that Pakistan's special athletes will give their best performance and strive to reach the victory stand. She further emphasized that Special Olympics Pakistan is committed to promoting an inclusive society where individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities have equal opportunities to excel in both sports and life.

Arteta warns misfiring Man Utd still a threat

London (AFP): Mikel Arteta said this week's 7-1 hammering of PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League had given the club a huge lift but urged caution ahead of Sunday's trip to misfiring Manchester United. Second-placed Arsenal, 13 points behind leaders Liverpool, are realistically out of the Premier League title race after recent stumbles. But they travel to Old Trafford seeking their fifth straight league win over their old rivals in Arteta's 200th Premier League game in charge. Arsenal, struggling with injuries in forward areas and goalless in their past two league matches, hit form in the first leg of their last-16 Champions League tie on Tuesday. "It was a great night for us in an important competition that we have hope in," the Gunners boss said on

Friday. "The manner, the way we did it obviously lifted everybody. That's the past unfortunately so it's about what we do today, the preparation for tomorrow and try to replicate a great performance on Sunday." United are a lowly 14th in the Premier League, 21 points behind Arsenal, but Arteta said they should not be underestimated. The Spaniard was asked what he expected from Ruben Amorim's team, who have produced some surprising results this season including a win against Manchester City, a draw against Liverpool and an FA Cup win against Arsenal on penalties. "That's the history of that football club," he said. "The players that they have and the coach that they have. "Watching the game last night against Real Sociedad (a 1-1 draw in the Europa

League) you come very clear that they are very capable to put a really strong performance and beat you on the day. So we know that, we know the difficulty of the match and that's how we prepared." Arteta, who became Arsenal manager in December 2019, was asked at his pre-match press conference to name his top moments as Gunners boss as he marks 200 league games in charge. "Probably the number one is with the day that I was sitting here on the first day, just fulfilling that dream of one day becoming the manager of this incredible football club," he said. "And then there are many others, but the other night was up there with one of the best because of the way we did it." He added: "I have a lot of energy still and I'm very driven to have more success."

Guardiola feeling pressure as top-four race heats up

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola admitted Friday he is feeling the pressure as he tries to salvage Manchester City's poor season by finishing in the top four of the Premier League. City, who have won six of the past seven Premier League titles, are currently fourth in the table, a single point behind Saturday's opponents Nottingham Forest. A top-four finish is usually required to qualify for the Champions League but fifth place is likely to be enough this season. City have been ever-present in Europe's top club competition since 2011/12, lifting the trophy for the first time in 2023. Guardiola was asked at his pre-match press conference on Friday how the pressure he faces now compares to when City have been fighting for the Premier League title in previous seasons. "The pressure is always there," he said. "In the big clubs the pressure is always there. You have to press

yourself to do your best. It doesn't matter what you are playing for." He added: "The reality is to try to finish in the top four and tomorrow (Saturday) we have an opportunity to go third in the table and climb and secure this target." Guardiola said he was wary of the threat from Nuno Espirito Santo's Forest, whose league form has dipped in recent weeks. "When you are third in the table after eight, 10 fixtures, OK," he said. "But when you are there with 11 games left, still you are third, it's because you have done really, really, really well. "Otherwise you cannot be there for many, many times, many months, doing good things and being third in the table. Impressive, I would say." Just six points separate Forest in third spot from Aston Villa in 10th, setting up a tight finish to the season. "There are many clubs, many teams fighting for

this target," said Guardiola. "Everyone wants to be in the Champions League next season. "For the club, for the prestige, for our sustainability, economically, for many reasons." Guardiola, whose team are out of the Champions League but through to the FA Cup quarter-finals, was relaxed about his side's European fate. "It will not be the end of the world (if we don't qualify)," he said. "We want to qualify for the Champions League but if it doesn't happen it's because we haven't been good enough and the other teams deserve it." City manager Guardiola also told reporters that defender Nathan Ake could be out for up to 11 weeks following surgery on a fracture in his left foot. The Netherlands international was substituted during City's FA Cup fifth-round victory over Plymouth at the Etihad Stadium last week after aggravating the problem.

NZ hopeful bowler Henry will be fit for India final

DUBAI (Agencies): New Zealand are hopeful pace bowler Matt Henry will be fit to face India in the Champions Trophy final in Dubai on Sunday. Henry, 33, the tournament's leading wicket-taker, jarred his right shoulder while taking a catch in the Black Caps' semi-final win against South Africa. New Zealand are awaiting results of scans and coach Gary Stead said they will give Henry "every chance". "It is still a little bit of an unknown," Stead said. "He is obviously pretty sore. [We are] hopeful he will be OK." Henry has taken 10 wickets in New Zealand's four matches at the Champions Trophy - two more than the next most successful bowler, Mohammed Shami, who has taken eight for India. He was injured taking the catch to dismiss Heinrich Klaasen in the 29th over but after spending time off the field returned to bowl two further overs. Pace bowler Jacob Duffy or fast-bowling all-rounder Nathan Smith would be the most likely replacements for Henry if he is not passed fit. "It was pretty uncomfortable," Stead said. "The positive thing for us is he got back out there to bowl." "We are going to give him every chance to be playing in this match." New Zealand arrived back in Dubai on Thursday after playing their semi-final in Lahore a day earlier. That came after they were beaten by 44 runs by India in Dubai in the final match of Group A on Sunday. India's progression means the final will also be played in Dubai, because India have refused to travel to hosts Pakistan. The advantages India have gained from playing all of their matches in Dubai, rather than travelling to the three Pakistan venues, has been a constant topic of debate throughout the tournament but Stead played down the issue. "It is a little bit out of our control," he said. "They are not decisions that come across my desk anyway."

ECB apologises for Pope Francis Ashes post joke

LONDON (Agencies): The England and Wales Cricket Board has apologised for a social media post joking that Pope Francis "loves the Ashes". A message on the X account of the 88-year-old Pope, who has been in hospital since February, was posted to mark Ash Wednesday. In response, the England Cricket account wrote: "Even @Pontifex loves The Ashes". The post has since been deleted. An ECB spokesperson said: "This was an ill-judged post and was swiftly deleted. We apologise for any offence." On Wednesday, the account of Pope Francis posted: "The Ashes remind us of who we are, which does us good. "It puts us in our place, smooths out the rough edges of our narcissism, brings us back to reality, and makes us more humble and open to one another. None of us is God; we are all on a journey." Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the 40-day period in which Christians prepare for Easter.

