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Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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PM Shehbaz says: Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators showing positive trend, reforms yielding results

Pak IT exports had shown reassuring progress and now stood at around \$3 billion annually through offshore channels

DAVOS (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said Pakistan's economy was showing clear signs of improvement and the country was moving forward with renewed confidence, as key economic indicators continued to strengthen.

Addressing an event at the Pakistan Pavilion on the sidelines of the 56th Annual Meetings of the World Economic Forum, the prime minister said Pakistan had achieved macroeconomic stability after difficult but necessary reforms and was now firmly focused on export-led growth and sus-

tainable development. "Our inflation has come down sharply from 30 percent to 5.5 percent, while the policy rate has been reduced from 22.5 percent to 10.5 percent," he said, adding that the improvement reflected disciplined economic management.

He noted that Pakistan's IT exports had shown reassuring progress and now stood at around \$3 billion annually through offshore channels.

The prime minister said that Pakistan's exports continued to face challenges but the future path was

unambiguous. "Pakistan has to pursue export-led growth," he said, underlining reforms in revenue collection as a key pillar of the strategy.

He said the government had introduced fundamental changes in the tax system, which was being fully digitized. As a result, the tax-to-GDP ratio had increased to 10.5 percent from 9 percent a few years ago, calling it a significant achievement.

Highlighting sectoral opportunities, Prime Minister Shehbaz said agricul-

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QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti in a group photo with UN delegation UN Resident Coordinator Mohammad Yahya after meeting at Chief Minister Secretariat.

CJP chairs review meeting on judicial reforms, sets timelines for disposal of death sentence appeals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi chaired the ninth interactive progress review meeting at the Supreme Court of Pakistan to assess monthly progress under the Reform Action Plan (RAP) and to issue directions on pending initiatives aimed at modernizing the justice system and improving public-facing judicial services.

According to a press note released here Wednesday, the meeting was attended by the President and Secretary of the Supreme Court Bar Association, the Registrar Supreme Court, IT Advisor Hamayun Zafar, section heads of the Supreme Court, the Director General of the Federal Judicial Academy, and the Secretary of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan.

During the meeting, progress was reviewed on reducing case disposal time, case categorization, digitization of judicial records, IT integration, digitization of financial receipts and expenditures, audit mechanisms, and public facilitation initiatives. Updates were also shared on automation measures, including software enhancements, QR-coded certified copies, E-Courts, capacity-building initiatives in data management and analytics, as well as alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and mediation programs.

The chair was informed that tasks related to e-filing and issuance of certified copies had been completed. Case categorization is currently underway and

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QUETTA: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi reviewed the security measures for the Jaffar Express.

Govt puts in place modern security arrangements on Jaffar Express: Abbasi

Independent Report QUETTA: The government has put in place the modern security arrangements on the Jaffar Express to ensure safe rail travel for the people of Balochistan.

To this respect, Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi reviewed the security measures for the Jaffar Express during his visit to Quetta. He said a round the clock surveillance of railway tracks, installation of modern security cameras, and the availability of adequate security personnel on board the train have been ensured.

The Minister appreciated efforts of the Pakistan Army and FC Balochistan

for ensuring train's fool-proof security arrangements.

He emphasized that the protection of passengers' lives and property remains the top priority of the government and the Pakistan Army. Abbasi Wednesday said that the People's Train Service in Balochistan represents a harmonious blend of cooperation between Pakistan Railways and the provincial government, terming it as a milestone in the provision of affordable and secure transportation in the province.

The minister said that for the first time in the 78-year history of Pakistan Railways.

NA passes The Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Wednesday passed the Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2025, bringing key changes to the Elections Act, 2017, aimed at balancing transparency with the protection of individual rights.

Introduced by Ms Shazia Marri, the legislation introduces changes to the Elections Act, 2017, aiming to balance transparency with the privacy rights of parliamentarians.

Lawmakers observed that while publishing parliamentarians' statements of assets and liabilities is essential for public accountability, good governance, and building trust in public office, excessive disclosure could risk compromising the personal security and privacy of legislators and their families.

A major provision aligns statutory references with the Federal Constitutional Court, replacing the term "Supreme" with "Federal Constitutional" in relevant sections.

BHC's enforced disappearance ruling challenged in FCC

ISLAMABAD (INP): A petition challenging a Balochistan High Court (BHC) verdict related to the forced disappearance of parents has been filed before the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Wednesday. The petition was moved by Bibi Shukria, who has sought the recovery of her parents and requested the FCC to set aside the BHC's decision dated December 16, 2025.

The petition states that the parents have been forcibly missing for the past three months. It alleges that on September 16, 2025, the parents of Shukria Bibi were abducted from Quetta's Saniab Road area on the orders of an influential government officer. It further claims that despite the availability of CCTV footage, police have refused to register a case against the influential government officer, and no meaningful action has been taken so far.



DAVOS: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses Pakistan Breakfast at Pakistan Pavilion on the sidelines of the 56th Annual meeting of the World Economic Forum.

CM Bugti hails sharp decline in terrorism, launches first climate fund of Balochistan

UNHCR hands over 48 solarized public facilities worth Rs.1bln to govt of Balochistan

Independent Report QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has highlighted the province's progress in addressing terrorism and climate challenges, emphasizing that a structured and proactive approach has led to a marked decline in terrorist incidents across the region.

