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Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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CM Balochistan highlights state security and development synergy at 21st State Defense Conference

Mir Sarfaraz Bugti emphasizes strengthened civil-military coordination, enhanced anti-smuggling operations, and progress on development projects for lasting peace and prosperity in the province

Independent Report
QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti addressed the 21st session of the State Defense Conference (Hardening of the State Conference), describing it as a powerful platform that has, over the past 18 months, effectively promoted peace, stability, and development in the province.

The conference, co-chaired by CM Bugti and Corps Commander

Balochistan Lieutenant General Rahat Naseem Ahmed Khan, underscored the critical role of regular coordination between government institutions and security forces in safeguarding development projects and ensuring public welfare. CM Bugti reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintaining peace, security, and sustainable growth across Balochistan.

Held in Quetta, the

conference brings together representatives from federal and provincial departments as well as Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps, and Pakistan Coast Guard. Scheduled approximately every 21 days, the sessions monitor implementation of decisions made in previous meetings and ensure timely execution of strategies.

Special attention during the meeting was given to anti-smuggling and anti-narcotics operations, with

participants calling for intensified efforts against these illicit activities. The conference also reviewed the progress of the "B-Areas to A-Areas Conversion" strategy, highlighting its positive impact and stressing the need to extend its benefits to all provincial divisions, thereby strengthening security and prosperity at the grassroots level.

In addition to security

Continued on page 2



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti Corps Commander Balochistan Lieutenant General Rahat Naseem Ahmed Khan co-chair 21st session of the State Defense Conference (Hardening of the State Conference). Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan & other high ups are also present.



A high-level U.S. delegation led by Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker meeting with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Islamabad.

FM Dar expresses hope for peace in Iran, wider region in phone call with Araghchi

Foreign ministers agree to continue bilateral consultations; Khamenei accuses Trump of casualties

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Saturday expressed hope for peace and stability in Iran and the wider region in a phone call with his Iranian counterpart.

A post on X by the Foreign Office said FM Dar and Iranian FM Abbas Araghchi held a phone call today.

"They discussed the current situation in Iran and the wider region. DPM/FM expressed hope for peace and stability, and both sides agreed to continue bilateral consultations on matters of mutual interest,"

it said.

The call came as over 3,000 people have died in nationwide protests in Iran, according to rights activists. A "very slight rise" in internet activity was also reported in the country after an eight-day blackout.

The United States-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said it had verified 3,090 deaths, including 2,885 protesters, after residents said the crackdown appeared to have broadly quelled protests for now and state media reported more arrests.

Continued on page 2



Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and Abdul Ghafoor Haideri Central General Secretary of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam offering fatcha for the departed soul of the wife of the elder brother of the Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan at his residence in Islamabad.

CM Bugti orders immediate airlift of injured after tragic Makran coastal highway bus accident

Mir Sarfaraz Bugti coordinates with Sindh CM, ensures swift medical assistance and full inquiry into the incident

Independent Report
QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti contacted Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah following the tragic passenger bus accident near Ormara on the Makran Coastal Highway. The leaders discussed the condition of the injured passengers, ongoing treatment, and arrangements for immediate medical assistance.

Prioritizing the protection of human lives, CM Bugti directed that severely injured passengers be airlifted to leading private hospitals in Karachi for prompt and advanced medical care. According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Secretariat, the operation is underway on an urgent basis to ensure timely treatment for all vic-

tims. Chief Minister Bugti also instructed Deputy Commissioner Gwadar Naeqebullah Kakar and relevant administrative authorities to ensure that the transfer, medical care, and all logistical arrangements for the injured are handled efficiently and without delay. Deputy Commissioner Kakar confirmed that all injured passengers belong to Sindh province.

Expressing profound grief over the incident, CM Bugti extended heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. He further ordered that ambulances be arranged to transport the bodies of the deceased to their hometowns, providing support to bereaved families in this difficult time.

PM to visit Switzerland next week

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will leave for a four-day foreign visit next week. According to media reports, the Prime Minister will attend the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Monday.

A high-level delegation will also accompany the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is also expected to meet various delegations.

The Prime Minister is likely to go to London on a private visit upon his return from Davos. The Prime Minister will be on a foreign visit from January 19 to 23.

President, PM express concern over illness of Saudi King

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have expressed concern over the illness of Saudi King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and prayed for his speedy recovery and long life. Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz has been discharged from hospital after complete medical checkup, and shifted back to his residence. According to reports, his medical test results were satisfactory. President Asif Ali Zardari sent a message of goodwill to the Saudi monarch, stating that the entire Pakistani nation is praying for the health of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. He said King Salman holds a place of great respect in the hearts of the Pakistani people and prayed that Allah Almighty grants him good health.

Justice Najam Mengal to be sworn in as permanent BHC Judge

Independent Report
QUETTA: Justice Najam Ud-Din Mengal will take oath as a permanent judge of the Balochistan High Court on Monday, January 19, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. The ceremony will be held at the High Court of Balochistan Auditorium.

Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court, Justice Muhammad Kamran Khan Malakhal, will administer the oath to Justice Najam Ud-Din Mengal.

The event will be attended by distinguished judges, senior judicial officers, lawyers, and other notable personalities.

NA speaker says: Statements against country, judiciary, armed forces not allowed on Assembly floor

LAHORE (APP): National Assembly (NA) Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq visited the National College of Arts (NCA) here on Saturday and made it very clear that any statements against the country, judiciary, the role of judges and the armed forces of Pakistan would never be allowed in the House.

According to a press release, he stressed that any statement against the armed forces of Pakistan was unacceptable and clarified that only such discussions would be permitted which fall strictly within the constitutional and legal framework. The NA speaker categorically stated that anyone speaking against Pakistan would not be allowed to express views in the National Assembly. He said he was neither part of the gov-

ernment nor the opposition, but as speaker, he would perform his duties in an impartial manner in accordance with the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly.

He further stated that while protest was a democratic right of every citizen, it must remain peaceful. There was no room for arson, damage to life and property, or vandalism. He termed the use of sticks and weapons as alarming and said that such elements pose a serious threat to the rule of law.

Speaker Ayaz Sadiq stated that he holds regular consultations with the prime minister, who had never restrained him from exercising his constitutional

Continued on page 2



LAHORE: Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq talking to media persons after viewing the displayed art stuff during exhibition of Degree Show at NCA.

Two traffic accidents in Sargodha, Ormara claim 24 lives

SARGODHA / ORMARA (INP): At least 14 people were killed and several others injured on Saturday after a truck crashed due to dense fog in Punjab's Sargodha district, rescue officials said. Meanwhile, at least nine people were killed and 36 others injured when a passenger coach overturned on the Makran Coastal Highway near Gwadar in Balochistan, police said on Saturday.

The Sargodha accident occurred near Ghalapur Bangla in Kot Momin tehsil, where visibility was extremely low because of heavy fog. A mini-truck veered off the road and fell into a dry canal, according to rescue officials.

Rescue authorities said seven people died at the scene, while the injured were rushed to nearby hospitals. Another seven people later died during treatment, raising the death toll to 14.

At the time of the ac-

cident, 23 people were travelling in the truck. They were en route from Islamabad to Faisalabad to attend a funeral. Because the motorway was closed due to fog, the driver had taken a local route.

Rescue teams arrived at the scene soon after receiving the information and launched relief operations. The bodies of the deceased and the injured were shifted to the THQ hospital.

Women and children were among those who lost their lives. The deceased were identified as Misri Khan, Haleema Bibi, Yaseen, Sonia Bibi, Pathani Bibi, Hania, Iman Fatima, Rani Bibi, Haris, Waseem, Horain, Aamna, Hareem Fatima and Saqlain. The injured were identified as Hasnain, Saqlain, Zaheer, Mumtaz, Kashif, Nadeem, Shamim, Nadia and Parveen.

The accident occurred

Continued on page 2



At least 14 people died when a speeding passenger coach overturned on the Makran Coastal Highway at Hudd Goth near Gwadar's Ormara tehsil.

Pakistan, US vow to bolster security, border management cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior & Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi held a meeting with a high-level U.S. delegation led by Ambassador Natalie Baker.

The meeting featured in-depth deliberation on boosting Pakistan-U.S. relations and expanding cooperation in shared areas of interest.

Both sides agreed to enhance collaboration in bilateral security and border management. It was mutually agreed to further strengthen existing cooperation with the Anti-Terrorist Assistance Program and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforce-

ment Affairs.

During the meeting, Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that advanced software would be used to identify individuals involved in crimes abroad.

The delegation also discussed training programs for officers of the FIA, Federal Constabulary, and Cyber Crime Agency.

Matters relating to the establishment of a Center for Transformation Crime and an academy within FIA with U.S. support also came under review.

It was agreed to equip border security agencies, coastal guards and other institutions with modern U.S.-supplied equipment.

Mohsin Naqvi stated that modern technology would enhance the capacity of border security agencies and coastal guards.

Interior Minister welcomed U.S. assistance in the reorganization of the Federal Constabulary and in strengthening the capabilities of FIA and NCCIA. He added that U.S. support in activating FIA's Counter-Terrorism Wing would prove highly beneficial, making it the first federal anti-terrorist wing with effective coordination with provinces.

Mohsin Naqvi said that the National Cyber

Continued on page 2

Trump invites Turkish, Egyptian counterparts to join Gaza 'Board of Peace'

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Turkey and Egypt on Saturday confirmed that US President Donald Trump has invited Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to join a newly formed Gaza "Board of Peace," aimed at overseeing the territory's temporary governance. The proposed board is expected to supervise Gaza during a transitional phase following a fragile ceasefire that has been in place since October.

According to the White House, an executive panel has already been established to implement President Trump's Gaza peace plan. The panel includes US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, World Bank President Ajay Banga, former British prime minister Tony Blair, and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. It will oversee key areas such as governance, regional diplomacy, reconstruction funding, and investment mobilisation.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Turkish presidency said it had received a formal letter from President Trump inviting President Erdogan to become part of the initiative.



Riyadh: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik in meeting with HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud, Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia.

Malik highlights energy, mineral opportunities at FMF

RIYADH (APP): Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik represented Pakistan at the Future Minerals Forum (FMF) in Riyadh, where he showcased the country's vast mineral potential and held a series of high-level meetings with Saudi and international leaders to strengthen energy cooperation and attract investment.

On the sidelines of FMF, he also held a meeting with HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud, Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia, during which both sides discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation across the energy sector, including petroleum supply, renewable energy, energy efficiency, investment opportunities.

Ali Pervaiz Malik also had a meeting with Engr.

Khalid Al-Falih, Minister of Investment of Saudi Arabia, to discuss enhancing investment flows and facilitating partnerships in Pakistan's energy and minerals sectors. He also met with Jassim Alshirawi, Secretary General, International Energy Forum, Sami Takaluoma, CEO, Metso Corporation, the Chairman of Delta Oil, Badr Al-Aiban, Engr. Saad Alkhalb, CEO, Saudi EXIM Bank.

During these interactions, prospects of mutual cooperation came under discussion.

The Federal Minister took part in a prominent ministerial panel titled "Dawn of a Global Cause: The Role of Governments in Driving Mineral Supply," moderated by Ms. Eleni

Continued on page 2

Bangladesh rejects Indian official's visa ahead of T20 World Cup

DHAKA (INP): High-stakes negotiations between the International Cricket Council (ICC) and Bangladesh over the T20 World Cup 2026 began amid controversy after Bangladesh denied a visa to an Indian ICC official, allowing only one member of the delegation to enter the country. The planned two-member delegation from the Council was halved after a senior ICC executive of Indian nationality failed to obtain a visa in time. As a result, only Andrew Ephgrave, the ICC's Head of Anti-Corruption and Security, arrived in Dhaka on January 17 to continue talks. The visit is being viewed as a last-ditch attempt by the ICC to resolve a growing diplomatic and sporting crisis with the Bangladesh Cricket Board ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, scheduled to begin on February 7.

At the heart of the dispute is Bangladesh's demand to shift its group-stage matches from India to Sri Lanka. Bangladesh authorities and the BCB have cited political tensions and security concerns for players and officials.

Bangladesh has also boycotted playing in India following the expulsion of star pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the IPL, further straining relations.

With his colleague unable to travel, the responsi-

bility of negotiations now rests entirely on Ephgrave, a former British police officer with extensive international security experience. According to Bangladeshi media, he is expected to present a detailed security plan aimed at reassuring Bangladesh that its players and staff will receive full protection while playing in India.

Indian media described the visa refusal as symbolic of the current political climate between India and Bangladesh. The ICC has not officially commented on the visa issue, though it has reportedly caused disappointment within the organization.

Bangladesh issued a visa only to the head of anti-corruption and security, while the Indian ICC official remained stranded.

Ephgrave is scheduled to meet Bangladesh board officials to discuss venues for India-based World Cup matches. Failure to reach an agreement could put the tournament's schedule at serious risk before it even begins.

Observers say the fate of the T20 World Cup now hinges on whether the ICC can convince Bangladesh to stick to the original plan.

With negotiations underway and diplomatic tensions simmering, both the ICC and Bangladesh face mounting pressure to resolve the impasse quickly.

Rout of commissioner Karachi Marathon 2026 finalized

KARACHI (APP): The Commissioner Karachi Marathon is set to take place on January 25th.

A meeting held on Saturday under the chairmanship of Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi reviewed the arrangements. In the meeting route for the Marathon City Run 2026 was finalized.

It was decided that it'll start at 7 am from the Tower, proceed via Native Jetty Bridge, M.T. Khan Road, My Kolachi, Boat Basin, Shaan Circle, Clifton Bridge, Marriott Hotel, and Metro Pole Hotel signal into Club Road, ending in front of the Commissioner's office.

The meeting was attended among others by chief organizer of the event DIG traffic Syed Pir Muhammad Shah, Additional Commissioner II Asad Khoso, Assistant Commissioner General Hazim Bhangwar, technical advisor Syed Goher Ali, and Director Sports Ghulam Muhammad Khan. Deputy Commissioner South Javed Nabi Khoso joined via video link.

Registration is ongoing via a dedicated web link while a registration desk is also set up at the Commissioner's office.



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Chaudhary Tanvir Khan administers the oath to newly elected members of Qadir Bakhsh Rajput Welfare Society at Chaklala Scheme-3.