'No advantage' in playing CT matches in Dubai, says Gambhir

DUBAI (AFP): India playing all their Champions Trophy matches in Dubai was a pre-tournament decision and the talk of unfair advantage is baseless, the team's batting coach said on Friday. Rohit Sharma's team face New Zealand in the title clash on Sunday at the Dubai International Stadium, where India have been unbeaten in four matches. India refused to tour hosts Pakistan in the eight-nation tournament due to political tensions and were given Dubai as their venue in the United Arab Emirates. "The draw that happened, it happened before," batting coach Sitanshu Kotak told reporters. "After India winning four matches, if people feel that there is an advantage, then I don't know what to say about it." The tournament's tangled schedule, with teams flying in and out of the UAE from Pakistan while India have stayed put, has been hugely controversial. South Africa batsman David Miller said "it was not an ideal situation" for

his team to fly in to Dubai to wait on India's semi-final opponent and then fly back to Lahore in less than 24 hours. Even nominal hosts Pakistan had to jump on a jet and fly to Dubai to play India, rather than face them on home soil. The pitches have been vastly different in the two countries. Pakistan tracks produced big totals, in contrast to the slow and turning decks of the Dubai stadium. "End of the day, I think in a game, you have to play good cricket every day when you turn up," the 52-year-old Kotak said. "So the only thing they (critics) may say is that we play here. But that is how the draw is." "So nothing else can happen in that. It is not that after coming here, they changed something and we got an advantage," he added. India have been the team to beat after they topped Group A, which had New Zealand, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They then beat Australia in the first semi-final. New Zealand, led by

Mitchell Santner, lost the last group game to India by 44 runs before they beat South Africa in the second semi-final in Lahore. Kotak said the previous result between the two teams will have no bearing on their mindset going into the final. "That depends how the New Zealand team thinks, but I think we should not think that," said Kotak. "We should just try and turn up and play a good game of cricket because there is no use thinking about the last match." New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said they are not too worried about India's advantage. "I mean, look, the decision around that's out of our hands," said Stead. "So, it's not something we worry about too much. India have got to play all their games here in Dubai. But as you said, we have had a game here and we'll learn very quickly from that experience there as well." "And if we're good enough to beat India on Sunday, then I'm sure we'll be very, very happy," he added.

Kyrgios out at Indian Wells, van de Zandschulp advances

INDIAN WELLS (AFP/APP): Lucky loser Botic van de Zandschulp advanced to face five-time Indian Wells champion Novak Djokovic on Thursday as first-round foe Nick Kyrgios was forced out of his latest comeback event with a right wrist injury. A distraught Kyrgios trailed 7-6 (9/7), 3-0 when he called a halt after consulting the trainer. The mercurial Australian, last seen grimacing from an abdominal injury and firing expletives at his coaching box as he fell in the first round at the Australian Open, was playing on a protected ranking after missing 18 months following knee surgery and wrist reconstruction. "It's always hard to see

someone walk off court like that," van de Zandschulp said. "But especially Nick. His previous year, couple of years, have been tough ... (it's) tough to see someone hurting like this." Kyrgios had displayed some of his crowd-pleasing best in the opening set, keeping one rally alive with two between-the-legs shots. Down two breaks he rallied to force the tiebreaker, but after saving one set point he failed to convert one of his own before van de Zandschulp pocketed the set. "It's never easy to play someone like him," van de Zandschulp said. "You never know what to expect. Had to be sharp every point." Kyrgios, who hasn't won an ATP match since 2022,

was clearly hurting in the second set, flexing his hand and staring at his wrist between points. After withdrawing, he sat with his head in his hands before walking dejectedly off the court. Van de Zandschulp, ranked 85th in the world, will now get a chance to add another big name to his victims list. The Dutch 29-year-old toppled Carlos Alcaraz at the US Open last year and beat Rafael Nadal in Davis Cup play in what proved to be the last match of the Spaniard's career. He's played Djokovic once before and lost. "What I remember from the last match is I actually played pretty good -- lost 6-3, 6-1," he said.

Paris wins Kvitfjell downhill as Odermatt closes in on WC titles

KVITFJELL (AFP): Marco Odermatt closed in on two World Cup globes as he finished second to Dominik Paris in a wind-blown men's downhill in Kvitfjell on Friday. Paris took his first victory of the season in 1min 44.67sec. It was a record fourth victory on the Olympiabakken and the 19th downhill win in his career, taking him level with Switzerland's Petter Muller in second place on the all-time World Cup downhill winners list. "I don't know if I am the 'king', but I am feeling well, it's a good hill for me," said the 35-year-old who previously won in the Norwegian resort in 2016, 2019 and 2022. Paris, with just two top-10 finishes this season and without a victory for 14 months, added: "You have to be very smooth and yeah, I know the key section. That makes it a bit easier."

Odermatt was 0.32sec behind the veteran Italian, but increased his lead in the discipline standings as he led a convoy of red-clad Swiss skiers home. Stefan Rogentin was third at 0.63sec, Franjo Von Allmen placed fourth at 0.83sec after a characteristically wild ride, and Alexis Monney finished fifth at 0.89sec. The Swiss men have now claimed 14 of the 21 downhill podium spots this season. "It's nice to be captain of such a great team," said Odermatt, with one hand on a fourth consecutive overall World Cup title. "The young guns, they are coming, they are pushing me a lot. I try to stay on the top. Franjo came very, very close in many races already. "We are having a good time together, we try to help each other, push each other. They also push me and that's something very good."

Odermatt collected 80 points to increase his lead in the downhill standings to 103 over Von Allmen and 220 over Monney. "I tried several times before in the downhill (here) and never came better than seventh place. A great step," said the 27-year-old Odermatt. The downhillers race again on Saturday in Kvitfjell and finish their season in the March 20-27 finals in Sun Valley, Idaho. Swiss star Odermatt, who also tops the super-G and giant slalom standings, boosted his edge in the overall standings to 440 points over slalom leader Henrik Kristoffersen. While there are only four slalom or giant slalom races left -- with 100pts up for grabs for the winner of each race -- the Norwegian could opt to race speed events in Sun Valley in the unlikely pursuit of points.

Doncic, James lead Lakers fightback as Knicks downed in thriller

LOS ANGELES (AFP): Luka Doncic and LeBron James combined for 63 points as the Los Angeles Lakers produced a thrilling late fightback to seal a 113-109 overtime victory over the New York Knicks on Thursday. The red-hot Lakers extended their unbeaten streak to eight games in a pulsating battle at the Crypto.com Arena that saw Doncic finish with 32 points while James poured in 31. Doncic and James had both been instrumental in dragging the Lakers back into the contest after the Knicks led by 10 points midway through the fourth quarter. The Knicks meanwhile were left ruing a potential victory that

slipped through their fingers despite a majestic performance from Jalen Brunson, who scored a game-high 39 points. The agony of the Knicks' defeat was compounded by an injury to Brunson in overtime, with the mercurial point guard limping off the court after rolling his right ankle in a collision with the Lakers' Austin Reaves. "Our physicality in the fourth quarter was next level," an exhausted Doncic said afterwards. "Once we got started, we played basketball. "They're a great team with great players and it's a tough win. We've got eight in a row now and every game is a battle for us." The Lakers looked to be struggling after trailing for most of the

game against a fired-up Knicks, who led by as much as 13 at one stage. But after struggling for shooting accuracy for most of the contest, the Lakers began making shots in the fourth quarter. James bagged a crucial pair of three-pointers while Gabe Vincent also drained three from outside the arc to spark the comeback. Vincent finished with 12 points while Lakers rookie Dalton Knecht also chipped in with 11 points off the bench, including three three-pointers. The Lakers moved to 40-21 with the victory to remain in second place in the Western Conference, 10.5 games adrift of runaway leaders Oklahoma City. Curry sparks Warriors comeback