The chief minister made these observations during a high-level meeting with a United Nations delegation headed by UN Resident Coordinator Mohammad Yahya. The discussions focused on human development, public welfare, human rights, Afghan refugee management, climate change, and avenues for development collaboration.

recognizing Balochistan's efforts, praising legislative steps against child marriage, youth skill development programs, the establishment of the Women's Endowment Fund, and other measures advancing human rights and social welfare. The delegation congratulated the provincial government on these accomplishments.

Highlighting climate action, CM Bugti announced that Balochistan has launched a dedicated Climate Fund for the first time, signaling a forward-looking commitment to environmental sustainability. Regarding Afghan refugee repatriation, he confirmed that the provincial government is implementing federal policies with particular attention to the safety

and dignity of women, children, and the elderly, noting that no harassment incidents were reported during the process.

The chief minister also underscored Balochistan's cultural traditions of hospitality, noting that returning Afghan refugees traveling from Sindh and Punjab were welcomed warmly by provincial authorities.

Acknowledging UN support, CM Bugti highlighted the role of UNHCR in education, healthcare, and renewable energy initiatives, noting the handover of 48 solar-powered public facilities worth one billion rupees. These projects, he said, represent a major step toward pro-

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ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi, chairing the 9th interactive Progress Review Session at Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Pakistan accepts invitation to join Board of Peace to support sustainable peace in Gaza

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has accepted an invitation to join the Board of Peace to support sustainable peace in Gaza, the Foreign Office (FO) confirmed on Tuesday. The move aligns with the Gaza peace initiative under UN Resolution 2803.

A Foreign Office spokesperson expressed hope that Pakistan's participation in the Board of Peace will contribute to a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and an increase in humanitarian aid for the affected population.

"Pakistan will continue to support the reconstruction of Gaza and address the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people," the spokesperson said, reaffirming the country's full support for Palestinian self-determination.

The FO reiterated Pakistan's commitment to the two-state solution

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CM Bugti warns of budget strain, pledges unyielding administrative reforms

Says no compromise to be made on interests of Balochistan people

Independent Report QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has spotlighted a critical strain in the province's annual budget, which approaches Rs 1 trillion, revealing that nearly four-fifths of the funds are consumed by non-development expenditures.

Addressing the issue on the social media plat-

form X, the Chief Minister noted that a large portion of the non-development allocation goes toward salaries and pensions for roughly 250,000 government employees. This leaves only Rs 200 billion available to meet the development and welfare needs of Balochistan's 13 million

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QUETTA: Deputy Director of the World Bank project, Aslam Zehri briefing Acting Governor Balochistan, Ghazala Gola about World Bank Road Sub-Component.

Naqvi forms committee to address Ulema's issues

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday constituted a committee under the leadership of Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry to address issues faced by Islamic religious scholars across the country.

The decision was taken during a meeting between Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and a delegation of ulema led by Mufti-e-Azam Pakistan Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman.

During the meeting, the interior minister assured the delegation that concrete steps would be taken to resolve the issues of religious scholars.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid tribute to Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman and other ulema for their role in promoting peace and stability in the country. Mohsin Naqvi said that the problems being faced by the ulema would be reviewed in detail, and practical measures would be adopted for their resolution.

Under the committee formed by the interior min-

istry, Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman and other prominent religious scholars will also be members.

The committee will formulate and submit workable recommendations aimed at resolving the issues raised by the ulema.

Addressing the delegation, Naqvi said that Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman plays a unifying role in society and is respected by all segments. The interior minister added that unity, harmony and national solidarity were essential, stressing that Pakistan comes first.

He further said that Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman has always spoken for unity, consensus and cohesion in the country and enjoys respect across religious and political lines.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry said that the services of religious scholars for Pakistan were highly commendable. At the conclusion of the meeting, Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman offered prayers for the integrity, progress, stability and prosperity of the country.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by Mufti-e-Azam of Pakistan Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman meeting with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry.

Governor urges swift completion of key flood recovery road project

Independent Report

QUETTA: Acting Governor Balochistan, Ghazala Gola, has underscored the critical importance of highways in driving regional development and improving the livelihoods of local communities. She called for the rapid progress of the World Bank-funded road sub-project connecting Dera Allah Yar to Hair Din Sohbatpur, highlighting that its timely completion would bring far-reaching benefits to the entire region.

The acting governor made these remarks during a briefing at Governor

House Quetta with Deputy Director of the World Bank project, Aslam Zehri. She reaffirmed her dedication to development-focused initiatives and public welfare, emphasizing that enhanced road infrastructure would strengthen connectivity and support economic growth for the surrounding communities.

The briefing was attended by World Bank officials, including Wasim Ahmed Babai and Saad Zahid, who discussed project timelines, challenges, and progress updates.



DAVOS: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar with Foreign Minister of Finland, Elina Valtonen, on the sidelines of World Economic Forum (WEF).

Veteran Journalist Shahid Rind joins Balochistan CM's office as political and media advisor

CM Bugti praises Shahid's appointment, highlights role in promoting transparent governance

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has appointed senior journalist and political analyst Shahid Hamid Rind as Aide to the Chief Minister for Political and Media Affairs, according to an official notification issued by the Services & General Administration Department.

Shahid Rind is widely recognized as one of Pakistan's leading journalists, with extensive expertise in covering provincial and national politics, governance, public policy, and social issues. Known for his impartial analysis and responsible reporting, he commands respect as a credible commentator across multiple national and



regional media platforms. In his new role, Rind will advise the Chief Minister's office on political strategy, strengthen media engagement, and facilitate effective public communication regarding governance initiatives and policy priorities.