Tarar lauded PTV cricket team for new world record

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Saturday lauded Pakistan Television's (PTV) cricket team for a historic achievement after they successfully defended a target of just 40 runs against SNGPL in the fourth inning, setting a new world record in first-class cricket. "PTV's rise is no coincidence. From the President's Trophy 2024/25 triumph, powered by

youngsters like Mohammad Shehzad and Shamyul Hussain, to creating a world record in the President's Trophy 2025/26 today; this is what happens when talent is backed, hard work is valued, and merit is rewarded. Merit and only merit. Have refused all 'sifarish'," said the minister while congratulating the team on X.

The minister expressed immense pride in the team's performance un-

der pressure during the fourth innings. He singled out Ali Usman and Ammad Butt for their outstanding bowling displays, while also praising the superb captaincy of Shamyul Hussain.

He extended special appreciation to the PTV management and PTV Sports for their efforts in delivering results both on and off the field. He described the achievement as a proud moment for the entire organization.

From darkness to dock: ICT Police crack blind murder, bring lawyer's car-snatching killer before law in 48 hours

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have solved a blind murder case within 48 hours and arrested the suspect who brutally killed a lawyer and fled the scene by snatching the victim's car, bringing him before the law through swift and co-ordinated action.

A press release here on Saturday said Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq disclosed these details while addressing an important press conference at Rescue 15. Senior police officers, including SSP Investigation Muhammad Usman Tariq Butt, SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza, SP Industrial Area and other senior officials were also present.

DIG Tariq said the incident occurred in Sector H-9/10 area, where unknown assailant shot lawyer Sheikh Abdul Rauf with a firearm, killing him on the spot, and escaped by taking away the victim's vehicle, leaving the case as a blind murder. He said upon receiving information, local police teams and senior officers immediately reached the scene, shifted the body to hospital, preserved evidence, inspected the crime scene and registered a case without delay.

DIG Jawad Tariq said special police teams were constituted under the supervision of SSP Investigation Muhammad Usman Tariq Butt and SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza. The teams included SP OCU Suleman Zafar.

Sports, Youth Affairs Dept organize horse race in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD (APP): For the first time in the history of Hyderabad city, the Sports and Youth Affairs Department of the Sindh Government organized a horse race. Competitions were conducted on the instructions of Provincial Minister

Sardar Mohammad Bakhsh Mehr. Sardar Muhammad Khan Junejo and Babar Kerio gave full support in the horse race, while the arrangements were supervised by the District Sports Officer, Hyderabad Maryam Kerio. Around 150 horses of Sindh's famous native breed, Kathiawari breed, Harzai breed and Balochistan race participated in the competition.

Activities are going on but horse racing is being organized for the first time in the history of the city.



Sardar Muhammad Khan Junejo inaugurates Horse Race competition organized by Sports and Youth Affairs Department of the Sindh Government in Hyderabad.

CM Balochistan..

Continued from page 1

measures, the session provided a detailed review of development projects and public welfare initiatives, reflecting a holistic approach to governance. CM Bugti reiterated that the province's bright future depends on the continued implementation of such effective, integrated strategies combining peace, development, and security.

The meeting was attended by representatives of federal and provincial departments, along with senior officials from security agencies including the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps, and Pakistan Coast Guards.

The participants held

in-depth discussions on anti-smuggling and anti-narcotics operations, stressing the need to intensify action against these illegal activities. The forum underlined that smuggling and drug trafficking is essential for strengthening law and order and safeguarding the socio-economic fabric of the province.

The participants expressed satisfaction over progress made on the "B Areas to A Areas Conversion" initiative. It was emphasized that all possible efforts would be made to ensure effective implementation across all divisions so that development benefits reach every region and an environment of peace and prosperity is consolidated.

FM Dar expresses..

Continued from page 1

The Iranian government has blamed much of the violence on people it says are armed rioters posing as protesters, labelling them "terrorists" and claiming that "America's goal is to swallow Iran, the goal is to put Iran back under military, political and economic domination."

The capital, Tehran, has been comparatively quiet for four days, said several residents reached by Reuters. Drones were flying over the city, but there were no signs of major protests on Thursday or Friday.

sations he has levelled against the Iranian nation," he told a crowd of supporters during an address marking a religious holiday today. "This was an American conspiracy," he said, adding that "America's goal is to swallow Iran, the goal is to put Iran back under military, political and economic domination."

The capital, Tehran, has been comparatively quiet for four days, said several residents reached by Reuters. Drones were flying over the city, but there were no signs of major protests on Thursday or Friday.

Two traffic..

Continued from page 1

near the Hudd Goth area of Ormara when a Karachi-bound coach travelling to Jiwan lost control and overturned due to overspeeding, according to Coastal Highway police. The vehicle belonged to a private transport company, Al Usman.

SP Aslam Bangulzai stated that preliminary investigations suggested overspeeding as the primary cause of the crash, adding that the driver lost control of the vehicle.

Rescue teams rushed to the scene and shifted the bodies and injured passengers to Ormara Tehsil Hospital. Hospital officials said several of the injured were in critical condition.

Police said further investigations were underway, while details regarding the driver and the transport company were being collected.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief over the deaths and ordered authorities to ensure strict implementation of traffic laws and safety measures on national highways and strict monitoring of precautionary measures in view of public safety due to fog.

President Asif Ali Zardari also expressed deep sorrow over the tragic traffic accidents in Sargodha and near Ormara, lamenting the loss of precious lives in the dense fog.

Punjab Police athletes win 40 medals at 35th National Games

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Police honored its medal-winning athletes of the 35th National Games 2025 by awarding cash prizes and certificates of appreciation at a ceremony held at the Central Police Office, here on Saturday.

The ceremony was held under the supervision of Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar, who distributed cash awards and certificates among 41 Punjab Police athletes, coaches and team managers for their outstanding performance at the national-level event.

Congratulating the athletes, the IG Punjab said that Punjab Police was proud of its players who enhanced the department's reputation through exceptional performances at national and international sporting events. He said that Punjab Police athletes delivered their best-ever performance at the 35th National Games held in Karachi.

Dr Usman Anwar said that under the current leadership, Punjab Police has introduced standardized uniforms and the Pakistan Police Sports Board flag for athletes across the country. He said that medal-winning players are ambassadors of Punjab Police and should play an active role in identifying and nurturing emerging talent to further strengthen police sports in Pakistan. The IG Punjab announced that gold medalists would receive Rs 300,000, silver medalists Rs 200,000 and bronze medalists Rs 100,000 as cash prizes. He added that during the past three years, police athletes and players have been awarded a total of Rs 7.5 million as cash incentives, and the policy of encouraging medal-winning athletes through the Police Sports Board platform would continue in the future. According to a Punjab Police spokesperson, bronze medalists in individual events were awarded Rs 100,000.



TURBAT: Provincial Minister for Planning and Development Mir Zahoore Ahmed Buledi giving away winner trophy to captain during Kech Sports Festival Football Event.

JPP, rights bodies host live screening of UN child rights review

ISLAMABAD (APP): Justice Project Pakistan (JPP), together with the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHHR), Group Development Pakistan (GDP), the Legal Aid and Justice Authority (LAJA) and the Parliamentarians' Commission on Human Rights (PCHR), organized a live screening of Pakistan's review before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The event, held at the International Labour Organization (ILO) Auditorium in Islamabad, was supported by the European Union. The screening brought together journalists, diplomats, civil society organisations, child rights advocates, academics and policy practitioners to observe Pakistan's interactive dialogue with the UN Committee in real time. Participants engaged with questions raised by Committee members and responses from the State delegation through informal discussions and live tweets carried out during the live screening.

Opening the event, Shafique Chaudhry, Executive Director PCHR said "Pakistan's review under the UN Convention on the

Rights of the Child is a critical moment of accountability. Our Constitution already reflects the core principles of the Convention; the challenge before us is to translate these guarantees into consistent protection for every child."

Child rights expert Valerie Khan stated "This is not only an occasion to hold the state to account, but also other institutions, including the judiciary, executive and legislature. It is about developing a clear roadmap to move forward and ensure the effective enforcement of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child." Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and is thus obligated to align its laws, policies and practices with the Convention. The review follows Pakistan's submission of its combined sixth and seventh periodic reports and comes at a critical moment, given the persistent challenges affecting children across sectors.

Speaking at the event, Adil Anwar, Director General of the Legal Aid and Justice Authority (LAJA), highlighted the importance of embedding child rights within Pakistan's justice system.



Tehsil Central Kurram Tribal leader Maulana Shah Nawaz Khan addresses media on IDP issues at Peshawar Press Club.

Malik highlights..

Continued from page 1

Giokos, Anchor and Correspondent, CNN. The panel featured distinguished speakers including Bandar Alkhorayef, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Ms. Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Morocco; Thiam Tidjani, Minister of Mines and Industry, Mauritania; Ms. Aurora Williams Baussa, Mining Minister, Chile; and Claude Guay, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Canada.

During the discussion, Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik highlighted that the Government of Pakistan is actively reducing systemic friction by simplifying the regulatory environment and harmonizing the mineral sector framework.

He emphasized that Pakistan possesses vast and diverse mineral poten-

tial, offering significant opportunities for global partnerships. The panel acknowledged Pakistan's growing prominence, recognizing it as an emerging and attractive mineral destination. Ms. Eleni Giokos remarked that, due to the immense potential Pakistan holds, the world appears to be "knocking at Pakistan's door to secure minerals," reflecting increasing international interest. The Federal Minister formally invited global stakeholders to participate in the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum, scheduled to be held in April 2026, positioning it as a key platform for investment, collaboration, and policy dialogue.

In addition, the Federal Minister attended the FMF Ministerial Roundtable titled "Dawn of a Global Cause: Minerals for a New Era of Development," which brought together representatives from 100 governments



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti showing outstanding batting performance during match between Chief Minister Eleven and Chief Secretary Eleven.

SCCI reaffirms support for youth sports and talent development

SIALKOT (APP): Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), held a meeting with Rashid Abba, Academy Link Mentor at the English Premier League club West Ham United, at SCCI Auditorium.

The meeting was also attended by members of the Pakistan Street Child Football Team and a delegation from Muslim Hands.

The discussion focused on promoting youth development, identification of sports talent, and social uplift initiatives through football. Emphasis was placed on using sports as a tool to empower underprivileged children, encourage discipline, and provide international exposure to talented young players.

Syed Ahtesham Mazhar appreciated the efforts of organizations working for youth empower-

ment and highlighted the role of sports in fostering positive values, teamwork, and leadership among young people. He reaffirmed SCCI's support for initiatives that contribute to social development and enhance Pakistan's image at the international level.

Rashid Abba shared insights into football training, grassroots development, and opportunities for collaboration that could help Pakistani youth benefit from international best practices. Members of the Pakistan Street Child Football Team also shared their experiences and aspirations.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to explore future cooperation and partnerships aimed at strengthening youth sports development and creating sustainable pathways for young talent through football.



ISLAMABAD: A view of construction work of 10th avenue under process in the Federal Capital.

Experts for sector coupling, grid reforms to address overcapacity, underutilized power issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Energy experts, policymakers and industry stakeholders have said that sector coupling and grid reforms could emerge as a potential solution to address Pakistan's over capacity and underutilized power issues that are draining the country's economy.

These economic opportunities for Pakistan were discussed during a webinar, titled "Wind Curtailment in Pakistan: The Way Forward through Sector Coupling", organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) under its Clean Energy Transition Program.

Engr. Ubaid ur

Rehman Zia, Head of Energy Unit at SDPI, highlighted that in Pakistan, a growing share of low-cost wind energy is being curtailed not because it is expensive or unreliable, but because the system is structurally unable to absorb it. This is not a technical failure of wind power. It is an economic and system-design failure, said a press release.

He mentioned that sector coupling offers a fundamentally different way of thinking about wind power not merely as electricity for the grid, but as a primary energy input into multiple economic value chains.

Statements..

Continued from page 1

authority. He said that Pakistan's economy was gradually strengthening which was clear evidence of economic stability. He noted that Pakistan enjoys strong and cordial relations with key friendly countries including the United States, China, Russia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

The NA speaker said, "Every country has illegal elements, and combating them is a shared responsibility of both the state and the public in order to steer the country towards development and prosperity." He said, "National College of Arts is a prestigious institution of higher learning, which has established a unique identity at both national and international levels."

He appreciated the research-based creative work of the NCA students and said that the youth studying there were a valuable national asset, who were achieving remarkable success in various fields.

Pakistan, US..

Continued from page 1

Crimes Investigation Agency (NCCIA) is carrying out an extensive crackdown on illegal call centers across the country. He noted that advanced software is vital for preventing financial fraud and terror financing, and U.S. cooperation with NCCIA in this regard is highly significant.

The Federal Interior Minister emphasized the need to further expand collaboration with Pakistani institutions. The U.S. delegation appreciated Pakistan's efforts to increase security cooperation and strengthen bilateral ties.

The Acting U.S. Ambassador acknowledged the ongoing collaboration between the Ministry of Interior and U.S. agencies at various levels and reaffirmed that efforts would continue to further enhance partnership with Pakistan.

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Federal Secretary Interior, DG FIA, Commandant Federal Constabulary, Additional Secretary Interior, DG National Cyber Crimes Investigation Agency, DG Passport & Immigration, IG Islamabad Police and senior officials were also present on the occasion.

Changez Khan Marri says: No compromise on quality or timely completion of development projects

Independent Report
KOHLU: Member of the Provincial Assembly Changez Khan Marri has categorically stated that there will be no compromise on the quality or timely completion of ongoing development projects in the district. He said that the provision of basic facilities at the doorsteps of the people, particularly in far-flung areas, is a key priority, which will help address long-standing public issues.

The provincial lawmaker emphasized that public welfare schemes are the government's foremost priority, warning that negligence, carelessness, or unnecessary delays in development works will not be tolerated under any circumstances. He noted that the construction of standard and durable roads in both urban and remote areas of Kohlu will not only ensure safe and efficient transportation for the public but will also promote commercial activities, thereby strengthening the local economy.

Changez Khan Marri further said that the effective and timely completion of other ongoing development projects will ensure the continuous availability of clean drinking water, uninterrupted electricity, as well as improved health and education facilities, which

are essential indicators of a developed region.

He added that clear directives have been issued to all concerned departments and contractors to strictly ensure transparency, quality, and adherence to approved timelines. He warned that contractors involved in substandard construction or delays beyond the stipulated period will face strict action.

Reaffirming his commitment, Changez Khan Marri said that the completion of development projects will bring prosperity to the area and lead to a visible improvement in the standard of living of the people.



GWADAR: Deputy Commissioner Nacebullah Kakar in a group photo officers and fisherman during resolving of their issues.