Elsewhere Thursday, Stephen Curry scored 40 points as the Golden State Warriors rallied back from a double-digit deficit for a second straight game to defeat the Brooklyn Nets 121-119 in New York. Curry -- who scored 28 points in the Warriors' comeback victory over the New York Knicks on Tuesday -- was in superb form as Golden State climbed out of a 22-point first quarter hole to grab a third consecutive road win. Curry's 40-point haul included seven three-pointers from 13 attempts, with the pick being a jaw-dropping heave from near halfway to end the first half. That highlight reel-worthy moment made it a five-point game at the break as the

Warriors roared back to life after being outscored by a whopping 35-15 in the first quarter. The Warriors found their rhythm in the second period, pouring in 40 points to the Nets' 25 before going on to complete the comeback after the interval. Curry was backed by 25 points from Jimmy Butler while Gary Payton II added 16 from the bench. Cameron Johnson led Brooklyn's scoring with 26 points. The Warriors improved to 35-28 and are now sixth in the Western Conference as they chase a return to the postseason after missing out last year. Elsewhere, the Boston Celtics maintained their pursuit of the Cleveland Cavaliers at the top of the Eastern Conference after

cruising past an injury-depleted Philadelphia 76ers 123-105. The Sixers, missing Joel Embiid, Paul George and Tyrese Maxey, were never in the hunt as the Celtics completed a wire-to-wire victory to improve to 45-18 in the East, 7.5 games back from leaders Cleveland. Jayson Tatum led the rout for Boston with 35 points, while the in-form Payton Pritchard came up big from the bench with 19 points. The only down note for the Celtics came in the second quarter when Derrick White was forced to leave the game after losing a tooth in a physical tussle with the Sixers' Kelly Oubre Jr. White left the game but returned in the second half wearing a mouthguard.



In brief

ANF recovers 43 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 6 operations recovered over 43 kg drugs worth over Rs 5.8 million and arrested 7 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday. He informed that 325 grams ice hidden in a parcel sent to New Zealand through a courier office in Lahore was recovered. In another operation, 14.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of two women rounded up near Sawan Adda, Rawalpindi. In third operation, 16.8 kg hashish hidden in the secret cavities of a vehicle near 26 No. Chungi in Islamabad was seized and two Afghan nationals were arrested. 6 kg hashish concealed in the luggage of a suspect near M-1 Motorway Islamabad was recovered. In 5th operation, 5 kg ice was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Faizpur Interchange Sheikhupura and a suspect was arrested. In 6th operation, 1 kg ice was recovered which was concealed in the bag of a suspect netted near Babu Sabu Chowk, Lahore. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

9 criminals netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police in actions against criminals on Friday arrested nine accused including drug peddlers, liquor suppliers and illegal arms owners. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the R A Bazaar Police held accused Moin Javed with 1.41 kilograms chedas and the Kallar Syedan Police recovered 570 grams of the contraband item from accused Abdul Rauf. Similarly, five accused were nabbed with 29 litres of liquor. The Ganjmandi Police arrested two accused Usama Irfan and Suleman with 8 litres and 5 liters of the commodity, while the Taxila Police recovered 5 litres of liquor from accused Hasnain. Likewise, the Waris Khan Police also held two liquor suppliers Bilal and Suhail with 7 litres and 4 litres of the commodity. Meanwhile, the Civil Lines Police netted two accused for possessing illegal arms and ammunition. The Irshad was held with a 9-mm pistol and Aziz with a 30-bore pistol.

5 held for gambling

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Sadar Baroni Police on Friday held five accused for gambling on cards, with stake money of Rs 20,000. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the accused Nasir, Shah Ali, Shafiq, Shah Muhammad and Abdul Jabbar were caught red-handed while playing cards. Besides the bet amount, six mobile phones and playing cards were also recovered from the accused, the spokesman said.

Police arrest PO

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawat Police on Friday arrested a Proclaimed Offender (PO) wanted in a case of breach of trust. The accused Khurram was booked by the Rawat Police Station for the breach of trust in 2021 and he had been in hiding since then, the Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. The police today raided his hideout to arrest him.



ISLAMABAD: Political and Public Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister, Rana Sanaullah Khan, meets with the Political Counsellor of the US Embassy, Zach Harkinrider. —APP Photo

First Friday of Ramadan observed with religious reverence

ISLAMABAD (APP): Muslims across the country and around the globe observed the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan with great reverence, devotion and prayers.

The occasion holds immense spiritual significance as it marks the beginning of a month-long journey of self-purification, worship, and charity.

Mosques were filled with worshippers offering special prayers for peace, prosperity, and protection—both for Pakistan and the entire Muslim Ummah. Religious scholars, during their sermons (Khutbas), emphasized the importance of seeking forgiveness, engaging in acts of kindness, and strengthening one's connection with Allah.

"Ramadan is a time for self-discipline and self-improvement, and the first Jummah serves as a reminder to set pure intentions for the coming weeks," said Imam during his Friday sermon to the people gathered for

prayer at the picturesque Faisal Mosque at the foothills of Margallas. Thousands faithful gathered at the grand mosque, seeking Allah's mercy and committing themselves to worship and charity. Among them was Ayub, a young devotee, who offered his first Jummah prayer of Ramadan at the Faisal Mosque.

"I feel truly blessed to be here today," he said. "This Ramadan, I intend to engage in more acts of charity and worship to seek Allah's rewards." The significance of Jummah in Islam is deeply rooted in history. It is believed to be the day when Prophet Adam (AS) was created and later expelled from Jannah.

Several key events in Islamic history, including the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Madinah and the decisive Battle of Badr, also took place on a Friday. Due to its importance, the Jummah prayer is considered equivalent to the five daily obligatory prayers, and missing it without a valid reason is regarded as a sin.

Women also observed the blessed occasion in their homes, offering prayers and engaging in religious gatherings. Aasia, a newlywed housewife, marked her first Jummah of Ramadan with her in-laws.

"It is a special day for me. I prayed alongside my mother-in-law and sister-in-law, and together, we contributed to purchasing food rations for underprivileged families," she said. "May Allah accept our good deeds," she added with a heartfelt prayer.

Islamic teachings emphasize that Jummah is a day of forgiveness, with Allah Almighty multiplying the rewards for good deeds performed on this day. The first Friday serves as a powerful reminder of the values that define this sacred month, encouraging believers to seek closeness to Allah through prayer, charity, and acts of kindness.

British HC honors young climate storytellers on Commonwealth Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): The British High Commission hosted a special ceremony to celebrate young climate storytellers on the occasion of Commonwealth Day 2025. Winners of the Art for Earth competition showcased their creative talents through art, film, and storytelling, highlighting the impact of climate change and innovative solutions.