Meanwhile, Chief

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Balochistan pushes back against child labour, calls for unified action from government and industry

Independent Report

QUETTA: Advocate Abdul Hai, member of the National Commission for Child Rights (NCCRC) Balochistan, has warned that child labour not only infringes on the fundamental rights of children but also exposes significant governance gaps in law enforcement, accountability, and social protection frameworks.

Under the Huqoq-e-Pakistan II initiative, NCCRC, in partnership with UNDP Pakistan and with support from the European Union, convened a provincial consultation focused on monitoring child labour within Balochistan's private sector. The session brought together representatives from federal ministries, chambers of commerce, civil society groups,

labor organizations, and business associations.

During the consultation, participants analyzed trends in child labour, obstacles in enforcing laws, and weaknesses in institutional coordination. Strategies were discussed to strengthen compliance in the private sector, particularly in informal supply chains, and to enhance social protection mechanisms, in alignment with the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights and GSP+ commitments.

The session is part of a series of national and provincial engagements designed to feed into an upcoming national report on child labour in the private sector.

NCCRC will collate provincial evidence and stakeholder insights to formulate practical, evidence-based recommendations aimed at improving law enforcement, corporate accountability, and inter-agency coordination.

Advocate Abdul Hai stressed that eliminating child labour is not only a legal obligation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals but also a moral and constitutional responsibility of Pakistan to safeguard its children.

UNDP Pakistan Consultant Zainab Mustafa highlighted the need for stronger multi-stakeholder coordination to effectively address child labour, expressing confidence that the forthcoming report will serve as a key roadmap for policymakers, civil society, and the private sector.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Food Haji Noor Muhammad Dumar, MPA Zarak Khan Mandokhel, Sadiq Khan Achakzai, and President of Central Traders Association of Balochistan Abdul Rahim Kakar inspect Liaquat Bazaar Haleem Plaza Fire in Quetta.

Govt taking steps to empower women in Balochistan: Saira

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Women Development Balochistan Saira Atta on Wednesday said that the current government is taking serious and concrete steps for the development, empowerment and self-sufficiency of all women in the province.

She said that various projects are being implemented to create new opportunities for education, technical training and employment for women, so that they could play an active role in the society.

She expressed these views while talking to APP.

The Secretary Women Development said that the Women Development Department is introducing

various programs in collaboration with government and private institutions for the welfare of women, the aim of which is to make women skilled, strengthen them economically and give them a dignified position at the social level.

She said that the women of Balochistan are in no way less than the women of other provinces of the country in terms of intelligence, ability and competence, however, poverty, unavailability of basic and essential facilities and lack of opportunities have become major obstacles in the way of their development.

During the meeting, issues related to the social,

educational and economic development of women were discussed in detail.

Secretary Women Development Saira Atta said that the women of Balochistan have immense potential, but due to lack of resources and opportunities, they are not able to utilize their full potential.

She said that poverty and lack of basic facilities are the biggest obstacles for women, which require comprehensive and sustainable policies to overcome.

Saira Atta further said that the Women Development Department is working with government and private institutions for the welfare of women.



USTA MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal being briefed by Chairman YMSesDO Muhammad Munir Abro regarding completion of school building under KNK Japan.

QCCI demands compensation for traders affected by fire

Millions worth of goods destroyed in Haleem Plaza blaze; hundreds of families' livelihoods at stake

QUETTA (ANN): President of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) Haji Muhammad Ayub Maryani, Senior Vice President Haji Akhtar Kakar, Vice President Engineer Mir Wais Khan Kakar, and other office-bearers have expressed deep sorrow over the heavy losses suffered by traders due to a fire incident at Haleem Plaza in Liaquat Bazaar, a central commercial area of Quetta.

In a joint statement, they urged the government to announce immediate financial assistance to compensate the affected traders for their losses.

They said that the fire reduced to ashes computers, mobile phones, garments, and other valuable

goods worth millions of rupees stored in various shops at Haleem Plaza.

The chamber leaders stated that the incident has not only caused massive financial losses to the business community but has also put the livelihoods of hundreds of families at serious risk. They termed the incident a major financial shock for traders operating in the provincial capital.

Expressing grief and solidarity with the affected business community, the Quetta Chamber of Commerce demanded that the provincial government immediately provide compensation to the affected traders and take urgent measures for the restoration and rehabilitation of their businesses.

Balochistan braces for intense cold wave with snow and strong winds

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Regional Meteorological Center Balochistan has issued a warning of a severe cold wave, accompanied by strong winds, set to affect the province's southwestern districts on Wednesday and Thursday.

Districts likely to experience intermittent rain and gusty thunderstorms include Quetta, Mastung, Kalat, Ziarat, Chaman, Pishin, Killa Abdullah, Killa Saifullah, Loralai, Zhob, Harnai, Kharan, Chaghi, Surab, Washuk, Musakhel, Barkhan, Khuzdar, and Noshki.

Light to moderate snowfall is forecasted for Quetta, Ziarat, Chaman, Pishin, Humzai, Khanzai, Killa Saifullah, Kan Mehterzai, Muslim Bagh, Killa Abdullah, Golistan, and Kalat during evening and nighttime hours, accompanied by strong winds.

Meanwhile, light rain and thunderstorms are also expected in coastal and southern districts including Gwadar (Jiwani, Pasni, Gwadar), Panjgur, Keach (Turbat), Sibi, Naseerabad, Awaran, Kachhi, and Dera Bugti. Over the past 24 hours, most districts recorded dry and cold conditions, with northern and northwestern areas experiencing extremely low night and early morning temperatures. Ziarat reported the province's lowest temperature at -4.8°C.