DC Usta Muhammad warns against delays and substandard work in education projects

Independent Report
USTA MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner Usta Muhammad, Muhammad Ramzan Palal, has categorically stated that no compromise will be tolerated on construction quality or delays in the completion of educational projects, stressing that providing a safe and quality learning environment for students and teachers remains the district administration's top priority.

Accompanied by District Education Officer Usta Muhammad Shah Bakhsh Pindrani, the Deputy Commissioner conducted a detailed inspection of an under-construction educational building. During the visit, construction activities, work pace, adherence to design

specifications, and the quality of materials being used were thoroughly reviewed.

The Deputy Commissioner noted that complaints regarding substandard construction and poor-quality materials had been received during the initial phase of the project. Taking immediate notice, the administration identified the shortcomings and ensured their rectification, directing that construction work be resumed strictly in accordance with approved standards. He added that compliance with these directives is currently underway.

According to the inspection report, the ongoing construction work is overall satisfactory. During the visit, District Education Officer Shah Bakhsh

Pindrani and SDO Buildings Ashiq Ali Bohar briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the project's progress, utilization of financial resources, material testing procedures, and remaining completion stages.

Issuing on-the-spot instructions, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal emphasized that the educational facility must be completed as a safe, durable, and high-standard building for students and teachers under all circumstances. He further stated that field visits, continuous monitoring, oversight, and accountability mechanisms will remain in place to ensure all government projects are completed on time with transparency and quality standards.



QUETTA: Retired Employees of Federal Levies sitting in protest camp in favour of their demands.

RDMC Scholarship award ceremony marks new chapter of educational development in District Chagai

Independent Report
QUETTA: A dignified certificate award ceremony was held for 53 male and female students from District Chagai who successfully secured fully funded six-month scholarships under the initiative of Reko

dent that RDMC's Community Investment programs are transforming the mindset of local youth and the wider community—particularly in the education sector.

In recent years, the impact of RDMC's educa-

vestment initiatives in the health sector are also significantly visible. The establishment of a dispensary, two hospitals, and the provision of mobile health services across more than 20 remote villages have already begun delivering tangible improvements in community health. These facilities have enhanced access to quality healthcare for women, children, and elderly residents in remote areas.

The role of the Community Investment Team and the Community Development Committees (CDCs) was widely appreciated, as their continuous engagement, transparency, and close coordination with local communities have ensured that development initiatives are need-based, inclusive, and impactful.

Community elders, parents, and local stakeholders expressed confidence that RDMC's long-term investment in education and health will contribute significantly to building a skilled, healthy, and self-reliant generation in District Chagai. The successful organization of the certificate award ceremony was made possible through the collaborative efforts of RDMC management, the Community Investment Team, and CDC members.



Diq Mining Company (RDMC), based on the recommendations of the Community Development Committees (CDCs).

The ceremony marked a significant milestone in the journey toward educational development and long-term social progress in the region. The selected students will undergo a six-month foundation program, enabling them to qualify for admission to leading universities across Pakistan.

The initiative reflects RDMC management's strong commitment to education, youth empowerment, and sustainable community development. It is becoming increasingly evi-

tion interventions has been clearly visible. Several abandoned schools have been reopened, young children are now being encouraged to continue their education beyond the primary level through scholarship support, and families who once hesitated to send their children to school are now actively seeking educational opportunities. With the introduction of higher education scholarships, it is expected that the entire educational landscape of District Chagai will undergo a remarkable transformation within the coming years.

Alongside education, the positive outcomes of RDMC's Community In-



QUETTA: Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ain Pakistan leader Ghulam Nabi Marri addresses media at Quetta Press Club.

Dummar expresses grief over fatal Makran coastal highway bus accident

Independent Report
QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Food and Chairman Balochistan Food Authority, Haji Noor Muhammad Khan Dummar, has expressed profound sorrow and grief over the tragic traffic accident involving a passenger bus on the Makran Coastal Highway.

In a statement issued here, the Provincial Food Minister conveyed deep anguish over the loss of precious human lives, terming the incident extremely tragic and heart-rending. He said the devastating accident has plunged the entire province into mourning, adding that the loss of innocent lives is an irreparable

tragedy.

Haji Noor Muhammad Khan Dummar extended heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the bereaved families, praying for the elevation of the departed souls and patience for the families to bear this immense loss. He also offered prayers for the early and complete recovery of those injured in the accident.

The Provincial Minister directed the concerned authorities to ensure the provision of the best possible medical facilities to the injured. He further prayed that Allah Almighty grants strength and patience to the affected families during this difficult time.



USTA MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal being briefed by District Education Officer Shah Bakhsh Pindrani regarding under construction.

Govt released all dues of State Life Insurance Corporation: Dr. Samiullah

QUETTA (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Balochistan Health Card Program Dr. Samiullah Kakar on Saturday said that the provincial government has released all the outstanding dues of the State Life Insurance Corporation in accordance with the clear and people-friendly vision of the Chief Minister of Balochistan and provincial health minister.

He said that following this important development, formal instructions have been issued to all government and private hospitals empaneled under the Balochistan Health Card Program across the province to provide complete and quality medical facilities to the patients deserving of the health card without any hindrance, delay or discrimination.

He said that the Balochistan Health Card Program is a practical manifestation of the vision of the chief minister of Balochistan and the minis-

ter of health, the main objective of which is to relieve the common citizens, especially the poor and needy class, from the financial burden of expensive treatment.

He said that the Balochistan government is taking this journey of reforms in the health sector and public welfare forward with full seriousness, transparency and responsibility.

He clarified that if patients or their relatives face any kind of obstacle, delay or complaint during treatment under the health card in any empaneled hospital, they should feel free to contact the Balochistan Health Card Program.

Dr. Samiullah said that the designated phone number of the program is prominently available at the Balochistan Health Card Program counter established in every empaneled hospital, from where immediate guidance and timely redressal of complaints is being ensured.



QUETTA: Alauddin addresses media at Quetta Press Club.

Through e-Rozgar Initiative Sibi Division launches State-of-the-Art digital lab to empower women

Commissioner Asadullah Faiz emphasizes digital skills as essential for today's workforce, pledges support for women's self-reliance and economic participation.

Independent Report
SIBI: Commissioner Sibi Division, Asadullah Faiz, underlined the importance of digital skills in the modern era, stating that programs like e-Rozgar play a pivotal role in empowering women.

In a significant step toward digital empowerment, Commissioner Faiz formally inaugurated a modern digital computer lab at Divisional Public School Sibi under the e-Rozgar Initiative. A prestigious ceremony was also held to highlight the objectives and benefits of the program. The event was attended by Ms. Sakina

Abdullah Khan (CEO Web Organization, Chairperson Kumak Foundation, Member Worker Welfare Board), Principal Hafiz Asad, along with numerous female teachers and students. The ceremony commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran followed by Na'at in honor of the Prophet. During the event, Ms. Sakina Abdullah Khan briefed the audience on the e-Rozgar Initiative, a key program of the Government of Pakistan aimed at providing free training in freelancing, digital marketing, web development, graphic designing, and e-commerce.

PPP Leader Ali Madad reaffirms commitment to public service

Independent Report

QUETTA: Haji Ali Madad Jattak, senior leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Member of the Provincial Assembly, emphasized that the party remains steadfast in its commitment to public service, vowing to raise citizens' issues at every forum.

A large number of tribal elders and residents visited Haji Ali Madad Jattak at his Quetta residence today to discuss local concerns. During the meeting, citizens presented their problems, complaints, and suggestions, all of which were received with

careful attention, seriousness, and empathy.

Haji Ali Madad Jattak assured the public that he would coordinate with the relevant departments and senior officials to ensure prompt and effective resolution of their issues. He emphasized that serving the people, safeguarding their rights, and addressing their concerns remain his top priorities as a public representative.

He also reaffirmed his commitment to continue this work of public service with dedication, upholding the trust placed in him by the citizens.



SIBI: Commissioner Sibi Division Asadullah Faiz E-Rozgar Initiative inaugurate Divisional Public School Digital Computer Lab.

PTI welcomes Achakzai's election as Opposition Leader on Imran Khan's direction

Independent Report

QUETTA: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Balochistan leadership has termed the election of Mahmood Khan Achakzai as Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly a positive and timely decision taken on the directions of PTI founder Imran Khan. Party leaders extended congratulations to Mahmood Khan Achakzai, stating that his foremost

objective as opposition leader would be the release of Imran Khan and the restoration of constitutional supremacy.

This was stated by PTI Balochistan Provincial President Dawood Shah Kakar, Provincial General Secretary Jahangir Rind,

Quetta Division President Arif Kakar, District Quetta President Zain-ul-Abideen Khilji, Quetta City President Syed Mir Ali Agha, and other party leaders while addressing a general body meeting. The meeting also discussed the street movement and the visit of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi to Balochistan.

The PTI leaders emphasized that the decision to nominate Mahmood Khan Achakzai as Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly was made by PTI founder and leader Imran Khan, and that every party worker stands fully committed to implementing this decision in letter and spirit.



QUETTA Metropolitan Corporation Chief Officer Nazar Zehri inspects office premises in Quetta.

DC Naqeebullah resolves five-year-old fishermen dispute in just two weeks

Independent Report

GWADAR: In a remarkable administrative effort, Deputy Commissioner Gwadar Naqeebullah Kakar successfully resolved a long-standing dispute between local fishermen and fish company owners, which had remained unresolved for the past five years, restoring peace and harmony in the region.

The dispute resolution session was attended by Member of Provincial Assembly Gwadar, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rahman, Additional Deputy Commissioner Gwadar Dr. Abdul Shakoor, and Assistant Commissioner Pasni Khuro Dalwari. Both parties had mutually agreed to recognize the Deputy Commissioner as the sole mediator, granting him full authority to resolve the matter.

Deputy Commissioner Kakar personally visited Pasni, consulted with all parties, and successfully settled the long-standing conflict. Following the resolution, the ongoing

strike in Pasni was called off, and fishing activities resumed in the region, bringing relief and satisfaction to the local fishermen and business community.

During the decision-making session, consensus was also reached regarding matters related to non-local boat operators. The meeting was attended by DSP Police Malik Ahmed, President of Pasni Traders Association Liaquat Baloch, representatives of boat owners Sheikh Atta Baloch, fish company owners Imam Bakhsh Usman, and fishermen's representatives, Nakuda Inayat Baloch and Nakuda Razaq Baloch.

Notably, both parties had maintained their positions for the past five years, and the matter remained unresolved despite legal proceedings. However, the proactive and effective strategy of Deputy Commissioner Naqeebullah Kakar successfully brought the dispute to a smooth and amicable conclusion.



QUETTA: A view of accumulated sewerage water on Double Road.

Crypto MoU

It turned into a surprisingly high-profile event. On Wednesday, Pakistan signed an MoU with SC Financial Technologies, a firm affiliated with World Liberty Financial, which is owned by US President Donald Trump’s family, for “structured dialogue and technical understanding around emerging digital payment architectures”. Though Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb would describe the MoU as ‘non-binding’, the state seems to have attached immense importance to it, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Asim Munir, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi personally overseeing the signing of the MoU. The document was inked by Mr Aurangzeb and SC Financial Technologies CEO Zachary Witkoff, who is also the son of Steve Witkoff, US special envoy to the Middle East. Reuters noted this was the first publicly announced tie-up linking World Liberty, launched in September 2024, and a sovereign state.

By Reuters’ account, SC Financial Technologies will work with the State Bank “to integrate its USD1 stablecoin into a regulated digital payments structure, allowing the token to operate alongside Pakistan’s own digital currency infrastructure”. A spokesman for World Liberty Financial told the wire service that, “The agreement [...] could help ensure that the US dollar will remain the world’s reserve currency. Pakistan will be exploring how [...] [the] stablecoin would be used for digital payments and international remittances”. This would be a big step for Pakistan, where authorities till recently took a very dim view of cryptocurrencies.

Mr Aurangzeb underlined the strategy when he said that the “focus is to stay ahead of the curve” while acknowledging that any new steps Pakistan takes need to be “aligned with regulation, stability, and national interest”. It will be a tight-rope for regulators to walk, and many other countries will be watching for lessons.

To Mr Aurangzeb’s credit, he has always taken a considered stance on the adoption of new technologies. Even with this MoU, it seems that any tangible development will follow “dialogue” and sharing of “technical understanding”. As long as Pakistan’s crypto push remains tethered to sound principles that seek to protect the national interest and rupee stability, such initiatives should be explored and encouraged. It is hoped that the minister, who is also a seasoned ex-banker, will be similarly thorough in his assessments of all crypto-related proposals, which are likely to land on his table with increasing frequency as more global players take an interest in Pakistan’s policy pivot. Many countries have grappled with the idea of introducing cryptocurrency technologies in their formal financial systems, yet there seems to have been little progress in overcoming barriers between traditional systems and new technologies. Perhaps Pakistan can show the world how it may be done.

Faisal Bari

Iqbal works as a driver with a rent-a-car company. He is usually working six to seven days a week. The company pays him around Rs30,000 as salary. He does make some more as overtime, and though that amount varies by the month, on average he gets another Rs20,000 or so. Adding tips to the total, he makes around Rs65,000 per month. He has a wife and two children who are still in school.

Up to a couple of years ago, Iqbal was able to save a bit every month from his income. But the inflation over the last few years has made his budget a lot more constrained. He is barely able to meet all his routine expenses now. Electricity and gas bills have increased a lot. And the food bill has also almost doubled. He is actively on the lookout for extra driving jobs now so that he can get more overtime payment. He has started skipping lunch unless a

client is generous enough to give him lunch or money for lunch.

This is not an isolated case. In their article (‘People are eating less’) in this paper last week, Zafar Mirza and Miftah Ismail, giving numbers from the Household Integrated Expenditure Survey 2024-25, have shown that people are indeed eating less and they have had to tighten their belts further to make ends meet. And this is true for not just lower-income groups but middle-income groups as well.

What has made life a lot harder for Iqbal and his family has been a health shock. His wife has blood pressure and diabetes and has recently been diagnosed with some liver ailment. Doctor’s fee, expenses for diagnostic testing and regular costs of medicines have pushed Iqbal into debt. He has been forced to borrow from his relatives, friends and any clients he felt would be kind enough to help him or lend him money.

Each month is a

Difficult times

struggle now. Medical expenses are a constant addition to his monthly expenses, but his income has not gone up and there does not seem to be any prospect of income growth either. He has essentially fallen into a debt trap. He has accumulated a significant amount of debt, which there is little possibility of paying, and has no ability to raise further debt. But monthly expenses continue to be higher than his income.