Young Pakistanis aged 13 to 24 from across the country were invited to participate, sharing their artistic expressions on how climate change affects their lives and communities. Organized in collaboration with the British Council, the competition received over 550 creative submissions, demonstrating the enthusiasm and commitment of youth toward climate awareness. To honor the winners, the British High Commission held a prestigious award ceremony, featuring an exhibition of the winning entries and discussions on youth-led climate action.

Speaking at the event,

British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr. Jane Marriott CMG OBE, while praising the participants' creativity said: "I have been truly inspired by the extraordinary creativity of these young individuals. They have highlighted the urgency of climate action in the most innovative ways. Pakistan's youth are full of energy and ideas, and this competition has shown how powerful their voices can be in shaping the climate conversation."

One of the winners, 20-year-old Rooha Arshad, who won in the Climate and Innovation category, emphasized the importance of individual action: "It's easy to hope that new technology will save the planet, but it's really up to us. We must recognize our responsibility and use the natural resources we already have to tackle the climate crisis."

The competition winners—Khadija Chaudhry, Rahma Muddassir, Gulshan Fatima, Haider Ali, Umair Zia, and Rooha Arshad—were

recognized for their outstanding work in three categories: Climate and Innovation, Climate and Gender, and Climate in My Community.

Commonwealth Day, celebrated on March 10 across 56 member states, promotes shared values of unity, sustainability, and peace. This year's theme, "Together We Thrive," underscores the importance of global cooperation in addressing environmental and social challenges.

Climate change remains a top priority for the UK in Pakistan. The British government has already helped 1.5 million people enhance their resilience to climate disasters and aims to support an additional 3 million over the next four years. The UK's Innovative Climate Finance Programme is set to mobilize £420 million in climate investments, primarily from the private sector.

The event reaffirmed the UK's commitment to climate action and showcased the power of young voices in shaping a sustainable future.

Wafaqi Mohtasib to launch WhatsApp channel F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: With a view to apprising the general public of its activities on daily basis, the office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib is launching an official WhatsApp App channel on Tuesday, 11 March, 2025.

It is part of the ongoing drive launched by the institution to expand its outreach and accessibility through raising awareness about the role and scope of its work.

This will enable members of the civil society and the general public to keep themselves abreast of its activities particularly those undertaken for speedy and free of cost redressal of public complaints relating to maladministration of the Federal Government agencies and departments.

'Int'l women's Day' to be marked on March 8

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Women's Day will be marked on March 8 (Saturday) around the globe including Pakistan under the theme of, "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment."

The day will be commemorated with different events, seminars, awareness programs to highlight the importance of the day.

In Pakistan, a notable figure Fakhra Najib is a Pakistani journalist and the Executive Director of FM Power 99, a radio station dedicated to empowering women and marginalized communities through information and education.

She has pioneered an innovative distance Learning (IRI/IAI) program in collaboration with federal and provincial government departments in the country which was benefiting 500,000 children, teachers and parents including 60% females.

In celebration of International Women's Day, Fakhra Najib's work at FM Power 99 highlights the importance of women's rights, equality, and empowerment. The station provides a platform for women to share their stories, raise their voices, and advocate for change.

Palestinian embassy honours young Pakistani siblings for advocacy on Gaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Embassy of Palestine hosted a special reception to honor two young Pakistani siblings, Ubaydah Al Fiddhah Hafiah (11) and Ghulam Bishar Hafi (13), for their steadfast advocacy for the children of Gaza.

Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Zuhair Zaid expressed profound gratitude to the siblings for their unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian cause. In an official letter of appreciation, he praised their courageous efforts, calling them a symbol of justice and humanity.

"I find myself at a loss for words, overwhelmed by the depth of your courage, the purity of your love, and the boundless compassion you have shown," Dr. Zaid wrote, emphasizing that their message was a powerful reminder that "humanity is still alive in its purest form."

He lauded the impact of their sacrifice, noting that "though small in action, it is immeasurable in meaning," and described their advocacy as an "unbreakable bond that transcends distance and time" between the people of Pakistan and Palestine.

The ambassador further commended their ability to turn "pain into power, grief into hope, and silence into a voice that echoes across borders." He acknowledged the depth of their advocacy, stating that their words, "written with hands so young yet hearts so vast," held profound significance.

Dr. Zaid also recognized their non-violent approach, praising their commitment to justice through love and truth rather than violence. "Your blood has mingled with the cries of the innocent," he wrote, adding that their actions served as "a beacon of humanity amidst the darkest times."

In his concluding remarks, the ambassador assured the siblings that



their message of sacrifice would never fade. "From the depths of my heart, I thank you. I honor you. And I promise that your message will continue to inspire millions," he stated.

During the reception, Dr. Zaid, accompanied by his young daughter, made an emotional declaration, stating that from now on, Ubaydah Al Fiddhah and Ghulam Bishar would be considered his own children, alongside his five biological children.

Prof. Dr. Aurangzeb Hafi, the father and mentor of the siblings, quoted the ambassador as saying that Palestine "owned" these two children, their petitions, resolutions, and protest notes issued as part of their campaign against the atrocities committed against Gazan children.

Dr. Zaid also discussed with Prof. Hafi the pressing need to protect and resettle orphaned children from Gaza, particularly those left amputees due to the ongoing violence. The Palestinian ambassador extended the invitation to the siblings following a recent ceremony in Karachi, where a special documentary showcased their unique form of protest - blood-written notes highlighting the plight of Gazan children. The event recog-

nized them as the youngest-ever activists to take a frontline role in advocating for the cause.

Their protest campaign, featuring blood-written notes and open letters to global authorities, was ranked among the most impactful advocacy efforts, earning official recognition from Palestinian authorities.

A few weeks ago, following the Gaza ceasefire, the siblings revived their 'Voice for the Voiceless' campaign, advocating for the rights of Palestinian amputee children. With thousands of children orphaned and many left permanently disabled, they called for urgent global intervention to provide care and rehabilitation for these young victims.

Their activism began in June 2024, coinciding with the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression on June 4. Their first protest-blood-written notes were presented to international platforms, including the United Nations, urging the world to listen to the 'voice of the voiceless.'

Their advocacy continues to inspire a global movement, proving that even the youngest voices can resonate across borders in the fight for justice and humanity.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of faithful stand in a queue to enter Faisal Masjid for Namaz-e-Jumma (Friday Prayer) during the holy fasting month of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak. —APP photo

Education Ministry rounds up years of progressive initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training had achieved significant milestones over the past year in its mission to develop Pakistan as a progressive and prosperous nation by ensuring quality education and skill development for all citizens.

According to the official details, with a vision of providing equal educational opportunities, the education ministry has implemented numerous initiatives across various sectors.