QUETTA: A delegation of lawyers led by Advocate Supreme Court Barrister Raja Jawad meeting with acting Governor Balochistan Ghazala Gola.

Rauf launches Helpline of Citizen Complaint Management System

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Local Government (LG) Balochistan Rauf Baloch and Administrator of Quetta Metropolitan Corporation (QMC) Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Qambrani launched the Helpline of QMC and Citizen Complaint Management System (CMS) on Wednesday.

After the inauguration ceremony, a live demonstration of the Helpline and Complaints System was presented to the Secretary Local Government, in which the complete procedure for registering citizen complaints, timely transmission to the relevant departments and effective monitoring was explained.

On this occasion, the staff of the IT branch of MCQ gave a detailed briefing on the Citizen Complaint Management System

and its basic features.

It was informed in the briefing that a toll-free number 0800099999 has been allocated for the convenience of citizens, through which citizens will be able to register their problems and complaints easily.

A separate digital dashboard has also been established for transparent and effective monitoring of complaints, through which continuous monitoring of the stages of receipt, processing and resolution of complaints has been made possible.

The Secretary Local Government was also given a detailed briefing about the online revenue monitoring system of the Metropolitan Corporation Quetta.

It was informed that through this system, digital monitoring of all sources of in-

come will be possible, which will increase transparency, improve record accuracy and financial management.

While appreciating the performance of the Metropolitan Corporation Quetta, Secretary Local Government Baloch said that digitalization is being promoted in all sectors as per the policy of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

He said that the use of modern technology from an effective complaints system to revenue monitoring would play an important role in improving transparency, good governance and the quality of public service.

He hoped that these measures would lead to significant improvement in the provision of civic amenities.



JAF FARABAD: Parliamentary Secretary MPA Engineer Abdul Majeed Badini addressing the participants of open katchery at Goth Ismail Chalgari.

Commissioner Loralai vows strict action against exam irregularities, highlights education integrity

Independent Report

QUETTA: Loralai Division Commissioner, Wali Muhammad Bareech, has underscored that maintaining transparency in examinations is crucial for safeguarding students' futures, stressing that any form of negligence or misconduct will not be tolerated.

The commissioner conducted a thorough inspection of the annual examinations at Darul Uloom Islamia Katwari Mor, Loralai, held under the Federal Board of Madaris, Pakistan. During his visit, he reviewed the examination

halls, engaged with students regarding the environment, facilities, and discipline, and received briefings from supervisory staff on administrative arrangements. Students expressed satisfaction with the calm and well-organized setup.

Commissioner Bareech commended the orderly and transparent conduct of the exams and lauded the efforts of supervisory teachers and administrative staff for upholding high standards.

He was accompanied by notable figures including Maulana Attaullah

Shah (Advocate) and Maulvi Muhammad Anwar.

Speaking at the occasion, the commissioner emphasized the vital role of religious seminaries in imparting knowledge, ethics, and character, while reaffirming the government's continued support for both religious and modern educational institutions to promote comprehensive learning.

Concluding his visit, Commissioner Bareech extended best wishes to all students, praying for their success and a bright future.

DC Usta Muhammad says: New school building aims to elevate girls' education standards

Independent Report

USTA MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner Usta Muhammad, Muhammad Ramzan Palal, has emphasized that providing a high-quality learning environment is a top priority for the district administration, noting that development projects like the newly inaugurated school building play a critical role in advancing girls' education.

The Deputy Commissioner formally opened the new facility at Government Girls High School Rustam Khan Jamali, constructed with the support of KNK Japan and the local partner organization YMSesDO. District Education Officer Usta Muhammad also attended the ceremony.

The project delivers modern, well-equipped educational infrastructure and was officially handed over to the School Education Department, Usta

Muhammad. The single-story building includes seven classrooms, four enclosed toilet units with solar-powered amenities, internal electrification, ramps and handrails, aluminum windows for security, standard school furniture, and green chalkboards. A 5.6 kVA hybrid solar system with batteries and panels, water tanks, corridors, rooftop treatment, and other essential facilities have also been installed to support a safe and sustainable learning environment.

Speaking at the inauguration, Deputy Commissioner Palal praised the collaboration of KNK Japan and YMSesDO and urged the school administration to ensure proper upkeep of the facilities. He also extended his best wishes for improved academic performance, the dedication of teaching staff, and a bright future for the students.

Flour mills association warns of worsening wheat and flour crisis in Balochistan

QUETTA (ANN): Provincial Chairman of the Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) Balochistan Region, Abdul Wahid Bareech, has expressed serious concern over obstacles in wheat transportation and the growing shortage of flour across Balochistan, warning that the crisis is intensifying due to unnecessary and unlawful restrictions.

In a statement, he said that Balochistan lacks sufficient local wheat availability, and restrictions on transporting wheat from other provinces have severely aggravated the situation. He pointed out that earlier, wheat supplies from Sindh to Balochistan were restricted despite the province's acute shortage and the government's limited capacity to meet demand.

Abdul Wahid Bareech said that customs officials at Notal have stopped several vehicles, including those transporting wheat to flour mills and traders in Balochistan. This wheat is later processed into flour and distributed throughout the province. He added that

Dummar highlights education, health, and nutrition as cornerstones of progress

Independent Report

QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Food and Chairman of the Balochistan Food Authority, Haji Noor Muhammad Khan Dummar, has emphasized that a society's strength relies on robust education, accessible healthcare, and the availability of safe, high-quality food. He noted that under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the provincial government is implementing concrete measures to enhance public service, improve governance, and strengthen institutional frameworks.