What is a person like Iqbal supposed to do?

This is not the story of just one household in Pakistan. It is the story of a significant proportion of the population of the country. If people have no savings, shocks can be devastating and can push households into debt and poverty. The most common shock seems to be health shocks. For a household of five to six people — the norm in Pakistan — with one or two earners, and with grandparents and children, health shocks are not a surprise at all.

Diabetes, blood pressure, hepatitis, tuberculosis, and many other ailments — a lot of them requiring medium- to long-term and continued care — are quite common in Pakistan. With 40 per cent or so of children afflicted with malnutrition, youngsters falling ill is not unexpected either.

The state does not provide good healthcare facilities. Public sector provision is not only patchy and of poor quality in general, it is also not available everywhere. And private healthcare is expensive. Whenever Iqbal has taken his wife to the public hospital, he has been told to get diagnostic tests done from private laboratories and he has also had to pay for all the medicines. Only the doctor’s fee is subsidised by the state. But diagnostic tests are quite expensive. Medicines, too, are expensive and have become even more costly over the last few years.

Do bear in mind that we do not provide any income support through

our social protection institutions and programmes to those who are above very low-income levels. The Benazir Income Support Programme is for the very poor and does not extend beyond. There are no programmes for the working or low-income poor.

What could be the way out for Iqbal? Can he increase his income? He could try to work more hours. That is not easy though. He could pull out one or more of his children from school and push them into the workforce. But given the unemployment rates in the country, this is not much of an option, especially if the children are still in the early to middle stages of their education. And the loss in terms of a child not completing his or her education is seen in the medium- to long-term damage to the country.

It is at the level of the state that we can actually change things. In fact, it is the responsibility of the state to do so. A large proportion of Pakistanis

have fallen on hard times, even a larger proportion has become more vulnerable to shocks than before. It is the responsibility of the state to do something about this. It is here, even in terms of intentions, that we do not find anything. We need to start thinking about how we can create more income-generating opportunities for people. And we need to think about extending support to those who are falling on hard times. Probably the best way to do this — and this is being done and has been done in many countries — is to extend health and education facilities of decent quality to all citizens, especially those who are struggling. This could help a lot of people in major ways. But, of course, in an elitist and elite-captured state, this will not happen easily. It will require a major overhaul of the governance system and governance ethos in the country. This, at least for now, does not seem to be on the horizon.

Multipolar South Asia

Khurram Abbas

South Asia remained largely bipolar during the Cold War era due to India’s inward-looking approach and Pakistan’s proactive alignment with the West.

However, the balance of power steadily shifted in India’s favour in the first quarter of the 21st century. Islamabad’s internal security and economic fragility, a pro-India regime in Dhaka, Delhi’s rising economic profile, Beijing’s hesitation to proactively engage in South Asia’s security and strategic affairs and Washington’s decision to embolden India as a bulwark against China led to the emergence of a belligerent India in the region.

Change is the only constant in international affairs. This also applies to South Asia, where the region is witnessing profound geopolitical shifts. Today, Pakistan wants to reclaim its political space in South Asia. Beijing is eager to expand its footprint in the region, while Dhaka is showing defiance against Delhi’s assertive policies and domestic interference.

Islamabad considers it a conducive environment for promoting the idea of a ‘multipolar’ South Asia.

Islamabad believes that a resurgent Pakistan, assertive Bangladesh and proactive China can effectively limit Indian influence and reclaim its strategic space in the region.

In the South Asian context, multipolarity does not imply the emergence of several equal great powers, but rather the dilution of India’s structural dominance through the rise of alternative and consequential regional pillars. Multipolarity, as envisaged by Islamabad, signifies a regional order in which China, Bangladesh and Pakistan emerge as equally important strategic, economic and political poles alongside India, rather than remaining peripheral or subordinate actors.

South Asian states have already welcomed Chinese economic activities under the Belt & Road Initiative. Now, Islamabad envisages a proactive approach by Beijing in establishing sub-regional forums sans India, and deeper technological and security cooperation with smaller South Asian states. Smaller, Islamabad is trying to embolden Dhaka as an assertive power within the South Asian region.

Islamabad has calculated that a politically inde-

pendent, economically stable and militarily assertive Dhaka will challenge India’s assertive policies. A stronger Bangladesh with advanced air and naval power will challenge Delhi’s uncontested influence in the Bay of Bengal. Hence, an emboldened Dhaka will indirectly complement Islamabad’s strategic overtures in South Asia. This is why Islamabad is strengthening Dhaka’s defence through deepening cooperation in the naval, air and military domain.

Multipolarity in South Asian affairs will introduce several strategic and political opportunities for the regional states. First, the significance of smaller South Asian states such as the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan will increase in a multipolar South Asia as the competing powers will likely try to persuade them to join their respective blocs.

Similarly, a multipolar South Asia will also increase strategic and political options for smaller South Asian states. Historically, the smaller South Asian states did not enjoy abundant strategic options; rather, they had to rely only on India. In a multipolar South Asia, smaller states

will have the diplomatic flexibility to adopt an issue-based cooperation strategy on trade, energy, climate, security, etc, rather than entering into rigid bloc politics.

Second, a multipolar South Asia will limit Delhi’s ability to unilaterally shape the norms of regional forums. For instance, Delhi’s unilateral decision to boycott Saarc in 2016 paralysed the only regional forum in South Asia. However, a multipolar South Asia will create space for alternative sub-regional frameworks.

Third, attempts for the establishment of a multipolar South Asia will enhance Pakistan’s regional and global political profile as a facilitator of multi-vector regional alignment rather than simply being a bilateral rival of India.

However, there are significant risks involved in promoting the idea of a multipolar South Asia. First, Islamabad’s attempts towards the establishment of a multipolar South Asia will lead to another episode of intense geopolitical competition within the region. This intensified geopolitical competition will adversely affect efforts for regional connectivity. In this intense competitive environment, South

Asian states will prioritise sub-regional forums over regional frameworks as consensus-building in a regional forum is perhaps near impossible. One practical manifestation is the growing emphasis on mini-lateral frameworks that operate outside India-centric regional institutions. The establishment of the Bangladesh-China-Pakistan strategic forum reflects this evolving trend.

Second, Delhi will resist a multipolar South Asia through economic resources, diplomatic campaigns and establishing strategic partnerships with its neighbouring countries to reassert its primacy in the region. These strategies will add pressure on the foreign policy of smaller South Asian states.

Third, the uncertain domestic political environment of Bangladesh with its inconsistent foreign policy approaches, and longstanding Pakistan-Bangladesh issues such as Dhaka’s demands for an apology for the 1971 events and repayment of assets in undivided Pakistan, may hinder efforts towards a strengthened and effective multipolar South Asia in the long term.

Since the beginning, Islamabad has been concerned about the South Asian region becoming hostage to a single dominating power. While smaller South Asian states, too, had inherent insecurities on account of India, they tried to address them through engagement with New Delhi — on the latter’s terms. Islamabad, on the contrary, tried to challenge Indian dominance with a two-pronged strategy. Externally, it formed an alliance with the West to militarily enable itself against India, while within the region, it made efforts to establish a regional organisation (Saarc) in 1985 with the help of smaller South Asian states to defy the single country’s dominance.

Islamabad considers it another ‘1985 moment’, when it successfully aligned with smaller South Asian states and persuaded New Delhi to operate as one stakeholder among many, rather than as the region’s sole arbiter. The critical question is whether Islamabad’s push for a multipolar South Asia will replicate its 1985 success or reinforce regional polarisation.

Faith and action

Ghulam Shabbir

The Quran repeatedly says that on the right side of history are those who attain faith and do constructive deeds. Hence, one can see that there is an umbilical connection between faith and action as both are integral and indispensable to each other. Being symbiotically related and organically conjoined, both live and die together. So, faith divorced from action is not faith at all, as per the Quran (6:158).

Actions are transitory in nature yet their effects assume permanence as action, rather than inner states or dispositions, affects the human self, tenaciously clinging to the rational soul. Upon death, a person’s wealth and possessions go to his inheritors while his deeds are ‘inherited’ or passed on to God (19:80). So men are not what they think or know but what they do.

The early Islamic community was well aware of the inseparability of faith and action. They knew their duty lay in believing and in carrying out what they believed with sincerity of purpose. This sense of responsibility raised their behaviour from mechanical obedience to the law to a realm of moral activism, which turned their character into an epitome of transparency and excellence, where private and public life coalesced. The fusion of faith and action in their conduct and the resultant cumulative moral genius brought them to the fore of global affairs; shepherds and simple desert dwellers assumed the reins of history and reoriented the moral dimensions of the world.

However, later both internal and external chal-

lenges tore apart the union of faith and action. Kharjism’s overinflated idealism put the existence and integrity of the state and community at risk while Murjism’s overblown optimism paved the way for a laissez-faire morality and culminated in an Islamic replica of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith, ie, man is justified by faith apart from deeds.

Externally, Hellenism, the Hellenised Judaic-Christian tradition and an influx of other alien ideas distorted the very essence of the message.

Muslim philosophers and Sufis saw the Quran through the lens of Greek thought. With minor adaptations and adjustments, they became prisoners of Greek logic. Both concurred that the goal of human life is knowledge.

Philosophers accepted the idea of the eternity of the universe and said that indestructibility — the eternity of the objects of knowledge — bestowed ‘immortality’ on the subject. Al-Ghazali in his esoteric works admitted philosophical doctrines which he rejected in his works meant for the public. Speculative thought, mystic deliriums and subjective poetry substituted the scientific statements of the Quran, and the fusion of faith and action vanished into thin air. It was Ibn Taimiyya who, using Quranic principles, balanced the extremes of Kharjism and Murjism, Asharism and Mutazila. He undertook the systematic refutation of Greek logic to purge Islam of alien imprints and revived the basic principles — the Quran and Sunnah.

The severity of his language and volume of his intellectual roar were equated with the plight and decadence of his community. He said the goal of human life is neither the philosophical contemplation of God nor the mystic type of love for Him, as God is not something to be merely perceived, admired and cherished.

The purpose of life is the knowledge of God’s will and its implementation in life. Man is the bearer of moral responsibility, which the entire creation had refused. It requires an all-out human endeavour to establish a relentless egalitarian world or—der. Thus, organic fusion rather than the mechanical juxtaposition of faith and action come alive in his scheme of thought, but his words went unheeded for centuries.

He found full expression in Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, who tested the verities of his statements through Sufi methods, in turn endorsing and enhancing the same. He is a lighthouse for the straying fleets of modern Islam.

As Dr Fazlur Rahman wrote, should any state or group in the Muslim world assume the project of reconstruction of Islamic thought, the thread would have to be resumed from where Ibn Taimiyya left off.

Pakistan is duty-bound to take on the enterprise of reconstruction of Islamic thought to distinguish normative Islam from historical faith, or else religious extremism, or secularism — the bane of modernity — will become the only choice. The million-dollar question, however, is that when Kharjites and Mutazila have been an ‘extinct species’ for centuries, why do the ‘chickens’ of Murjism and Asharism still rule the roost?

Oil, rock, crypto

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

“The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters” — Antonio Gramsci

The more things change, the more they stay the same. China may have emerged as a power of global import, but America is still the world’s sheriff, and the Trump ad-ministration wants everyone to know that.

The dust had barely settled on the audacious kidnapping of Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro that the Yankee propaganda machinery started fanning the flames of war on Iran. Imperialism abroad has been accompanied by Trump’s unleashing of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) goons on American streets with orders to literally shoot ‘suspects’ at sight.

The combination of bravado and terror portends more darkness ahead. But what is the end game?

There isn’t one. At a base level, Washington still just wants the oil, the lifeblood of the global capitalist order over which it has presided since the end of World War II. This order is creaking at the seams, but a better world system is not visible yet. Venezuela sits atop the biggest reserves of black gold in the world. Iran is number three on the list. US imperialism wants it all.

Then there is the other bedrock of the military-industrial complex — making war. In the face of China’s inexorable economic rise and partial erosion of dollar hegemony, US power is not what it was. But Washington possesses 10 times the

means of destruction of any other single country. It still bombs and invades other countries at will, kidnaps heads of state in broad daylight.

Will military might and oil stave off America’s terminal economic decline? The answer depends on who monopolises the new global commodity on the block — critical minerals. Or maybe you prefer the term ‘rare earth’. Whatever your fancy, control over the rock equates to monopolies of renewable energy, electric vehicles, everyday smart technology, high-grade weapons systems and so much more.

And this is where China calls out the Empire’s bluff. Beijing’s announcement of unprecedented export controls on rare earth elements a few months ago confirmed its willingness to play hard ball after Trump’s dramatic tariff announcements earlier in 2025. Oil, gas, plastic and coal still matter, but critical minerals are starting to matter more. Capitalism is greening itself and the Empire is being forced to play catch up.

What does the tortured withering away of the old order mean for us in this country? Mostly business as usual, at least for now. The current hybrid plus regime is ingratiating itself with as many external patrons as possible to generate those coveted geostrategic rents. You want military personnel to serve in Gaza? Happy to consider it. A port in Panshi to rival the Chinese in Gwadar? Why not? Access to copper, gold and other mineral exploration projects in already conflict-ravaged Baloch-istan and KP? Ayub Khan spun it by claiming: friends, not masters.

All of this while Chinese solar panels flood

Pakistani markets at breakneck speed, Chinese electric SUVs become the new status symbol of our hedonistic chattering classes, and all manner of defence deals are signed with Gulf kingdoms and whatnot. No one seems to be concerned with the geopolitical wars that will surely intensify.

Which brings us to crypto. Earlier this week, the CEO of the shady Trump-owned crypto company World Liberty Finance was in town to ink a deal with the go-vernment. The big guns were all present to oversee the ‘historic’ agreement. What exactly does it mean to ‘ex-plore innovation in digital finance’? No one really knows, just as no one is privy to what the newly created Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority is actually doing, on whose watch and to what end.

The crypto game is arguably even more opaque than any other money-making enterprise in the country, and that is saying a lot. More than \$600 million was lost to crypto transactions in 2025.

The one thing that can be said for certain is that World Liberty Finance has brought in a lot of cash for the Trump family, especially since he became president, and that there is more on the horizon for a select few in both Pakistan and the US in the wake of this deal.

And herein lies the rub. For all the geopolitical change taking place around the world, the logic of the system at large remains the accumulation of power and profit. As bloody games around oil, minerals and crypto intensify, brutalised masses in Pakistan and beyond are in line for even more of the brunt of a rapid race to the bottom.