One of the flagship initiatives, the Prime Minister's School Meal Program, provides free meals to 65,000 students daily, enhancing both their health and academic performance. To improve healthcare access, 100 Mother and Child Health Centers have been established across educational institutions.

In a push toward modern education, seven AI and robotics labs have been set up in schools across the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Additionally, in collaboration with NUML, language training has been provided to 1,000 students, enhancing global communication skills.

The Pink Bus Initiative has introduced twenty new buses offering free trans-

portation services for women and girls, ensuring safer and more accessible education. On the technology front, sixteen colleges have been equipped with technology training centers, and fifty digital learning hubs have been established in rural areas. Furthermore, 130 Chromebook labs and 1,000 Chromebooks have been distributed across 104 schools, while 100 schools now feature smart classrooms with LED screens and smart boards. Coding and robotics training has also been introduced to primary students in 150 schools.

In the realm of vocational and entrepreneurial training, 19 skill labs have been launched in Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) schools, and 25,000 teachers have been trained in financial literacy. A new entrepreneurship curriculum has been introduced to foster innovation. For early childhood and special education, 100 early childhood education centers have been set up to ensure quality foundational education, and special education centers have been included in the meal program to support differently-abled students.

Sustainability initiatives have seen solar power systems installed in 100 institutions, promoting green energy, while 50 daycare centers

have been established in educational institutions to support working women. Through the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTEC), 56,000 youth have been trained in IT and job-oriented trades, and the "She Fixes" initiative aims to empower women in technical fields. A National Job Portal has been launched to connect skilled workers with employers, and international certification programs have been introduced to enhance global employability. Short courses in high-demand fields such as IT and healthcare have also been developed.

Reforms in private and religious education include the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for private institutions and the development of a grievance redressal mechanism for complaints. Efforts are underway to integrate Madaris (religious schools) into the mainstream educational system. On the national curriculum and examination front, a phased implementation of the National Curriculum has been underway since 2022-23, and FBISE is transitioning to digital exams, reducing reliance on rote learning. A new grading system focusing on conceptual understanding has been introduced.

2 killed in Laghman collision

MEHTHARLAM (Pajhwok): Two people have been killed and seven others, including a woman, injured in a traffic accident on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway in eastern Laghman province, an official said on Friday. Maulvi Habibullah Mubariz, the director of the traffic department, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the accident occurred when two Corolla-type cars collided at around 11:30 PM on Thursday night.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 07, 1446 — Saturday, March 08, 2025

Afghanistan clinch 5-4 win against Greenland

KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghanistan marked a strong start to the four-nation futsal tournament in Brazil with a hard-fought 5-4 victory over Greenland. The Afghanistan Football Federation announced on its Facebook on Friday that the national side secured victory in their opening game of the four-nation futsal tournament in Brazil by defeating Greenland 5-4.

Guterres: Security incidents in Afghanistan decreased by 16.8%

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in his quarterly report on Afghanistan, addressed political, security, regional cooperation, human rights, and economic issues.

Guterres stated that from November 2024 to January 2025, security-related incidents in Afghanistan decreased by 16.8% compared to the same three-month period last year.

The UN Secretary-General's report states: "From 1 November 2024 to 31 January 2025, the United Nations recorded 2,081 security-related incident reports, marking a 16.8 per cent decrease compared with the same period in 2023/2024."

"The realities of Afghanistan should have been presented to the world, emphasizing that Afghanistan is a com-



pletely safe country where citizens of all nations and tourists can visit," said Emal Dostyar, a university scholar.

Guterres added that despite the end of conflicts over the past three years, Afghanistan's economy remains fragile. He stated that in the past three months, more than 350,000 Afghan migrants have returned from Iran and Pakistan.

The report further men-

tions: "Between 22 October 2024 and 7 January 2025, 356,329 Afghans are estimated to have returned to Afghanistan, excluding passport holders with valid visas. That figure includes 59,217 from Pakistan and 297,112 from the Islamic Republic of Iran, with 173,506 of those individuals having been deported."

"To find a suitable solution to migrants' problems, the U.S., the UN, and

European countries must engage with the Afghan government through diplomatic channels," said Jannat Fahim Chakari, a political analyst.

While the Islamic Emirate has not yet responded to this report, it had previously assured the security of the entire country.

"The Afghan interim government should establish mutual understandings with regional and neighboring countries to further ensure peace and stability," said Najib Rahman Shamal, another political analyst.

The report also underscores the UN's commitment to helping Afghanistan achieve peace within its borders and with its neighbors, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2721. These reports are submitted quarterly by the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council.

Boosting Afghanistan's regional, global trade

HERAT (TOLONews): Local officials in Herat state that the Herat-Khaf railway plays a key role in facilitating exports and imports between Afghanistan and regional countries.

In recent months, trade between Afghanistan and some neighboring and regional countries via this railway has increased, the officials said.

Mohammad Yousuf Saeedi, the spokesperson for the governor of Herat, said: "A commercial shipment has arrived at Rozanak station via the Herat-Khaf railway. This shipment consisted of 26 wagons, 20 of which contained sugar from the United Arab Emirates, while the remaining 6 carried cement and reached Rozanak station in Herat province."

The transportation of goods via the Herat-Khaf railway between Afghanistan, Iran, and some regional countries has played a significant role in boosting trade within Afghanistan.

According to the Herat Chamber of Commerce and Investment, the flow of exports and imports via this railway has increased in recent months.

Mohammad Yousuf Amin, the executive director of the Herat Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "Transfers via the Herat-Khaf railway have seen good growth. As far as we have observed, shipments of construction materials and transit goods from the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Turkey, and India have arrived in Afghanistan. This railway accelerates transportation since road transport alone cannot address the challenges faced by our traders."

Economic experts believe that the Herat-Khaf railway has connected Afghanistan to major global markets.

Gulabuddin Miri, an economic analyst, stated: "The Herat-Khaf railway contributes to the development of economic infrastructure and increases investment. It is also highly beneficial in facilitating exports and imports and reducing transportation costs. Strategically, it holds great importance as it connects Afghanistan to global markets."

The Herat-Khaf railway links Afghanistan to Turkey and European markets via Iran. The final phases of construction on this railway, which extends to the Herat industrial park, are still underway.

UN allocates \$48.5 million in emergency aid for Afghanistan

KABUL (Amu tv): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has allocated \$48.5 million in emergency humanitarian aid for Afghanistan, as funding shortages threaten relief efforts in the country.

The funds, drawn from the U.N. Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, will be used to address urgent needs across the country, OCHA said in a statement.

Indrika Ratwatte, head of OCHA in Afghanistan, said the aid package aims to support collective response efforts amid worsening

conditions for millions of Afghans. "After decades of war, poverty, and climate shocks, Afghans are now facing a sharp decline in life-saving assistance," Ratwatte said.

According to the latest OCHA report, declining aid funding has severely impacted humanitarian operations. OCHA says that in the past month alone, more than 200 health centers shut down, leaving 1.8 million people without access to essential medical services.

According to OCHA, by the end of March, one in three Afghans is expected to face severe food insecurity.