The minister conveyed these remarks during a meeting at the Chief Minister House with Deputy District Education Officer

Dukki, Bakhtiar Achakzai, and Reception Officer of Balochistan Residential College (BRC) Loralai, Bashir Khaderzai. The discussions centered on boosting educational outcomes, advancing public welfare programs, and ensuring the consistent supply of quality food to residents.

Officials at the meeting reaffirmed their commitment to collaborative efforts aimed at fostering Balochistan's overall development, securing a brighter future for youth, and reinforcing institutional capacities.

The session was described as constructive and cordial, reflecting strong cooperation and shared dedication among all stakeholders toward sustainable progress in the province.



QUETTA: Police try to stop the member of Balochistan Grand Alliance for going CM house during protest.

Zhob election officials push for greater inclusion of disabled voters ahead of polls

Independent Report

ZHOB: The Election Commission of Pakistan has stepped up efforts to ensure greater electoral participation for persons with disabilities, convening a key session of the Gender & Disability Electoral Working Group in Zhob.

The meeting was chaired by Regional Election Commissioner Sardar Mazhar Hussain and attended by government officials, political representatives, local government members, social welfare authorities, disabled voters, and members of the press.

District Election Commissioner Safdar Nasir, Assistant Election Commissioner Saifullah Safi, and political leaders including Fazal Amin Mandokhail, Bacha Khan Babar, Mitha Khan, and Sajid Bangash, along with local government representative Noor Gul

Kharoti, took part in the discussions.

Officials highlighted the challenges faced by disabled voters, noting that the postal ballot system—which allows eligible voters to cast ballots from home—remains underutilized due to limited awareness. They emphasized the need for a comprehensive public awareness campaign to ensure that all citizens can exercise their constitutional rights.

The session concluded with recommendations for a coordinated effort involving political parties, civil society, and local authorities to educate and empower disabled voters.

Participants committed to ongoing collaboration to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and promote their meaningful participation in democratic processes.



QUETTA: Students of district Sherani, Muhammadullah Sherani, Rahim Sherani, and Jaffar Khan address press conference at Quetta Press Club.



QUETTA: Director General QDA Aurangzaib Kasi presides over the meeting to review progress of QDA Department. Secretary QDA Sheikh Najeebullah is also present.

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External weaknesses

For now, Pakistan's return to a current account deficit in the first half of the fiscal year is less a cause for worry than a reminder of how fragile the external balance remains once growth resumes. The current account has slipped back to a \$1.17bn deficit in the first six months of the year — following a surplus of \$957m in the same period last year and \$2bn over the full year. But the gap remains within the FY26 target of \$2.1bn, or 0pc-1pc of GDP.

The gap is blamed on the widening trade deficit that rose from \$14.5bn to \$19.2bn in July-December, despite continued demand compression. It underlines the extent of the growth challenge that lies ahead for policymakers and the State Bank amid dwindling foreign private and official flows. It also shows that the balance-of-payments problem is not a one-off event but a structural issue even if the immediate triggers remain a massive rise in food imports and a significant decrease in rice exports. The Afghan border's closure, too, has played a part.

The saving grace for the external account so far has been increased remittances and lower global oil prices. However, these cushions still leave us vulnerable to geopolitical shocks in the Middle East, as they may evaporate in case of regional escalations, particularly involving Iran. Undoubtedly, the containment of the current account deficit and last year's surplus has played a critical role in anchoring foreign exchange market sentiments, preventing speculative pressure on the home currency.

Now that the return to a current account deficit has dented this sentiment, if not eroded it altogether, we may see renewed pressure on the exchange rate and the SBP further tightening legitimate currency outflows if this trend continues. The emerging situation may force the SBP to again halt the monetary easing it just restarted after several months. A current account deficit is not a disease; it is rather a symptom of what ails the economy: falling agricultural and industrial productivity and policy failures holding exports down and scaring away foreign private investors.

Recent data shows that both outbound shipments and non-debt-creating, long-term foreign investment are plummeting. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has set up an inter-ministerial committee to recommend a strategy to exit the IMF programme. Obviously, such a strategy would focus on building up growth momentum in the next two years.

The committee must understand that there are structural weaknesses in agriculture, manufacturing and investment feeding into external imbalances. Unless growth is anchored in productivity, exports and sustained investment inflows, we will remain stuck in low-growth mode and be vulnerable to the next balance-of-payments shock.

Zahid Hussain

American President Donald Trump now seeks to create a new international organisation to rival the United Nations. His idea of the 'Board of Peace' goes beyond its original UN mandate of overseeing the rehabilitation of Gaza, which has been devastated by two years of Israel's genocidal war. Reportedly, so far nearly 60 countries have been invited to join the 'board' chaired by the American president. It is supposed to operate as a "more nimble and effective international peacebuilding body". It will cost \$1 billion for nations to buy a permanent seat on the so-called board. Many heads of government and state representing potential member countries have been invited to join. The full list of the invitees is still not known.

Interestingly, there is no mention of Gaza in the Board of Peace charter. Last year, a UN Security Council resolution had authorised the formation of the board to oversee the post-war administrative transition of the enclave.

Trump has separately named an 11-member executive board for Gaza as part of the 20-point peace plan for the enclave.