Rana Mashhood says: Youth empowerment vital for national development

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan has said that the government was creating extensive opportunities for young people under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme to enable them to play an effective role in national development and progress.

Addressing a ceremony, here on Saturday, he said that youth empowerment was a top priority of the government, adding that along with quality education, it was equally important to provide modern training and skill development to prepare young people for future challenges. He stressed that trained and skilled youth were the backbone of a strong and progressive economy.

Rana Mashhood said that Pakistan's delivery and overall performance were

now being acknowledged at the global level.

He noted that during Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos, Pakistan successfully showcased its technological capabilities to the world, reflecting the country's growing strength in modern warfare and innovation. He further said that in Marka-e-Haq, Pakistan defeated India through the effective and strategic use of technology, proving its preparedness and competence.

He said that Pakistan was moving steadily on the path of development, citing economic stability and improved global standing as key indicators of progress. He pointed out that the ranking of the Pakistani passport had improved, reflecting enhanced international confidence in the country.

Emphasizing the government's vision, Rana

Mashhood said that a "Rising Pakistan" was being built with a special focus on youth, who were being equipped with education, skills, and opportunities to lead the nation into a prosperous future.

He also said that Pakistan had taken off economically and was heading towards sustainable growth, expressing confidence that the country would soon exit the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. He added that economic reforms and prudent policies were yielding positive results, paving the way for long-term stability and development.

Rana Mashhood said that the Prime Minister's Youth Programme would continue to serve as a major platform for empowering young people and ensuring their active participation in nation-building.



LAHORE: Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq viewing the displayed art stuff during exhibition of Degree Show at NCA.

CM Sindh for coordinated efforts of all institutions to combat terrorism

HYDERABAD (APP): Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that terrorists are once again attempting to harm the country in different ways, disclosing that a major terrorist plot in Karachi was foiled two weeks ago and explosives and other materials were recovered.

He said that the threat of terrorism still exists in the country and stressed that it can only be defeated through coordinated efforts of all institutions.

Speaking on the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, the chief minister said that the commission has been constituted and deliberations are

underway.

He said that each province has submitted its own proposals, adding that the Pakistan Peoples Party's stance is clear that the share of the provinces should not be reduced and all provinces must be given their due share. He further said that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) should enhance exports, adding that the PPP would support every decision taken in the national interest.

Providing an update on the arrangements for the Urs of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan, the chief minister said that he was personally supervising the arrangements and all

possible facilities would be provided to the devotees.

Commenting on the Nader Jamali case in Dadu, Shah said that the interior minister was monitoring the situation and assured that transparent investigations would be carried out.

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has said that the arrest of the child abuser in Karachi is a major success.

He said, "I will not tolerate child abuse cases under any circumstances."

On the arrest of the suspect involved in the sexual abuse of over 100 children, the Chief Minister praised the police.

Ahsan Bhoon Group clinches key posts in PBC election

LAHORE (INP): Ahsan Bhoon Group clinched the key posts of Vice Chairman Punjab Bar Council and Chairman Executive Committee days after securing victory in the Pakistan Bar Council elections.

Candidates of the Ahsan Bhoon Group for the offices of Chairman Executive Committee and Vice Chairman Punjab Bar Council were declared successful after securing 56 votes each, out of a total of 75

voters.

Khawaja Qaiser of the Ahsan Bhoon Group was elected Vice Chairman Punjab Bar Council with 56 votes, while Fakhar Hayat secured 56 votes to become Chairman Executive Committee of the Punjab Bar Council.

The successful candidates stated that they would continue their struggle for the supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law.

FPSC to announce CSS 2025 results in February

ISLAMABAD (INP): In an important development, the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) on Saturday announced that it would announce the final results of the CSS, 2025 in the last week of February. Preparations had entered final stages. Over 80 per cent candidates, who have got through the written examination, have been interviewed, while the interviews of the remaining candidates would be completed soon.

Minister reviews progress of CM's Model Village programme

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Local Government and Community Development (LG&CD) has chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Civil Secretariat to assess the implementation of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's Model Village Program, here on Saturday.

He was briefed by the authorities concerned that Punjab Rural Municipal Services Company (PRMSC) has issued tenders for development schemes in 359 villages, while work has already started in 224 villages across the province. Secretary Local Government Shakeel Ahmed Mian and Additional Secretary Ahmer Sohail Kaifi were also present.

PRMSC officials provided a detailed briefing on the program, highlighting the ongoing work and future plans to provide modern infrastructure and facilities in rural areas.

The minister said that in the first phase, 470 villages have been selected for development, with 112 villages nearing completion. He shared a detailed division-wise breakdown: 39 villages in Sargodha, 44 in Sahiwal, 53 in Gujranwala, 49 in Gujrat, 62 in Multan, 39 in DG Khan, 47 in Bahawalpur, 34 in Faisalabad, 47 in Sheikhupura (Lahore division), and 56 in Rawalpindi.

The minister said the program is aimed at transforming Punjab villages by ensuring access to basic amenities, modernized streets, children's parks, street lighting, clean water supply, and sewage systems. He noted that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is the first provincial leader to give due attention to rural development, and expressed confidence that the program would give a "new look" to the villages.

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Deputy Mayor of Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad inaugurates flower show at Karachi Press Club.

Minister inaugurates 2-acre playland at Greater Iqbal Park

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Housing and Urban Development Bilal Yasin has inaugurated a two-acre Playland at the historic Greater Iqbal Park, here on Saturday.

The Playland, developed by the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Lahore, has been established as a family-friendly recreational facility. PHA Lahore Vice Chairman Ghazali Saleem Butt and PHA Director General Raja Mansoor were also present on the occasion.

Briefing the minister, PHA officials said that the Playland has been designed on the pattern of Disneyland and features modern motion rides for

children. The facility includes safari motorbikes, breakdancer rides, merry-go-rounds, pirate ships and several other amusement attractions for visitors.

Officials further informed that fitness certificates from the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) have been obtained for all rides and related equipment to ensure safety standards. On the occasion, the provincial minister said that the provision of modern and unique recreational facilities for children and families in public parks was of great importance. He said that recreational activities in a natural environment promote healthy lifestyles among citizens.

Efforts underway to solve problems of Buner people: Minister

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Irrigation Riaz Khan has said that steps have been taken to address problems of Buner people and provide them all the basic amenities of life.

He expressed these views while talking to various delegations and local elders at Malik Pur Pir Baba, Buner. He said that government was not oblivious to problems of Buner people adding that efforts were un-

derway under a comprehensive policy to address long-standing desires of Buner people. On this occasion, the provincial minister listened attentively to public issues and issued necessary directives to the relevant authorities for the prompt resolution of problems. He said that efforts to resolve public issues and ensuring provincial development would continue keeping in view suggestions and aspiration of people.



KARACHI: Eminent Economist Dr. Kaiser Bengali addressing the participants of a Seminar titled '2025 Recapped: The State of Global Politics' at Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA).

US consul general meets commissioner, discusses development cooperation

FAISALABAD (APP): US Consul General Stetson Sanders has called on Divisional Commissioner Raja Jahangir Anwar at the Commissioner's Office where both sides discussed bilateral matters, development initiatives and economic significance of Faisalabad. Welcoming the US Consul General on his visit to Faisalabad, Divisional Commissioner Raja Jahangir Anwar as an Administrator of Municipal Corporation and briefed him about socio-economic profile of the city.

He said that Faisalabad was Pakistan's third largest city, widely

known as "Manchester of Pakistan", with its textile and garment products in demand across the world.

He highlighted agricultural importance of the region and informed that against a target of 1.85 million acres, wheat had been cultivated on over 1.9 million acres in Faisalabad division during current season.

He stressed the need to promote bilateral cultural exchanges and said that under the leadership of Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz, thousands of students from across Pakistan and abroad were pursuing higher edu-

cation on scholarships in Faisalabad's universities.

He recalled that more than 500 villages in Jhang and Chiniot districts were severely affected by floods six months ago. Rehabilitation of flood victims, restoration of infrastructure and provision of relief packages had posed major challenges which were successfully addressed, he added. Briefing the consul general about municipal affairs, the divisional commissioner said that non-stop measures were underway to ensure quick provision of municipal services including repair and rehabilitation of roads.

Kohala road project launched, Abbasi lauds Punjab govt cooperation

KOHALA (APP): A two-kilometer road rehabilitation project from Kinnear Bridge to Kohala Bazaar, under the Punjab Government Murree-Kohala Highway scheme, was inaugurated on Saturday by Secretary General Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Murtaza Javed Abbasi.

The inauguration ceremony was held at Kohala, where the project was formally launched through the unveiling of a plaque by chief guest Murtaza Javed Abbasi along with former Member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly Sardar Farid Khan. Addressing the gathering, Murtaza Javed Abbasi thanked the Punjab Government for providing development funds for the project, stating that Punjab support was enabling the people of Abbottabad district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to benefit from improved infrastructure. He said efforts would

also be made to secure the early construction of a major hospital at Kohala so that residents would not have to stage protests at Kohala Bridge for basic facilities.

Local residents expressed gratitude to the Punjab Government, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, and Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Ameer Muqam for allocating funds for the project.

They said the rehabilitation of the road, along with the construction of a Punjab Government rest house and its access road in Kohala, would enhance the beauty of the area and benefit the people of Circle Bakote.

Former MPA Sardar Farid Khan said providing public facilities was part of the Pakistan Muslim League's manifesto and assured that every possible effort would be made to safeguard the rights of the people of Circle Bakote.



Funeral Prayer held for Martyred Constable Wajid Khan attended by IGP Sindh Javed Alam Odho and Senior Police Officers.

Secy housing visits key urban remodelling sites

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Housing Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Mangal, along with DG LDA Tahir Farooq, visited several ongoing development projects in the provincial capital, reviewing progress on the Data Darbar remodelling project, the under-construction Neela Gumbad scheme, and development works around the Lahore Railway Station.

During the visit, the DG LDA, Chief Engineer TEPA, and Chief Engineer LDA briefed the secretary on the scope, timelines, and implementation progress of the projects.

The delegation also inspected the proposed site for an underpass from Bhati Chowk to Kachehri, where officials shared that the plan includes construction of the underpass as well as a widened road on the opposite side to improve traffic flow and connectivity.

Officials informed

that work on Data Darbar expansion is underway on multiple fronts simultaneously.

Following the removal of the shrine's outer wall, construction is ongoing for the expansion of the inner corridor, while work on the parking area, pedestrian routes, and a pedestrian underpass is also progressing in parallel.

Later, the secretary and DG LDA reviewed development activities around the Railway Station, where Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Mangal appreciated the LDA team for its efforts in sustainable urban regeneration and acknowledged the contributions of DG LDA Tahir Farooq, Chief Engineer LDA Israr Saeed, and Chief Engineer TEPA Iqar Hussain. He noted that LDA's initiatives in sustainable development and urban regeneration are being adopted in other districts as well.

60 illegal Afghan nationals arrested in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Police arrested 60 illegal Afghan nationals during an ongoing crackdown in Karachi over the last few days.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Sohrab Goth Aurangzeb Khattak said that these illegal Afghan nationals are drug addicts and were in hiding in different areas of Karachi. DSP Aurangzeb Khattak said thousands of illegal Afghan nationals were sent back to their home during different operations.

He said that a search operation is still underway to apprehend illegal Afghan nationals. He said that time was granted to a few Afghan families who were residing in Medical Ground Karachi.

Motorcyclist killed, wife seriously injured in road accident

KARACHI (INP): A motorcyclist was killed, and his wife seriously injured, after a dumper crushed their motorcycle near Wireless Gate in Karachi, rescue officials said on Saturday.

The accident occurred when the dumper, reportedly coming from the wrong side, struck the couple. The deceased was identified as Nisar Ahmed, a resident of Gulshan-e-Hadeed.

His wife sustained serious injuries and was shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Nisar Ahmed was returning home from a relative's house at the time of the accident.

Two serial child rapists arrested

KARACHI (INP): Police have arrested two serial child rapists accused of sexually assaulting more than 100 children in Karachi, in what officials described as one of the city's biggest operations of the year. Acting on intelligence information, East Investigation Police arrested the suspects from Mehmoodabad within the jurisdiction of Tipu Sultan Police Station. The main accused was identified as Imran, and his accomplice as Waqas Khan.

According to SP Investigation East SP Usman Sadozai, the arrests were made after a child identified the suspects during a targeted operation by a special investigation team. Imran had a puncture repair stall in the Mehmoodabad area and is a resident of Manzoor Colony. Police revealed that between 2020 and 2025, seven cases of child sexual abuse were reported to police across four districts of Karachi including Malir, Korangi, East and South



LARKANA: Labourers busy repairing the walls of the world-famous archaeological site of Mohenjo-daro.

ICTN Asia Expo highlights Pakistan's growing tech strength: Shaza Fatima

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja has said that ICTN Asia is a landmark international event that reflects Pakistan's rapid progress in advanced technology and its growing presence on the global digital map.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the ICTN Asia Expo at the Expo Center here on Saturday, the minister said that Pakistan was moving steadily towards a technology-driven economy. She noted that during the past four years, the Special Technology Zones Authority had established 32 Special Technology Zones across the country, creating a strong ecosystem for IT growth, innovation and investment.

She said the upcoming Digital Nation System would prove to be a game

changer for Pakistan's IT sector by integrating digital services and improving governance.

Highlighting government efforts, she said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the country was steered away from economic default in 2022 and economic stability was restored within two years through timely decisions and reforms.

Emphasizing the importance of human capital, Shaza Fatima said Pakistan's youth are its greatest strength. She shared that hundreds of thousands of young people have already received skills training, while a much larger number will be trained during the current year to meet the demands of the modern digital economy.

The minister said the government was actively

working on strengthening Pakistan's global image through focused international branding, aimed at rebuilding trust and confidence worldwide. She added that technology was at the heart of this transformation, with a national-level federation playing a key role in ensuring ownership and coordination across sectors.

She stressed that the ultimate objective of technology adoption was to make life easier for ordinary citizens. She said digital public services help curb red tape and corruption, adding that the federal government has completely transitioned to e-commerce and eliminated paper-based processes.

She also highlighted the launch of the Asaan Khidmat Service Center as an important step towards citizen-friendly service delivery.



TOKYO: Mr. Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan Coordinator to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Commerce and Trade is addressing 8th Pakistan-Japan Government Business Dialogue. Ambassador of Pakistan to Japan H.E. Abdul Hameed is also present.