An estimated 3.5 million

children under five and over one million pregnant and breastfeeding women are at risk of acute malnutrition, OCHA added.

OCHA has warned that Afghanistan remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with millions at risk of further hardship without immediate intervention. "The situation will only worsen without sustained funding and urgent humanitarian action," the report stated.

The U.N. continues to urge donor nations to maintain support for Afghanistan's humanitarian response, as the country faces deteriorating living conditions and widespread food and health insecurity.

Afghan, Uzbek officials discuss boosting trade



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Acting Minister of Public Works and the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Afghanistan have discussed the economic and trade relations between the two countries, as well as railway connectivity.

In a post on X, the

Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) said that Acting Minister Mohammad Isa Sani met Uzbek Ambassador Aibak Usmanov in Kabul.

The two sides discussed the long-standing historical economic and trade ties between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, along with rail-

way connections.

During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on the rehabilitation of the Hairatan-Mazar-i-Sharif railway, the transfer of commercial goods between the two countries, and the studies for the Balkh-Herat railway.

Taliban ban halts state TV broadcasting: AFJC

KABUL (Amu tv): The Taliban's ban on the broadcast of live images in Farah Province has forced the province's state-run television station, RTA, to suspend visual programming and operate solely as an audio outlet, the Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) said on Thursday.

In a statement, the AFJC said Farah is now the seventh province where the Taliban have officially enforced restrictions on visual content in local media.

Quoting sources, the AFJC reported that the ban was implemented under pressure from the Taliban's Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of

Vice, which oversees social and moral regulations. As a result, Farah's national TV station has ceased all local visual content production.

The station now only broadcasts audio reports, and on social media, it limits its visuals to images of buildings, objects, and government office signboards, the statement said.

A local journalist in Farah told the AFJC that private media outlets and independent journalists have not yet been formally ordered to stop using live images. However, some Taliban officials refuse to participate in video interviews, effectively limiting visual reporting.

The restrictions are part of the Taliban's 2024 law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which imposes strict limitations on personal and social freedoms, including media regulations.

Article 17 of the law explicitly assigns the "moral police" the responsibility of preventing the publication of images of living beings.

While some provinces have reportedly eased certain broadcasting restrictions, the enforcement in Farah marks an expansion of Taliban-imposed media censorship, further restricting access to independent news and information.

Afghanistan ranks ninth in 2025 Global Terrorism Index

KABUL (Ariana News): The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), in its 12th annual Global Terrorism Index 2025 report, stated that Afghanistan has not ranked among the top five countries most impacted by terrorism for the second consecutive year, instead placing ninth.

The report noted: "Afghanistan has dropped out of the top five most terrorism-affected nations for the second year in a row, marking its highest improvement since the index's inception."

According to the rankings, Burkina Faso and Pakistan occupied the first and second positions in 2024. The report highlighted that terrorism levels in Afghanistan have "significantly declined" since the Islamic Emirate's takeover, with the new rulers maintaining "internal stability."

Meanwhile, IEA's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid reaffirmed "full security guarantees" for citizens and stressed that Afghan soil "poses no threat to any country."

"The security we currently have is a major achievement for Afghans. However, minor cases still occur, which affect all nations—such issues exist in every country," Mujahid said. The report identified ISKP as the deadliest group in Afghanistan, responsible for one-fifth of all attacks in 2024.

WHO reports sharp increase in respiratory deaths



KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported an increase in respiratory-related deaths in Afghanistan, stating that 506 people died from respiratory diseases in January 2025.

On Tuesday, March 4th, the WHO released a report revealing that the number of respiratory disease cases in Afghanistan in January 2025 increased by 54% compared to December 2024.

According to WHO data, over 206,000 people in Afghanistan were affected by respiratory diseases, especially pneumonia, in January, with 506 of them passing away. The WHO also noted a 71.4% increase in measles-related deaths compared to December, with 42 deaths out of 7,307

suspected cases of measles. The organization has emphasized the need to increase healthcare services for patients across Afghanistan, particularly in areas experiencing the highest rates of disease transmission. The report highlighted that in January 2025, WHO made significant progress in healthcare in Afghanistan by supporting 131 primary healthcare centers in 20 provinces and improving nine hospitals in seven provinces, including those focused on infectious diseases, emergency care, and mental health.

Previously, the WHO had warned about increasing health challenges, particularly respiratory diseases, and the lack of access to healthcare services in Afghanistan.

The rising number of respiratory disease cases and related deaths in Afghanistan underscores the urgent need for improved healthcare infrastructure and access to medical services in the country. The WHO's efforts to enhance healthcare facilities and support primary care centers are crucial in addressing this growing crisis.

With the continued spread of diseases like pneumonia and measles, along with the challenges of limited healthcare access, the international community must increase support to Afghanistan. Effective response and intervention are vital to prevent further loss of life and to improve overall health outcomes in the country.

Stalled World Bank projects would help Afghanistan: Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): At least 45 projects funded by the World Bank in the country have remained stalled over the past three years.

Many of these projects are infrastructure-related and are said to have had significant impacts on Afghanistan's development.

The Health Project, which provides essential healthcare services in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, another program facilitating support for small financing resources in Afghanistan, the Citizens' Charter Project, the Employment Generation Project, the Afghanistan Urban Development Project, the Afghanistan Skills Development Project, the Higher Education Development Program, the construction of strategic grain reserves, and the project to strengthen Afghanistan's trade systems within the framework of the World Trade Organization are among the projects that have been halted.

The Ministry of Economy of the Islamic Emirate has described these projects as vital for Afghanistan and has emphasized the need for the World Bank to restart their implementation. "The World



Bank previously financed multiple projects in sectors such as transport infrastructure, energy production, agriculture, health, and education.

However, for more than three years, around 45 projects across various sectors have seen no physical progress and remain incomplete. Resuming these projects could create job opportunities and improve service delivery in both urban and rural areas," said Abdul Rahman Habib, spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy.

Economic experts, considering the significance of these projects, have urged

the Islamic Emirate to allocate funds from the national budget to complete them.

"If the World Bank remains committed to its economic pledges and assistance, it would be beneficial to attract this financial option. However, if the World Bank does not prioritize this issue, the Islamic Emirate government should allocate its internal resources and financial capacity to continue these incomplete projects," Mir Shakir Yaqubi, an economic analyst, told TOLONews.

"Regarding the projects that were financially sup-

ported by the World Bank and are now halted, it would be good if our country's officials worked on these projects to regain financial support," said Ahmad Ferdaws Behguzin, another economic expert.

These projects remain stalled at a time when the World Bank has consistently warned about rising food insecurity in Afghanistan. Experts believe that if the World Bank's halted projects in Afghanistan are resumed, they could play a significant role in alleviating international concerns about the country's situation.

Samangan industrialists face power and space challenges

SAMANGAN (TOLONews): Several industrialists in Samangan province have complained about the lack of electricity and the absence of suitable locations for investment.