But the charter reportedly sent out by the Trump administration to potential members projects the Board of Peace as an international conflict resolution body along the lines of the UN. One wonders under what mandate this international body is being set up. It is the brainchild of the American president who seems to consider himself as the sole arbiter of the global order.

According to international media, the charter gives wide-ranging powers to Trump as the board's chair, allowing him to appoint and remove member states — a decision that could only be overturned by a two-thirds majority of members. It also provides him with the "exclusive authority to create, modify, or dissolve subsidiary entities as necessary or appropriate to fulfil the Board of Peace's mission".

Trump has been a fierce critic of the UN and under his presidency America has pulled out of

several of its agencies. His Board of Peace is also meant to undermine the global body. He aspires to create a new world order dictated by American military might. Interestingly, the charter says the objective of the board is "to promote stability, restore dependable and lawful governance, and secure enduring peace in areas affected or threatened by conflict". It is ironic that this talk of lawful governance comes from an administration that recently kidnapped the president of a sovereign state (Venezuela) and his wife in a military operation that trampled over all international laws. Trump has dismissed international law, saying only his "own morality" can curb the aggressive policies he is pursuing across the world.

Trump has also threatened to use military force against other South American countries and has bombed Iran last year. It aided Israel's genocidal war in Gaza that has killed more than 70,000 Palestinians and destroyed the entire enclave. The same administration, whose imperialistic designs have been fully exposed, claims to

uphold the idea of a rules-based world order.

Describing the need for setting up a new international organisation, the charter maintains: "Durable peace requires pragmatic judgement, common sense solutions, and the courage to depart from approaches and institutions that have too often failed". It doesn't, of course, talk about the fact that America's own disdain for the rule of law has been the main reason for the failure of the UN and other international institutions. This board cannot provide global peace and stability. It is meant to be used to advance America's hegemony.

Curiously, the idea of this American-led multinational organisation has been floated as the Trump administration prepares to take over Greenland, which has brought Washington into conflict with its European NATO allies. He has imposed an initial 10 per cent tariff on European countries opposing his plan to seize the Danish-controlled autonomous island.

In a recent message to Norway's prime minister,

Trump reportedly said that one reason why he is pushing to acquire Greenland is that he didn't win the Nobel Peace Prize. "Considering your Country decided not to give me the Nobel Peace Prize for having stopped 8 Wars PLUS, I no longer feel an obligation to think purely of Peace..." was Trump's message.

Trump's anger over not getting the Nobel Peace Prize seems to be driving him to take the world down. He no longer distinguishes between rivals and allies. Nothing could be more dangerous for world peace than such a megalomaniac at the helm of the world's biggest power. His plan to create and chair an international organisation as a rival to the UN will be the final nail in the coffin of an already collapsing global order.

Strangely, neither the Board of Peace nor the Gaza Executive Board under it has Palestinian representation. Instead, the executive board is stuffed with American officials whose pro-Zionist bias is well known. Besides Secretary of State Marco

Rubio, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and America's Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff are also included in the executive board. There are also officials from Qatar and Egypt and an Israeli businessman, according to media reports.

One of the most controversial founding members of the Gaza board is Tony Blair, the former British prime minister, who is accused of war crimes for his decision to join the American war in Iraq.

As a part of the peace plan, an International Stabilisation Force will be raised to lead security operations, support comprehensive demilitarisation and enable the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. Pakistan and some other Muslim countries have been approached to join the force that will be led by an American military officer. Given its dubious mandate, there is a real danger that the ISF will find itself fighting the Palestinian resistance group. Pakistan needs to think through any decision to join the ISF.

Islamabad under siege

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

The assault comes from multiple directions, each more brazen than the last. Consider what happened barely a stone's throw from Parliament House itself: while legislators debated inside, Shakarparian contractors were busy deforesting a beautiful tract of land within sight of the nation's seat of power. The trees fell and the earth was cleared, primed for mudslides once the monsoon arrives. Nobody in authority raised an alarm. The symbolism is almost too perfect: as we talk about governance, the very ground beneath our feet is being stolen.

This is not an isolated incident but part of a pattern. The Islamabad Wildlife Board, established precisely to protect the Margalla Hills National Park, has been neutered. Rina Saeed Khan, the champion who stood guard over these hills, now faces harassment through bogus cases, a punishment for the 'crime' of doing what the law mandates. When protectors become the persecuted, the capture is complete.

The physical trans-

formation of the city tells the same story. Those cascading contours that once defined Islamabad's character, giving it a topography distinct from the concrete monotony of other urban centres are being systematically flattened. This destruction is now cascading beyond the capital territory, driven by influential housing societies in the surrounding hilly areas. Contractors fill in these natural undulations to create level plots and farmhouses, erasing in months what nature took millennia to create. The model city is being reduced to just another flat, characterless expanse of development.

The city has been further bifurcated by signal-free corridors that have killed its walkability. Islamabad was designed as a city where I could once move between sectors on foot or bicycle, where neighbourhoods connected organically. Now, massive thoroughfares carve through the urban fabric, making it impossible to cross without risking one's life. We have prioritised cars over people and speed over liveability, destroying the pedestrian character that once made the city humane.

Construction in green belts now proceeds with impunity. These areas were once the oxygen veins of the city, meant to ensure that development never became suffocating. Today, we allow construction there and needlessly expand roads, parking lots, and seminars. Semi-permanent camps for law-enforcement agencies further narrow the spaces that let the city breathe. Each road-widening project claims more green spaces — the very things that made Islamabad different.