Pak-Philippines Pharma trade holds \$1 billion potential: Razzaq Siddiq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and the Philippines have the potential to expand bilateral trade in the pharmaceutical and biological sector to \$1 billion, with both countries needing to diversify trade by focusing on modern medicines, vaccines and medical tools, said Pakistani business tycoon in the Philippines Abdul Razzaq Siddiq.

Talking to the media, Siddiq, who is President of Second World Traders, Inc., said pharmaceuticals and biological products are among the most promising sectors for trade diversification, adding that cooperation in these areas would significantly strengthen economic and healthcare ties between the two countries.

He said a Philippines-based pharmaceutical firm has opened a subsidiary office in Islamabad to boost bilateral trade and

healthcare collaboration. In this regard, Second World Traders Pakistan, a subsidiary of 2World Traders Inc., inaugurated its Islamabad office on January 5, 2026, marking a key step toward enhancing cooperation in vaccines and biological products.

Siddiq termed the move a sign of growing investor confidence and highlighted opportunities for supply-chain collaboration, technology transfer and local manufacturing. He said the company plans to initially import 10 million doses of Tetanus Toxoid vaccine to address shortages in Pakistan, followed by gradual localization of production.

He added that future projects include the production of anti-rabies serum in collaboration with Dow Institute of Life Sciences, as well as anti-snake venom

serums aimed at underserved regions, particularly Sindh and Balochistan.

"These initiatives are designed to strengthen Pakistan's healthcare system while deepening economic links with the Philippines," he said.

Sharing trade figures, Siddiq said Pakistan exported around \$30 million worth of pharmaceutical products to the Philippines in 2025, mainly medications, while overall bilateral trade stood at \$160 million in 2020. He added that Pakistan's exports to the Philippines reached \$8.79 million from August 2025 onward.

With over 30 years of experience in the pharmaceutical and biological sector, Siddiq said his group is among the largest biological companies in the Philippines, supplying life-saving vaccines globally.

Overseas jobs surge 5%, remittances jump 9%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) on Saturday stated that a 5 percent increase was recorded in the number of Pakistani workers sent abroad, while foreign remittances witnessed a 9 percent rise during the last year.

Sharing the achievements made by the ministry in 2025, it said that tangible measures taken by the Bureau of Immigration to facilitate overseas job seekers yielded positive results.

According to the ministry, a total of 762,499 Pakistanis were sent abroad in 2025 with the facilitation of the Bureau of Immigration, while overseas Pakistanis remitted about \$40 billion during the year.

The ministry said that labor mobility agreements were signed with Italy,

Belarus and Iraq in 2025.

It added that Italy's allocation of 10,500 workers for Pakistan over three years was a major development and marked Italy's first quota-based labor mechanism for Pakistan, providing opportunities for about 3,500 workers per year for three years.

This quota will offer employment opportunities in sectors including hospitality, healthcare, agriculture and ship-breaking.

The ministry further stated that Qatar's resumption of work visas for Pakistani workers after 19 years expanded access to Gulf countries.

To strengthen monitoring, the ministry introduced the e-Protector system, which resulted in the cancellation of licenses of 71 overseas employment promoters due to failure to perform.

Applications invited for subsidized provision of 1,000 laser land levelers

FAISALABAD (APP): The agriculture department has invited applications from the farmers and service providers for subsidized provision of 1,000 laser land levelers under Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz's Efficient Water Use in Agriculture Program. A spokesperson of Agriculture Department Punjab said here on Saturday that 1,000 laser land levelers would be distributed through a transparent balloting.

A subsidy of Rs.600,000/- per laser unit would be provided to the farmers, he added. He said that the eligible farmers and service providers should submit their applications along with relevant documents in the office of Deputy Director Agriculture (Water Management) by January 26, 2026.



ISLAMABAD: A Laborer busy sorting good quality onions at vegetables Market in Federal Capital.



RIYADH: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik in meeting with Engr. Khalid Al-Falih, Minister of Investment of Saudi Arabia.

Consultations start with private sector to drive growth-led exports: Commerce secretary

FAISALABAD (APP): Federal Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul said on Saturday that the government has initiated a comprehensive consultation process with private sector to develop the economy in line with future requirements and all viable proposals for growth-led exports would be reviewed in this regard.

Addressing a meeting of local traders and businessmen at Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that the initiative would help in formulating practical strategies to enhance exports and ensure sustainable economic growth.

He said that economic conditions had improved considerably compared to two to three years ago. However, he stressed the need for further corrective measures.

Terminating privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) a positive step, he said that the first phase of privatizing power distribution companies would begin soon, which would improve overall performance and reduce line losses.

He said that Ministry of Commerce had taken several key steps last year including the announcement of National Tariff Policy 2025-30.

He emphasized that Pakistan must move away from protectionism to become globally competitive and adopt a long-term strategy for the next 30 years, focusing on reducing water and energy consumption.

Highlighting the potential of IT sector, he said that it offered vast growth opportunities but required concrete measures to fully capitalize on its potential.

He said that discussions had also been held at the finance ministry level on SME and agricultural financing, noting that banks held a portfolio worth trillions of rupees, of which less than six percent was allocated to these critical sectors. State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) was being approached to provide special incentives and concessional financing to SMEs, he added.

He also discussed the need for skilled manpower and assured that the budget preparation process had started and Ministry of Finance itself would prepare the budget instead of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

He announced the appointment of a focal person and urged the Faisalabad Chamber and other organizations to submit their recommendations for consideration.

Earlier, FCCI President Farooq Yousaf Sheikh highlighted the challenges being faced by industries and called for immediate and serious measures to address them.

He also underlined the key factors which are imperative for boosting exports including reducing production costs, ensuring access to affordable capital, maintaining continuity in economic policies, accessing new and traditional markets, improving export quality, promoting innovation and ensuring better law and order.

He said that Pakistan's exports had remained stagnant for several years while remittances had helped stabilize the economy.

However, he stressed that sustainable economic stability depended solely on increasing exports.

He said the country's economic situation was better than last year, with Pakistan emerging from bankruptcy risks and foreign exchange reserves reaching a record \$21.25 billion, though the burden of domestic and foreign debt continued to pose challenges.

He also pointed out that delays in exporters' refunds had further aggravated the situation.



BERLIN: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, addressing the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) 2026 in Berlin, highlighting Pakistan's commitment to water resilience, sustainable agriculture, and food security.

Tahir Ayub says: Modernization of fruit, vegetable market crucial for food supply Chain

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Tahir Ayub, has emphasized that modernization of Islamabad's fruit and vegetable market is critical for improving trader facilitation and strengthening the capital's food supply chain, which serves thousands of retailers and consumers on daily basis.

Speaking to a visiting delegation belonging to Fruit and Vegetable Market

he said the market's rapidly expanding trade volume demands urgent infrastructure upgrades, including the development of new and modern auction facilities, both open and covered to enhance efficiency and accommodate growing commercial activity, said a release issued here on Saturday.

He proposed the creation of dedicated platforms for heavy vehicles and 40-foot containers to reduce traffic congestion

and improve logistical operations.

He also suggested bringing adjacent vacant and underutilized land within the market's boundary and to establish open truck auction zones, thereby expanding capacity and easing internal congestion. Additionally, he called for a comprehensive anti-encroachment drive to reclaim occupied spaces and redevelop them for legitimate market use, ensuring better management and operational discipline.

PHDEC establishes field office in Sargodha to bolster citrus exports

SARGODHA (APP): The Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company (PHDEC) under the Ministry of Commerce established a field office at the Sargodha Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) to facilitate growers and exporters in enhancing the country's citrus exports.

Speaking at an introductory session, the SCCI President Khawaja Yasir Qayyum welcomed the initiative, describing the field office as a significant milestone for addressing export challenges and improving the citrus sector.

The Chief Executive Officer of PHDEC stated that while Kinnow remained a vital crop, exports had faced recent declines, add-

ing that the new office would focus on accessing new markets and coordinating with provincial departments to restore export volumes.

Leading exporters from Al-Rafiq International, National Fruit Factory, Leo Fruit and Citrus Asia lauded the move and called for value addition and the introduction of modern commercial varieties to improve production standards.

The PHDEC Agro Consultant Dr. Muhammad Azeem Khan informed that the company was working on developing new varieties under expert guidance and would continue consulting stakeholders throughout the process.

Gold prices decline by Rs600 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24-karat per tola gold decreased by Rs600 and was sold at Rs481,862 on Saturday as compared to Rs482,462 on the previous trading day, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also declined by Rs515 to Rs413,118 from Rs413,633, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went down by Rs472 to Rs378,705 from Rs379,177.

Similarly, silver prices registered a decrease, with per tola 24-karat silver falling by Rs43 to Rs9,482 and the price of 10 grams of silver declining by Rs37 to Rs8,129.

Pakistan Railways to upgrade air-conditioning in 153 passenger coaches

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways (PR) has launched an extensive program to replace outdated air-conditioning units in its passenger coaches, aiming to restore comfort and improve the overall quality of travel.

According to a document available with Wealth Pakistan, currently 231 air-conditioned coaches are in operation, while demand for AC-equipped coaches stands at 208. The replacement project targets 153 coaches, with 85 units already replaced.

By March 2026, 68 more AC units are slated for replacement, marking a significant stride towards meeting the growing demand for comfortable travel. Separately, Pakistan Railways is actively working to strengthen passenger train operations by restoring power vans currently under maintenance.

According to the documents available with Wealth Pakistan, Pakistan Railways has a total fleet of 86 power vans, which provide essential electricity for lighting, air-conditioning and other passenger amenities. Of these, 54 power vans are presently available

for operation, supporting the running of passenger trains across the network.

The railway system requires 70 power vans for smooth train operations, a figure that includes maintenance planning and a spare cushion to ensure reliability. The data show that 16 power vans are currently undergoing repairs in workshops, reflecting ongoing efforts to rehabilitate assets and enhance fleet availability.

A Pakistan Railways official told Wealth Pakistan that the power vans in workshops are being systematically addressed through maintenance and overhauling, which is expected to gradually increase the number of units available for operation. Once restored, these power vans will help narrow the gap between operational availability and overall requirements.

He said the continued focus on maintenance underscores Pakistan Railways' commitment to improving passenger comfort and operational resilience, particularly for long-distance and air-conditioned services that rely heavily on dependable power supply.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information, Technology and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja addressing the 27th ITCN Asia at Expo Center.

Non-technical individuals in research institutions crippling country's agriculture: Khalid

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan Kissan Ittehad Chairman Khalid Mahmood Khokhar said non-technical people posted in agricultural institutions have destroyed farm productivity.

He added frequent bureaucratic changes and lack of expertise have pushed agriculture to the brink.

Addressing a press conference at local press club, Khokhar said agriculture was being run by individuals with no field knowledge.

He said many secretaries were changed in Ministry of Food Security and Agriculture Research, preventing policy's continuity.

He added that by the time an officer understood agriculture, he was transferred.

Khokhar criticized and stated government policies had failed to support farmers. He maintained price controls had caused massive losses. He added that farmers were not even recovering production costs. He termed it an "economic killing" of growers.

Pakistan Kissan Ittehad chairman said potato exports had sharply declined due to non-technical decisions. He said potato farmers were "on ventilators" due to unsold stock. Last year's produce was still lying in stores.

Khokhar said cotton was also on a ventilator. He warned cotton production may stop next year. He said there were no buyers in the market. Pakistan, once a cotton exporter, was now importing crops.

He said wheat was the engine of all crops. The Kissan Ittehad added bread prices were reduced for political publicity. However, the farmer not paid due price. He said farmers never knew official wheat rates in advance. Farmers cultivated crops on their own, not on government directions.

Khokhar said millions of farmers were leaving agriculture. He said 95 percent farmers owned less than five acres and they could not install industry by their own.



KARACHI: Woman shows handicrafts made at Ra'ana Liaquat Craftsmen's Colony (RLCC) workshop in Karachi Pakistan.

CEO says Digitalization at DRAP revolutionizes licensing, reducing processing time

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) Dr. Obaidullah Saturday shared his confidence in advancing international collaborations to establish local vaccine manufacturing, pointing out that reforms within the department have significantly sped up procedures, turning years-long tasks into those that are now completed within days. While speaking to a local media channel, Dr. Obaidullah, CEO of DRAP highlighted the transformative impact of the digitalization of DRAP's systems, adding, new digital approach has significantly sped up the licensing and

approval processes, making them faster more efficient and streamlined, which previously took years to complete.

Dr. Obaidullah also expressed his gratitude for the government's support and appreciation, acknowledging that their backing played a crucial role in DRAP's achievements.

He proudly mentioned that DRAP's efforts had earned them the "Reform Champion" award, further recognizing the authority's commitment to improving regulatory processes and services.

He claimed that DRAP is now able to provide better access to quality medicines.

Trump names Blair, Rubio to Gaza ‘board of peace’

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): US President Donald Trump on Friday tapped Secretary of State Marco Rubio and former British prime minister Tony Blair as founding members of the Gaza “board of peace.”

Trump also named his special envoy Steve Witkoff, son-in-law Jared Kushner and World Bank President Ajay Banga among those on the seven-member “founding executive board,” the White House said in a statement.

Trump himself will chair the board, it said, adding that further members would be announced in coming weeks.

Blair is a controversial choice in the Middle East because of his role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and

Trump himself said last year that he wanted to make sure he was an “acceptable choice to everybody.”

Trump had announced the formation of the “board of peace” on Thursday, a key phase two element of a US-backed plan to end the war in Gaza.

The US president said it was the “Greatest and Most Prestigious Board ever assembled at any time, any place.”

The board’s creation comes shortly after the announcement of a 15-member Palestinian technocratic committee, charged with managing the day-to-day governance of devastated post-war Gaza.

Gaza native and former Palestinian Authority deputy min-

ister Ali Shaath will head the new committee.

Trump on Friday also named US Major General Jasper Jeffers to head the International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Gaza.

The US-backed Gaza peace plan first came into force on October 10, leading to the return of all the hostages held by Hamas and an end to the fighting between the Palestinian militant group and Israel in the besieged territory.

The plan’s second phase is now underway, though clouded by allegations of aid shortages and violence.

Hamas, meanwhile, has refused to publicly commit to a full disarmament, a non-negotiable demand from Israel.



French President Emmanuel Macron reviews troops as he visits the Istres military air force base, southern France.

Iran protest movement subsides in face of ‘brutal’ crackdown

PARIS (AFP/APP): Protests in Iran have subsided after a crackdown that has killed thousands under an internet blackout, monitors said Friday, a week after the start of the largest demonstrations in years challenging the country’s theocratic system.