They say that despite efforts made after the Islamic Emirate's return to power to boost investment, some of their fundamental issues remain unresolved.

"If there is no electricity, all workers will be unemployed, and work will come to a halt. The production of furniture and upholstery is entirely dependent on electricity," stated Nurulhaq, an industrialist in Samangan.

"We have problems with electricity and workspace. The current space for our activities is small, and finding a suitable location is difficult. Even if a place is available, its price is too high. In this current courtyard, we pay 100,000 afghani in rent annually," stated Mohammad Azim, another industrialist in Samangan.

Meanwhile, some workers from production compa-



nies have urged investors to increase investment within the country to create more job opportunities and prevent young people from migrating. "We are happy that we do not have to leave the country. We have work in our homeland, and we are engaged in productive activities," said Obaidullah, one of the workers.

"If proper employment opportunities are available in Afghanistan, there will be no need to go abroad. Investment in the country

can boost businesses and provide more jobs for us and other workers," said Mohammad Arif, another worker in the province.

However, the Samangan Department of Industry and Commerce stated that the establishment of an industrial park in the province will help resolve the issues faced by industrialists and investors.

"By the order of Amir al-Mu'minin, 1,000 acres of land have been allocat-

ed for an industrial park, and it will be built soon to organize industrial activities," stated Enayatullah Yasini, Director of Business Affairs at the Samangan Department of Industry and Commerce.

According to the Samangan Department of Industry and Commerce, there are currently 80 large and small factories operating in the province, and opportunities for further investment have also been made available.

PPP always fighting for journalists rights, says Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: While speaking at an Iftar dinner hosted in honor of journalists by Sindh's Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has always maintained excellent working relations with journalists. As in previous years, an Iftar party has been arranged this year as well at the Karachi Press Club to honor journalists.

He announced that, like before, more plots will be allocated for journalists, some media houses for not paying their workers' salaries despite receiving advertisements worth millions of rupees. He assured that the government would prioritize ensuring that these workers receive their due salaries. He reaffirmed his commitment to standing by journalists in difficult times and always fighting for their rights.

Sharjeel Inam Memon also mentioned that journalist organizations raise important issues, and he remains in contact with



PFUJ, KUJ, and parliamentary reporters, if any institution fails to pay its employees, its business operations could be halted. Speaking about the founder of PTI, he said, "We pray that he gets out of jail and that Allah grants him wisdom so that he stops conspiring against Pakistan."

Regarding canals, he clarified the PPP's stance, stating that they are opposed to additional canals on the Indus River. He said that Sindh had taken the same position in IRSA and that the Chief Minister has written to convene a CCI meeting.

Journalists had also said to Ahsan Iqbal that the CCI meeting should be held soon.

Sharjeel Inam Memon further announced that the operational hours of the People's Bus Service would be extended after the 15th of Ramadan, allowing buses to run late into the night. He emphasized the need for media accountability, urging media outlets to avoid spreading false news, as a free and responsible media strengthens democracy. He also stated that MQM is part of the federal government and has the right to receive ministerial positions.

Former Naval Chief laid to rest

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Iftikhar Ahmed Sirohey, was laid to rest in Islamabad. Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, and Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, along with a large number of retired and serving armed forces personnel and civilians, attended the late Admiral's funeral prayers.

Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, expressed his condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for the departed soul. Admiral Iftikhar Ahmed Sirohey had a distinguished naval career spanning over four decades. He had the honour of participating in both 1965 and 1971 Pakistan-India wars. He served as the Chief of the Naval Staff from 1986 to 1988 and later as Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee from 1988 to 1991. Throughout his career, the Admiral exhibited dynamic leadership, impeccable moral character, exceptional professional competence, and an unwavering sense of duty.

The late Admiral joined Pakistan Navy on 1 April 1952, and was commissioned in the Operations Branch in 1955. He held vast experience in both command and staff appointments. At sea, he commanded PN Ships ALAMGIR, BADR, and BABUR. He also served as Commander Pakistan Fleet, Commander Karachi, and Managing Director of Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works. On the diplomatic front, he represented Pakistan as the Defence and Naval Attaché in the United Kingdom. He was a graduate of the Naval Staff College, United Kingdom.

Team of Cable Operators calls on Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Cable Operations Association called on Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar here on Friday.

The two sides discussed various issues faced by the cable industry and explored different options to resolve them, said a news statement. On the occasion, the delegation briefed the minister about the problems faced by the industry. Tarar assured them of resolving their issues on priority.

He called the cable operators an important source of providing the public access to information. The minister acknowledged their role in providing information to the people through news, educational programs, documentary.

Gilani acquitted in three corruption cases

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Federal Anti-Corruption Court in Karachi acquitted Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani in three corruption cases on Friday.

According to details, the hearing of the TIDAP corruption scandal was held at the Karachi Anti-Corruption Court, where the former prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani personally appeared. The court accepted his acquittal plea, clearing him of all charges. In the previous hearing, the verdict on three cases against Gilani had been reserved. The former prime minister was accused of causing a loss of over Rs 6 billion to the national treasury in freight subsidies.

Speaking to the media after the verdict, Gilani termed the corruption charges against him as politically motivated and declared his acquittal a victory of truth. "The person who testified against me has now become an accused himself," he remarked.

Responding to political queries, Gilani reiterated his stance on boycotting the Senate session over the non-implementation of production orders for detained PTI Senator Ejaz Chaudhry. "I have been in the House for years and always act according to the law," he said, adding that issuing a production order for an imprisoned senator is his legal right.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of faithful offering first Jumma prayers during the holy month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak.

Trump threatens new Russia sanctions after strikes on Ukraine

WASHINGTON (AFP): US President Donald Trump on Friday threatened new sanctions and tariffs on Russia over its bombardments of Ukraine, after previously suspending US aid to Kyiv in a stated bid to encourage diplomacy.

His comments, published on the Truth Social platform, came hours after Russia launched a "massive" drone and missile attack on Ukrainian energy facilities Friday. "Based on the fact that Russia is absolutely 'pounding' Ukraine on the battlefield right now, I am strongly considering large scale Banking Sanctions, Sanctions, and Tariffs on Russia until a Cease Fire and final settlement agreement on peace is reached," Trump wrote.

"To Russia and Ukraine, get to the table right now, before it is too late," he added. A senior White House official echoed this message on Friday. "President Trump is adamant that we need to get everybody to the table, and we could do that with carrots, and we can do that with sticks," Kevin Hassett, director of the president's National Economic Council told reporters.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky renewed calls for a mutual halt to aerial attacks on critical infrastructure following the latest Russian attack. His proposal to halt aerial bombardments on energy facilities builds on growing rhetoric from Kyiv, Washington and Moscow on halting the war, now in its fourth year. The Ukrainian leader said the first steps to establishing real peace should be stopping both Russian and Ukrainian aerial and naval attacks.