We have carved the E sectors out of what was supposed to be the Margalla Hills National Park. These areas were intended as habitats for leopards, pangolins, barking deer and grey goral. Instead, we authorised cricket pavilions, university campuses, golf courses, and private housing, turning ecological corridors into real estate opportunities. The wildlife that once roamed freely now finds itself trapped in shrinking pockets, leading to the conflicts we wring our hands about when a leopard ventures into the encroached areas. We took their home and act surprised when they show up at ours.

Meanwhile, garbage chokes the tributaries of the Lai nullah, and invasive species like paper mulberry are spread in the name of landscaping, driving away indigenous birds which need indigenous trees for nesting, mating and chirping.

The consequences of this reckless development play out in tragic ways. We once took pride in a gravity-based drainage system where every manhole bore the Mohenjo Daro seal, a symbol of inherited excellence in urban planning. Now, the CDA and its approved housing societies have encroached upon natural channels, narrowed nullahs, and built roads over storm-water drains. When the rains come, the water has nowhere to go. The floods in E-11 in 2021 and G-11 in 2025 were the price of denying water its right of passage. This is manufactured urban flooding, and it persists because nobody is held accountable.

While rainwater harvesting is ignored, all sources of natural recharging are being flattened. The run-off adds to pollution, while ad hoc population growth depletes the groundwater, allowing the

'tanker mafia' to emerge. Even our ancient heritage is not spared; we allowed encroachments on caves where Buddhist monks once meditated. We cut through the heart of our ecosystem to construct corridors like Alexander Road, ostensibly for connectivity, but really to open up land for developers who see only profit where there should be preservation.

Perhaps the most stunning revelation of the current mindset was the proposal to mortgage F-9 Park for a sukuk bond worth Rs500 billion. The federal government actually considered pledging this 750-acre public park as collateral for debt. Though the proposal was withdrawn after a public outcry, the fact that it was seriously entertained reveals a disturbing truth.

Meanwhile, the air tells its own story of decline. Islamabad's air was once distinctively crisp, and a part of its identity, as were its tree-lined avenues. That air is gone. Unchecked vehicular emissions, construction dust, and the burning of waste have transformed the atmosphere. The capital now appears regularly on pollu-

tion indices it once escaped, joining Lahore in the unenviable club of Pakistan's toxic cities. Every infrastructure project extracts its tribute; highways and metro extensions demand the sacrifice of mature trees that functioned as carbon sinks. The arithmetic of 'compensatory' saplings never adds up to the restoration of a lost ecosystem.

At the heart of the capital sits Rawal Lake, a prize waterbody that is slowly dying. Industrial effluents mix with sewage, and solid waste accumulates at the edges. Expanding irregular housing societies in Banigala, Bhara Kahu, and Chak Shahzad discharge waste into the lake, treating a strategic asset like a dumping ground.

This environmental siege exposes a fundamental disconnect between what we claim to value and what we actually protect. The institutions exist and the laws are on the books, but the political will to enforce them is missing. Islamabad was built as a statement that Pakistan could create a capital worthy of a great nation. That vision is being betrayed through internal surrender.

Arctic posturing

Mahir Ali

Lately, a half-remembered Bee Gees song from long ago has been haunting the mind. It's the one that begins with: "I started a joke, which started the whole world crying; but I didn't see that the joke was on me..."

When Donald Trump indicated on the eve of his second inauguration a year ago that his longing for Greenland had not diminished since his first term, it was viewed as just another thought bubble, alongside his designs on Canada and the Panama Canal zone. After all, it had been made clear to him in 2019 that the vast, mostly frozen territory wasn't for sale.

But once he gets a bee in his bonnet, it can be hard to dislodge. The US president has sought to justify his redoubled focus on acquiring Greenland by claiming that American might alone can protect the world's largest island from a takeover by Russia or China. The latter has never displayed any such inclination, while the former has enthusiastically been applauding Trump's designs. Moscow's delight barely requires an explanation.

Russia has predictably, and to some extent justifiably, been assailed by its western neighbours for Vladimir Putin's territorial ambitions in Ukraine. So it's amused by the spectacle of the hostile powers scrambling for a response to an American land grab. The US has had designs on Greenland since it bought Alaska from Tsarist Russia in 1867 at the throwaway price of two cents an acre. The Truman administration offered Denmark \$100 million in gold bullion to purchase the territory in 1946, but Copenhagen wasn't interested.

However, under a secret agreement concluded in 1951 (but not revealed until 40 years later), Denmark gave the US unlimited use of Greenland for military purposes. That pact has never been rescinded. The Pituffik US military base has existed for decades, but the dozen or so others that were abandoned at the end of the Cold War would require only polite requests to re-establish. That might have been a solution had Trump's interests been purely strategic. But it also illustrates a massive problem.

Once the competing spheres of influence had been established in Europe following World War II, most of East Europe tended to be described in Western media as Soviet satellites. West European nations, on the other hand, were never called out as American dependencies, an arrangement formalised by NATO. Ironically, the reliance on the US for 'security' only expanded following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the USSR's demise.

It would have made sense in the 1990s to incorporate the Russian Federation in European defence arrangements. Stupidly, the focus was on extending NATO's reach to Russia's borders. Putin, initially keen on cooperating with the West, balked at the idea of Georgia and Ukraine being invited into NATO. That's not the only reason for his misguided violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, but he can surely be excused a spot of schadenfreude as his inveterate adversaries in Europe struggle to respond to the threat of US aggression against one of its most servile allies on the continent.