Reza Pahlavi, the US-based son of Iran’s late shah, however, said he was confident the Islamic republic would fall and called for intervention, though the threat of new military action by the United States against Iran has appeared to have receded for the time being.

In posts to social media on Friday, Pahlavi announced a fresh coordinated demonstration, calling for Iranians to “raise your voices in anger and protest with our national

slogans” on the weekend. Protests sparked by economic grievances started with a shutdown in the Tehran bazaar on December 28 but turned into a mass movement demanding the removal of the clerical system that has ruled Iran since the 1979 revolution.

People started pouring into the streets in big cities from January 8 but authorities immediately enforced a shutdown of the internet that has lasted over a week and activists say is aimed at masking the scale of the crackdown.

The “brutal” repression has “likely suppressed the protest movement for now,” said the US-based Institute for the Study of War, which has monitored the protest activity.

Saudi king leaves hospital after ‘reassuring’ medical tests: royal court

RIYADH (AFP/APP): Saudi Arabia’s 90-year-old King Salman was discharged from hospital after undergoing medical tests in the capital Riyadh, the kingdom’s Royal Court said on Friday, adding that the results were “reassuring”.

The monarch “left the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh today (Friday) after undergoing medical tests that proved reassuring”, the royal court said in a statement shared on state media, having announced his admission earlier in the day.

Saudi Arabia, the world’s biggest crude oil exporter, has for years sought to quell speculation over King Salman’s health.

He has been on the throne since 2015, though his son Mohammed bin Salman was named crown prince in 2017 and acts as de facto ruler.

Afghan man goes on trial over deadly Munich car-ramming

MUNICH (AFP/APP): An Afghan man goes on trial in Germany on Friday accused of ramming a car into a crowd in Munich last year, killing a two-year-old girl and her mother and injuring dozens.

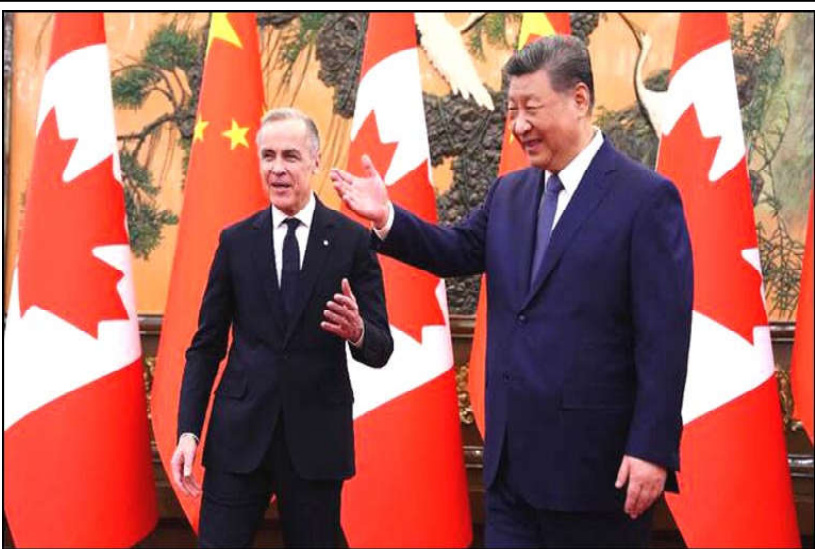
The suspect, partially identified as Farhad N., faces two charges of murder and 44 of attempted murder, with prosecutors saying he acted out of a “religious motivation” and expected to die in the attack.

The vehicle rampage in February 2025 was one of several deadly attacks linked to migrants which inflamed a heated debate on immigration ahead of a general election that month.

Farhad N., who was 24 at the time, is accused of deliberately steering his BMW Mini into a 1,400-strong trade union street rally in Munich on February 13.



People queue to vote during the general election, at a polling centre within Magere neighborhood in Kasangati town near Kampala, Uganda.



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney meets with President of China Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China.

Thousands join anti-Trump ‘Hands off Greenland’ protests in Denmark

COPENHAGEN (AFP/APP): Thousands of people took to the streets of Denmark’s capital on Saturday to protest at US President Donald Trump’s push to take over Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory.

The protest followed Trump’s warning on Friday that he “may put a tariff” on countries that oppose his plans to take over mineral-rich Greenland, which is an autonomous territory of Denmark.

They also coincided with a visit to Copenhagen

by a bipartisan delegation from the US Congress that has made clear the opposition of many Americans to the

Trump administration’s sabre-rattling. Waving the flags of Denmark and Greenland, the protesters formed a sea of red and white outside Copenhagen city hall, chanting “Kalaallit Nunaat!”—the vast Arctic island’s name in Greenlandic. Thousands of people had said on social media they would take part in marches and rallies organised by Greenlandic

associations in Copenhagen, and in Aarhus, Aalborg, Odense and the Greenlandic capital Nuuk.

“The aim is to send a clear and unified message of respect for Greenland’s democracy and fundamental human rights,” Uagut, an association of Greenlanders in Denmark, said on its website. A sister demonstration was scheduled to happen in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, at 4:00 pm (1500 GMT), to protest the US’ “illegal plans to take control of Greenland”, organisers said.

US says reached deal with Taiwan to lower tariffs, boost investments

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The United States said Thursday that it has signed a deal with Taiwan to reduce tariffs on goods from the democratic island, while increasing Taiwanese semiconductor and tech companies’ investments in America.

The agreement, the US Commerce Department said, “will drive a massive reshoring of America’s semiconductor sector.”

Under the deal, Washington will lower tariffs on Taiwanese goods to 15 percent, down from a 20 percent “reciprocal” rate meant to address US trade deficits and prac-

tices it deems unfair.

Sector-specific tariffs on Taiwanese auto parts, timber, lumber and wood products will also be capped at 15 percent, while generic pharmaceuticals and certain natural resources will face no “reciprocal” duties, the US Commerce Department added.

Meanwhile, Taiwanese chip and tech businesses are set to make “new, direct investments totalling at least \$250 billion” in the United States to build and expand capacity in areas like advanced semiconductors and artificial intelligence, the department said.

Myanmar tells ICJ Rohingya genocide claims ‘unsubstantiated’

THE HAGUE (AFP/APP): Myanmar on Friday dismissed as “unsubstantiated” allegations that it committed genocide against its Rohingya minority, telling the International Court of Justice that its brutal crackdown was a

“counterterrorism operation.” “This case will be decided on the basis of proven facts, not unsubstantiated allegations. Emotional language and blurry factual pictures are not a substitute for a rigorous presentation of facts,” Ko Ko Hlaing, a minister in the president’s office, told the court.

Myanmar is defending itself from accusations brought by The Gambia.



People walk in Tehran Grand Bazaar in Tehran, Iran.

Shah’s son confident Iran rulers to fall as Trump holds off

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The son of Iran’s late shah said Friday he was confident that mass protests would topple the Islamic republic and urged international action, as US President Donald Trump holds off on intervening in the unrest.

Reza Pahlavi, who lives in exile in the Washington area, has presented himself as leader of the opposition as the cleric-run state ruthlessly represses mass protests. “The Islamic republic will fall—not if, but when,” Pahlavi told a news conference in Washington.

Since the demonstrations erupted in late De-

cember with a rallying cry of solving Iran’s severe economic woes, Pahlavi has pleaded for US intervention. Trump had repeatedly warned Iran that if it kills protesters, the United States would intervene militarily. He also encouraged Iranians to take over state institutions, saying “help is on the way.” But two weeks after he first suggested help, he has not acted. Security forces in the meantime have killed at least 3,428 protesters, according to Norway-based group Iran Human Rights, with other estimates putting the toll at more than 5,000.

New Zealand, Slovakia shut embassies in Iran

WELLINGTON (AFP/APP): New Zealand and Slovakia said Friday that they had temporarily closed their embassies in Tehran and flown out their diplomats due to worsening security in Iran. The foreign ministry in Wellington said its diplomatic staff left Iran safely on commercial flights overnight, with the embassy’s operations moved to Ankara, Turkey. Slovakia’s Foreign Minister Juraj Blahar said its decision was prompted by the “significant” deterioration in security and the “real threat of an escalation of the military conflict.”

“At the moment, all diplomats and employees of the Slovakian embassy in Tehran are safe and out of danger,” he said in a statement. New Zealand advises against all travel to Iran and has urged any citizens in the country to leave immediately, as its ability to give consular help was “extremely limited”. The foreign ministry has also urged New Zealanders in the country to contact their relatives when they can, because severe communications challenges were making it hard for people to get in touch with family and friends.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters said Thursday his country was “appalled” by Tehran’s violent reaction to huge anti-government protests.

“We condemn the brutal crackdown being carried out by Iran’s security forces, including the killing of protesters,” Peters said in a statement.

Ukraine team arrives in US for Miami talks with Witkoff, Kushner

KYIV (AFP/APP): Ukrainian negotiators arrived in the US Saturday for talks with President Donald Trump’s envoy Steve Witkoff, son-in-law Jared Kushner and army secretary Dan Driscoll on ending almost four years of war with Russia.

The talks—expected to focus on security guarantees and post-war recovery—will take place in Miami as the fourth anniversary of Russia’s invasion looms and as Moscow has pounded Ukraine’s energy facilities in a freezing winter. Russia’s advance in east Ukraine gathered pace since autumn, with the Kremlin insisting it will seize the rest of Ukrainian land it claims as Russian by force if diplomacy fails.

Trump has pushed for an end to the war—Europe’s worst since World War Two—and expressed frustration with both sides, with no breakthrough on the horizon. He has also pressured Ukraine to accept peace terms that Kyiv says amount to capitulation. “Arrived in the United States,” said Kyrylo Budanov, President Volodymyr Zelensky’s new chief of staff and head of the Ukrainian delegation.

He posted on social media that he and his team, including security chief Rustem Umerov and negotiator David Arakhania, would “have an important conversation with our American partners regarding the details of the peace agreement”.

Syrian army says entering area east of Aleppo after Kurds agree to withdraw

ALEPPO (AFP/APP): Syria’s army said Saturday its forces had started entering an area east of the city of Aleppo after Kurdish forces agreed to withdraw from the region following recent clashes. In a statement carried by state television, the army said its forces “began entering the western Euphrates area, starting with the town of Deir Hafer”, after Kurdish forces had agreed to withdraw on Saturday morning.

An AFP correspondent saw army forces advancing towards the area, including with tanks.

In a statement carried by state television, the military urged civilians “not to enter the operations area” until the army had secured it and “cleared it of all mines and war remnants”.

After driving out Kurdish forces from Aleppo city last week following deadly clashes, Syria’s army deployed reinforcements near Deir Hafer and told the

SDF to evacuate the area between the town and the Euphrates River, around 30 kilometres (18 miles) further east. On Friday, Kurdish leader Mazloum Abdi committed to withdrawing his US-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces on Saturday morning “towards redeployment in areas east of the Euphrates”, based on “calls from friendly countries and mediators”.

The defence ministry had welcomed Abdi’s announcement, saying army troops would deploy in the areas after the SDF withdrew. The Syrian army had urged civilians to flee the Deir Hafer area in recent days, with at least 4,000 people leaving according to Syrian authorities. On Friday, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa on Friday issued a decree declaring Kurdish a “national language”, in an apparent gesture of good will towards the minority after the recent violence.

Sudan food aid could run out as peace talks show scant progress

PORT SUDAN (AFP/APP): Food aid in Sudan is set to run out by the end of March unless new funding is secured, the United Nations said Thursday, raising fears for millions caught up in the world’s largest hunger crisis.

Nearly three years of fighting between the army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces have left tens of thousands dead, 11 million displaced and repeated attempts at peace blocked.

Efforts led by the US and regional mediators—Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, known as the Quad—have failed to secure a ceasefire, as both sides wrestle for territorial gain.

A high-level meeting on Wednesday in Cairo brought together officials from the Quad countries, as well as the UN, European Union and regional organisations to discuss peace efforts, which have seen little progress.

“By the end of

March, we will have depleted our food stocks in Sudan,” said Ross Smith, the World Food Programme’s Director of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

“Without immediate additional funding, millions of people will be left without vital food assistance within weeks.”

According to the UN, more than 21 million people—almost half of Sudan’s population—are now facing acute food insecurity, with two-thirds of the population in urgent need of assistance.

Visiting Dongola, the capital of Sudan’s Northern State, on Thursday, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said many displaced people lack adequate shelter while women have limited access to support services.

He called for an “all-out effort” by both Sudanese authorities and the international community to enable the delivery of vital humanitarian aid.

Louvre heist probe still aims to ‘recover jewellery’, top prosecutor says

PARIS (AFP/APP): French investigators remain determined to find the imperial jewels stolen from the Louvre in October, a prosecutor has told AFP.

Police believe they have arrested all four thieves who carried out the brazen October 19 robbery, making off with jewellery worth an estimated \$102 million from the world-famous museum.

“The interrogations have not produced any new investigative elements,” top Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuaud said this week, three months after the broad-daylight heist.

But the case remains a top priority, she underlined. “Our main objective is still to recover the jewellery,” she said.

That Sunday morning in October, thieves parked a mover’s truck with an extendable ladder below the Louvre’s Apollo Gallery housing the French crown jewels.

Two of the thieves climbed up the ladder, broke a window and used angle grinders to cut glass display

booths containing the treasures, while the other two waited below, investigators say.

The four then fled on high-powered motor scooters, dropping a diamond-and-emerald crown in their hurry.

But eight other items of jewellery—including an emerald-and-diamond necklace that Napoleon I gave his second wife, Empress Marie-Louise—remain at large.

Beccuaud said investigators were keeping an open mind as to where the loot might be.

“We don’t have any signals indicating that the jewellery is likely to have crossed the border,” she said, though she added: “Anything is possible.”

Detectives benefited from contacts with “intermediaries in the art world, including internationally” as they pursued their probe.

“They have ways of receiving warning signals about networks of receivers of stolen goods, including abroad,” Beccuaud said.

Senators push for stronger social media laws to ensure safe future for youth, inspired by global standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): Members of Parliament across all parties raised alarms on Saturday about the increasing influence of social media, urging for laws similar to those in other nations and agreeing on the need for swift, responsible measures to ensure social media is used for the greater good of society and the country's future.

While speaking exclusively with a local media news channel, members of Parliament highlighted the need for social media laws to protect youth, drawing inspiration from successful international legislation.