"Ukraine is ready to go the way of peace, and it is Ukraine that wants peace from the very first second of this war. The task is to force Russia to stop the war," he wrote in a post on social media. Ukraine's allies abroad have voiced support for Zelensky's truce proposal and on Friday Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who recently hosted the Ukrainian leader, also gave it his backing. The Kremlin has previously ruled out a temporary ceasefire in Ukraine.

"We support the idea of establishing a ceasefire as soon as possible and stopping attacks in the air and at sea as a confidence-building measure between the parties," Erdogan told an online meeting. The Russian defence ministry confirmed on Friday it had carried out "precision" strikes on energy facilities, claiming they support the Ukrainian military.

Russia is "targeting facilities linked to Ukraine's military-industrial complex," Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. The Ukrainian air force said it had deployed French Mirage fighter jets — delivered to Ukraine last month — for the first time to repel the aerial onslaught. The fighter jets along with air-defence units shot down 34 of the missiles and 100 drones.

DTEK, the largest private energy supplier in Ukraine, said its facilities in the Black Sea region of Odesa were targeted for a fourth night in a row. And it said that gas facilities in the central Poltava region had "ceased operations" after being struck in the overnight attack. State gas company Naftogaz also

said its production facilities had been damaged, without giving details.

Authorities in at least five Ukrainian regions said Russia had targeted energy facilities. The latest Russian air assault came after EU leaders, shaken by the prospect of US disengagement, agreed to boost the bloc's defences. EU chiefs on Friday briefed several NATO partners — including Britain and Turkey — about the outcome of a meeting on defence of the bloc's leaders in Brussels a day earlier.

"Our cooperation with likeminded NATO partners is vital for international security. For Ukraine. For stepping up our joint efforts on defence," Antonio Costa, who heads the body representing EU member states, said in a post on X. Washington said talks with Kyiv were back on track to secure a ceasefire with Moscow — after a public falling out between Trump and Zelensky last Friday.

US and Ukrainian officials were expected to meet Tuesday in Saudi Arabia, a senior Kyiv official said, with Zelensky voicing hope for a "meaningful meeting". Zelensky himself will travel to Saudi Arabia on Monday for talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. US envoy Steve Witkoff said he would speak to Ukrainian negotiators about an "initial ceasefire" with Russia and a "framework" for a longer agreement. Ukraine's energy minister German Galushchenko said Russia was trying to "hurt ordinary Ukrainians by shelling energy and gas production facilities".

KP govt introduces bridge design code

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has introduced a Bridge Design Code aims to set minimum standards for the construction, repair, and design of bridges, aligning it with internationally recognized engineering principles.

The Chief Minister has approved the implementation of this code across the province, ensuring that future bridge construction adheres to these newly established standards. The Chief Minister was given a detailed briefing the Bridge Design Code prepaed by Communication and Works Department. It was told that the code has been specifically designed

to accommodate the unique climatic and geological conditions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A core working group, comprising government officials and experts has prepared the code, which is licensed by the American Association of State Highways and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). To ensure its enforcement, the government plans to introduce formal legislation, making compliance with the code mandatory for all future bridge projects. Officials highlighted that the absence of such regulations in Pakistan has contributed to frequent bridge collapses. During the 2022 floods, 107 bridges were destroyed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

alone, while the 2010 floods damaged 150 bridges across the province.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister emphasized that the introduction of a Bridge Design Code was long overdue adding that the implementation of this code is essential to prevent bridge failures that lead to the loss of human lives and public resources. By enforcing these standards, we can enhance the resilience of our infrastructure against natural disasters and other hazards," he stated.

He said that his government also announced plans to introduce a Highway Code in the near future, further strengthening the province's infrastructure development framework.

Faisal Javed concealed facts from court: PHC told

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Sabit Ulla, has sought a detailed report from the federal government regarding offloading Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Faisal Javed, from plane despite court orders, on Friday.

The court heard a contempt of court petition filed by Faisal Javed against the federal government for not allowing him to travel for Umrah, despite the court's orders. Faisal Javed himself appeared before the court while Deputy Attorney General Sana Ullah and Director FIA Inam Ullah Khan representing the federal government.

The petitioner informed the court that he was travelling for Umrah and the Peshawar High Court had ordered his name to be temporarily removed from the Exit Control List (ECL). However, he was offloaded from the plane, which amounts to contempt of court. He requested the court to take actions against those responsible and allow him to travel for Umrah.

Deputy Attorney General Sana Ullah informed the court that Faisal Javed's name was placed on the ECL and Passport Control List on March 6, as he had not disclosed multiple cases pending against him in the Peshawar High Court. He

assured that the government complies with court orders, but Faisal Javed had concealed facts, which raises questions about his intentions.

Director FIA Inamullah Khan clarified that the FIA does not unilaterally add names to the ECL or Passport Control List, but rather acts on reports from various agencies. He assured the court that the FIA respects court orders and take actions accordingly.

PHC divisional bench comprising of Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Sana Ullah has issued notices to the federal government, seeking a detailed report on the matter.

ATC rejects bail pleas: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar Judge Muhammad Iqbal Khan has rejected the bail pleas of three alleged terrorists and ordered their imprisonment. The accused including Shad Gul, Fazal Karim and Ibrahim had filed bail petition.

According to prosecution, the three accused were arrested at the Bhagiari check post in Jamrud. Various types of weapons and hand grenades were recovered from their possession.

Appointment of SDOs at C&W: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has halted the appointment process for the post of Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) in the Communications and Works (C&W) Department, following allegations of

favoritism in the selection process, on Friday.

PHC divisional bench comprising of Justice Arshad Ali and Justice Khurshid Iqbal issued notices to the relevant parties including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission seeking their response. The petition filed by Nauman, who had applied for the SDO post belong to Zone 4. The zone includes the districts of Bannu, Karak, Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, and Tank.

The counsel Bashir Wazir Advocate, informed the court that the petitioner had passed the test and interview for the SDO post. However, the interview panel, which consisted of four members and was headed by a member from Lakki Marwat, had recommended eight candidates for the post.

The lawyer pointed out that seven out of the eight recommended candidates were from Lakki Marwat, the same district as the panel head. This, the lawyer alleged, was a clear case of favoritism and a violation of the merit-based selection process.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Arshad Ali and Justice Khurshid Iqbal halted the appointment process until a final conclusion of the case. The court also issued notices to the relevant parties, including the Public Service Commission, seeking their response to the allegations.

Saif stresses need for dialogue with Afghanistan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Adviser Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif on Friday underscored the need for holding talks with Afghanistan to tackle the menace of terrorism.

In a statement, Saif lashed out at the federal government for neither

making any overtures for dialogue with Afghanistan nor allowing the provincial government to hold negotiations with the neighboring country, adding that the federal government had almost discarded the Terms of References (TORs) for the talks.

"The federal govern-

ment should devise a concrete policy for talks with Afghanistan. The people of KP and security forces were sacrificing their lives in the war against terror. Terrorism isn't solely a problem for KP, it affects the whole country. We need to be unified in the war against terror," he asserted.

FFC DAY 8TH MARCH

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