They stressed the importance of implementing regulations that ensure the responsible use of social media, safeguarding future generations from potential harm.

Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan commented that we cannot put the future of our youth at risk and the government is actively working on this issue.

He mentioned that dis-

cussions have taken place within the Ministry of IT and Information and timely measures will be taken to address the situation.

PML-N Senator Afnan Ullah Khan also commented that it is crucial to secure the future of the youth.

He emphasized that children should focus on their studies and pay attention to their future, rather than getting lost in social media.

He expressed concern that the ability to distinguish between right and wrong is diminishing due to excessive exposure to these platforms.

Syed Hafeez-ud-Din, MQM Senator, stated that legislation is the need of the hour, citing Australia and other countries as examples where effective social media laws have been successfully implemented.

He stressed the importance of adopting similar measures to ensure the safety and well-being of citizens, particularly the youth. Syed Rafiullah

Member of the National Assembly also stressed that work is underway on this issue and emphasized that it is crucial at this time to set age limits for social media use to protect the future of the youth.

He highlighted the need to ensure a safer environment for young people, focusing on their well-being and growth.

Mashal Yousafzai, PTI Senator also commented that there should be a clear age criterion for social media use and stressed the importance of enacting social media legislation. She emphasized that regulating access based on age will help protect the youth and ensure responsible usage of these platforms.

In conclusion, all members agreed that social media is having a significant psychological impact on the youth, affecting their focus and decision-making.

They pointed out that countries have already adopted effective legislation and it is now time for Pakistan to follow suit.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti during a toss of match between Chief Minister Eleven and Chief Secretary Eleven.

Cleanliness, safe drinking water key to better healthcare: Mustafa

Inaugurates Karachi's 2nd Digitized Healthcare Center

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal inaugurated Karachi's second Digitized Healthcare Center under the Federal Healthcare Digitalization Program at Federal Government Dispensary on Saturday.

While addressing the inauguration ceremony, he

said that Basic Health Units in Karachi and Islamabad will be digitized to ensure healthcare services at primary level. He said that the patients will now be able to consult the doctors by technology, who were earlier physically visiting the hospitals. Earlier, the Federal Minister unveiled the plaque to inaugurate the digitized healthcare centre.

Pakistan calls for impartial, consistent implementation of UN Charter to prevent conflicts

NEW YORK (INP): Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, has called for the impartial, consistent, and effective implementation of the UN Charter to prevent conflicts and resolve disputes peacefully.

He was speaking at the high-level discussion titled: "The UN Charter at 80: Conflict Prevention and Resolution" hosted by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan in collaboration with Global Peace Chain, a nonprofit

peace-building and youth empowerment organization. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said that the Charter does not need reinvention. Its wisdom has endured over the last eight decades. He said what must be reimaged is how we apply it in practice.

The ambassador said that the credibility of the UN Charter is ultimately tested in its application to long-standing disputes particularly where political sensitivities are high, but legal and moral clarity is unmistakable.

Aftab Sherpao stresses for unified narrative against terrorism

PESHAWAR (APP): Chairman Qaumi Watan Party Aftab Sherpao here Saturday said that terrorism was a major issue and unified narrative was imperative against this scourge.

He said to deal with the challenges facing the country, especially the menace of terrorism, there is a need for the KP government and political parties to reach a consensus on a unified narrative.

The Chairman of the Qaumi Watan Party, Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, said

that the government and political parties must develop consensus on a unified narrative in order to tackle terrorism. He expressed these views while addressing a gathering at Watan Kor, Peshawar. On this occasion, former female MPA Miraj Humayun announced her joining the Qaumi Watan Party along with her associates. Those who joined included Sara Farid Khan, General Councillor Farooq Shah, Kisan Councillor Waheedullah, and other elders.



TURBAT: Provincial Minister for Planning and Development Mir Zahoar Ahmed Buledi in a group photo with senior passed out students (Alumni) of Govt Atta Shad Degree College Turbat.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal addressing the inauguration ceremony of 'Digitalized Healthcare Centre'.

Chief Minister XI triumphs in friendly cricket match against Chief Secretary XI

QUETTA (APP): A friendly cricket match between the Chief Minister XI and the Chief Secretary XI at the PDMA Cricket Ground on Saturday turned into an entertaining spectacle, marked by thrilling moments, impressive batting, and disciplined bowling. A large number of cricket enthusiasts gathered to enjoy the lively encounter.

After winning the toss, the Chief Secretary XI chose to field, inviting the Chief Minister XI to bat first. The innings was opened by Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti and Zahid Khalji, who laid a solid foundation with an impressive 119-run

opening partnership.

Sarfraz Bugti emerged as the standout performer, scoring a stylish and composed 52 runs, drawing loud applause from spectators. At the end of the allotted overs, the Chief Minister XI posted a formidable total of 181 runs for the loss of three wickets.

In reply, the Chief Secretary XI struggled to keep pace with the required run rate and was bowled out for 135 runs. Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan and Inspector General of Police Muhammad Tahir Khan showed resistance with the bat and demonstrated all-round skills, but their efforts were not enough to chase down the

target.

Additional Chief Secretary (Development) Zahid Saleem delivered a match-winning performance, claiming three crucial wickets with fiery spells that decisively shifted momentum in favor of the Chief Minister XI.

On the fielding side, Sardar Kohyar Khan Domki, Babar Khan, Syed Ameen, and Hassan Mir displayed notable agility and commitment, contributing significantly to their team's overall success.

The Chief Minister XI secured a convincing 45-run victory, with CM Bugti's all-round performance emerging as the highlight of the match.

DG ISPR holds special sessions with teachers, students at IU Bahawalpur

RAWALPINDI (INP): Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR), Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, held a special session with the teachers and students of Islamia University Bahawalpur, along with representatives from various educational institutions and seminars.

During the discussion, the DG ISPR paid tribute to the people of Bahawalpur for their contributions to Pakistan's independence and stability.

The session focused on national and regional security, the Pakistan Army's

role in national security, and Operation Bunnanun Marsoos.

The session covered topics such as the threats posed by external propaganda, including the Indian-backed movements, and the importance of media literacy to protect the youth from negative narratives.

The Vice Chancellor of Islamia University praised the session's detailed insights into national security and Pakistan's objectives. Participants emphasized the importance of media literacy in safeguarding the youth's awareness and opinions.

Boy killed, minor girl wounded in Swat blast

SWAT (INP): A boy was killed and a minor girl was wounded when a powerful blast occurred in the fields of Matta area, Swat district of KPK, on Saturday.

According to initial reports, rescue officials stated that the two children were playing in the fields when the blast occurred and explosion instantly killed the boy, while the girl sustained injured, private news channel reported.

Injured and body was promptly taken to the hospital, rescue officials added.

Following the incident, local police cordoned off the area to secure the scene.



Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman addressing press conference in Faisalabad.

PML-N's anti-democratic LG law unacceptable: Hafiz Naeem

INDEPENDENT REPORT FAISALABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman has categorically rejected the local government law introduced by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), terming it anti-democratic and unacceptable under any circumstances. He said Jamaat-e-Islami will neither accept this black law nor allow local government elections to be held under it.

Talking to journalists during his visit to a public referendum camp at Ghanta Ghar Chowk, Faisalabad,

Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman said that the PML-N, fearing the people of Punjab, had imposed a democracy-hostile local government system.

He added that the public referendum on the local government law has awakened the people of the province and will further accelerate the struggle for the establishment of empowered local governments.

On the third day of the four-day public referendum, a large number of men and women partici-

pated across the province. Thousands of polling camps established in all districts of Punjab witnessed enthusiasm. The four-day referendum will conclude on Sunday evening, after which the results will be announced.

Rehman said that in light of the referendum results, Jamaat-e-Islami will announce its future course of action, including surrounding the Punjab Assembly, and protests will continue until the withdrawal of the local government law.

Bomb blast outside JI leader's house in Bajaur

BAJAUR (INP): Panic gripped parts of Bajaur on Saturday morning after a bomb blast occurred outside the residence of Jamaat-e-Islami's local deputy chief Maulana Waheed Gul, though no casualties were reported. The blast took place outside the house of Maulana Waheed Gul, who is nab emir of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) in Bajaur and a former candidate for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

Police confirmed that the explosion occurred in front of his residence, causing fear and panic in the surrounding area.

According to police officials, the blast caused partial damage to Maulana Waheed Gul's house, including the main gate, as well as a parked vehicle. Windows and parts of the house structure were also affected by the explosion.

Maulana Waheed himself confirmed the incident and stated that, fortunately, no one was injured.

Following the explosion, a heavy contingent of police personnel rushed to the site. Law enforcement officials cordoned off the area to secure the scene and prevent further incidents.

Residents reported panic and fear in the neighbourhood as authorities began initial investigations. District Police Officer Waqas Rafiq said that initial investigations suggest an improvised explosive device (IED) was used in the blast. Police have launched a detailed probe to determine the perpetrators and motive behind the attack.

Despite the intensity of the blast, no casualties were reported. Police and Maulana Waheed both confirmed that no loss of life or injuries occurred in the incident. The incident comes just a week after a senior Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) leader, Maulana Sultan Muhammad Wazir, succumbed to injuries sustained in a bomb blast near a seminary in Wana.

Pakistan customs foils two gold smuggling attempts at Jinnah int'l Airport

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Customs at Jinnah International Airport (JIAP), Karachi, have successfully foiled two separate attempts to smuggle gold and undeclared foreign currency during passenger clearance at the International Departures terminal.

In both cases, a total of ten (10) STB gold bars/bullions weighing 100 tolas and foreign currency amounting to USD 11,900 were seized. The combined value of both cases is approximately PKR 50.682 million. FIRs have been lodged under the relevant provisions of the Customs Act, 1969, said a release issued here on Saturday. Customs officials intercepted a passenger traveling to Dubai via flight No. FZ-330 after baggage scanning indicated the possible concealment of precious metal.

CTD arrests 49 terrorists in month-long operations, foils major terror plan

LAHORE (APP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab arrested 49 terrorists belonging to various banned organizations during intelligence-based operations conducted across the province over the past month, successfully foiling a major terror plan.

According to a CTD spokesperson, the department carried out 425 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) in different districts to prevent any untoward terrorist incident. During these operations, 427 suspects were interrogated and 49 terrorists were arrested along with weapons, explosives and other prohibited material.

Among those arrested was Mujtaba, a highly dangerous terrorist linked with the Indian intelligence agency RAW, who was apprehended in Lahore. A large quantity of explosives and maps of sensitive and important buildings were recovered from his possession, the spokesperson

said.

The arrested terrorists include Shaukat, Naveed, Abdul Rehman, Amjad, Shahid, Abrar, Danish Khan, Khalil Ahmed, Jamilur-Rehman, Ehsanullah, Nader, Waqas, Haseen, Farooq, Jamshed and Awlad Khan, among others. The suspects are affiliated with Fitna-ul-Khawarij and other banned terrorist organizations.

The terrorists were arrested from various districts including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, Toba Tek Singh, Hafizabad, Gujranwala, Chakwal, Jhelum, Dera Ghazi Khan, Faisalabad, Chiniot, Pakpattan, Khushab, Okara, Attock, Sheikhupura and Vehari.

Recovered items included 16,480 grams of explosives, two hand grenades, 36 detonators, 58 feet of safety fuse wire, six improvised explosive device (IED) bombs, pamphlets and magazines of banned organizations, prima cards, mobile phones and cash.



Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif with her son, Junaid Safdar, during his nikah ceremony held in Lahore

Junaid Safdar ties the knot with Shanzeh Ali in Lahore nikah ceremony

Monitoring Desk

LAHORE: Junaid Safdar, son of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, tied the knot with Shanzeh Ali, granddaughter of senior PML-N leader Rohail Asghar, in a nikah ceremony held in Lahore on Saturday.

The nikah was solemnised by the sajada nashin of the shrine of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, while the bride's consent was obtained by Council of Islamic Ideology Chairman Mufti Raghieb Hussain Naemi.

For the ceremony, Junaid Safdar wore an ivory sherwani paired with a gold-toned turban, while the bride was dressed in a traditional pink outfit, complemented by jewellery. A large number of political leaders and family members attended the ceremony, including the groom's parents, grandfa-

ther PML-N President Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Hamza Shehbaz, Salman Shehbaz, Hussain Nawaz, Hassan Nawaz, senior PML-N leaders, as well as several foreign guests.

The valima ceremony is scheduled to be held on Sunday at the Jati Umra Farms, where around 800 guests have been invited. PM Shehbaz, federal and provincial ministers, senior political figures and foreign guests are expected to attend the reception.

The mehndi ceremony was held on Friday at Jati Umra, attended by close family members and guests. On the occasion, Junaid Safdar wore a deep navy-blue traditional kurta with golden buttons, paired with a golden-brown shawl draped over his shoulder.

PTA says: Expatriates Pakistani SIM cards will not be blocked during their stay overseas

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has announced a major facilitation for overseas Pakistanis.

According to media reports, the PTA has taken an important decision to facilitate Pakistanis residing abroad, under which expatriates will now be able to use their mobile phone services, and their Pakistani SIM cards will not be blocked during their stay overseas.

The PTA stated that the initiative aims to provide relief to overseas Pakistanis by enabling them to retain ownership of their

mobile SIMs.

The authority further said that Pakistanis living abroad can avail this facility by contacting their respective mobile phone operators.

Through this decision, overseas Pakistanis will continue to have access to essential communication services, making it easier for them to stay connected with Pakistan.

The PTA added that it remains committed to empowering overseas Pakistanis and is playing an active role in expanding digital connectivity at the global level.

Balochistan student wins global award for turning banana waste into fibre

QUETTA (INP): A research project of Mohammad Sarfraz, a student from the Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, has received global recognition. The young researcher from Quetta has won the Discover Natural Fibre Initiative (DNFI) Award for producing fibre from banana stems.

The award, which celebrates efforts to promote eco-friendly fibres, was presented at the global research competition held during the Home Textile International Exhibition, Heimtextil, in Frankfurt, Germany.

Over 100 research institutions, companies and educational organisations from around the world par-

ticipated in the competition. Sarfraz's achievement highlights the remarkable potential of Pakistan's young minds, showcasing the country's growing presence in the field of sustainable research. Upon receiving the award, Sarfraz dedicated the recognition to his teachers and the talented youth of Balochistan. He shared with the Express that he had spent four years researching the process of producing high-quality fibre from banana stems. The project has garnered praise on various international platforms. However, Sarfraz takes particular pride in the success of his project when compared with projects from European research institutions and developed countries.