Denmark has long served as an obsequious handmaiden of US imperialism, willing to commit war crimes in Afghanistan

and Iraq. Hence its discomfulation at being turned into a potential target. The Danish colonisation of Greenland (initially alongside its Scandinavian neighbours) is justly resented by the territory's Inuit inhabitants. Among the now self-governing island's 57,000 people, around 85 per cent reportedly want complete independence from Denmark. A similar proportion disdains the idea of forcibly being turned into Americans.

The EU has plucked up the courage to whimper about its American masters' stated intentions, including the threat to impose 10pc, and eventually 25pc, tariffs on states that oppose Greenland's takeover. There's been talk of triggering counter-tariffs, but that's unlikely to make much headway when European ministers meet tomorrow. Europe is paying the price for having latched on to Uncle Sam's headquarters for far too long, and its current predicament deserves little sympathy. Ursula von der Leyen is hardly the kind of figurehead who can proclaim European independence, while even Dutch courage would be too much to expect from NATO's Mark Rutte, who infamously called Trump 'daddy', and is lost for words when the pater familias goes rogue.

New shipping routes and Greenland's rare earths are also in the mix as climate change advances with the US administration's eager (and egregious) imprimatur, and this week's Davos conclave should provide more entertainment as Trump comes face to face with his reluctant detractors. Meanwhile, the song cited at the outset concludes on a sombre note: "I fell out of bed hurting my head from the things that I said; 'Til I finally died — which started the whole world living." If only it were that simple.

Shahzad Sharjeel

There was a time when aerial photography was possible only from a helicopter; the exception was the KMC fire brigade snorkels, in the service of the MQM, covering party events. Then came drones, and soon no wedding shoot was complete without these contraptions buzzing inside the marquees, capturing guests at different stages of chewing, gulping, slurping, and spilling.

It was a matter of time before these flying demons were put to use for espionage and war. While gluttons fantasised about drone-dropped pizza and fiction writers toyed with plots involving target-killing drones, the invention was also put to good use for crop surveys, forestry, and pest management.

Russia and Ukraine have deployed swarms of drones against each other, and the recent Pakistan-India spat saw drone warfare. Depending upon their size, utility, and sophistication, these could be suicide weapons or the sort that fly back to their bases, that is, if they dodge the anti-drone drones. Among other types, some foreign outlets claimed that Pakistan deployed the Turkish-made Yihai-III and Songar drones. An internet search puts the price of a single unit of the latter between \$24,000 and \$50,000. India reportedly used the much more expensive Israeli-made Harop/Harpy, the Polish-made Warmate, and the indigenously produced Nagasutra-I. The Israeli variants could cost anywhere between \$0.5 million and \$4m apiece, depending on capability and service contracts.

With the US attacking Venezuela and eyeing Iran, with whom we share

Drone on

a border, and Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE vying for regional supremacy, and Israel attacking anywhere in the region at will, Pakistan has entered regional defence pacts. Some look at these pacts as the beginning of a Muslim NATO, only the 'bloc' is chock-a-block with Greenland-type enticements to put paid to any such unifying mechanism. Remember how Saddam Hussein was armed and encouraged by the West to think that he could just saunter into Kuwait and help himself to its oilfields.

There is a slight glimmer of hope, although a long shot. For the longest time, I have believed that one way to ensure the Muslim states don't get played against one another and the rest of the world is to establish a joint administration of the holy mosques under a representative body of the Muslim world. The rest of the country could be administered; however, the citizens decide. Why, you may ask, would it work? Well, if a collective defence of the sacred sites is desirable, then a collective administration should be considered as well. If any Muslim country does it in return for bilateral gains only, then it is neither fulfilling a religious duty nor contributing to the peace and stability of the region and the world.

In days gone by, the armed student wing of a party was named the Thunder Squad, apparently to strike fear into its opponents' hearts. Hardly a day passes without one country or another expressing its desire to purchase squadrons of JF-17 Thunder fighter jets. The lightweight, all-weather, day-night aircraft is a joint venture between the Pakistan Aeronautics Complex, Kamra, and

Chengdu Aircraft Industry Corporation of China. According to the PAC site, 58 per cent of production is carried out in Pakistan and the remainder in China. No official numbers are available on the price of these jets, though some reported estimates range between \$25m and \$30m each. According to media reports, multiple contracts with various countries for the sale of JF-17 Thunder could amount to \$20 billion.

If true, one wonders whether the proceeds from these exports will go into the national kitty and be distributed to the federating units through the National Finance Commission, or whether these receipts will be ringfenced for defence purposes. No matter how innovatively the military-industrial complex raises funds to establish and run the defence infrastructure, it should not claim discretionary control over the proceeds. Public investment and an extremely uneven playing field at the expense of the private sector have helped its development. Human development must get a lion's share of its profits.

The IMF has projected that social sector spending will continue to decline until 2030. We don't need a lender to tell us that the population will grow unchecked, that rates of wasting and stunting among children will persist, that polio will not be eradicated, that traders will not be taxed, and that the salaries will continue to simmer in the pot until they rise to the top, belly up. One can continue to drone on about being a hard state to the point of brittleness. The thunder needs to produce some rain for the parched land, the only motherland we have.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi addressing as Chief Guest to closing ceremony of International Tourism Conference 2026.

Sindh CM decides to restore legal status of NICVD

NICVD performs 200+ free TAVI procedures, each worth Rs 4 m in private hospitals

KARACHI (INP): Announcing that no obstacle would be tolerated in the way of free treatment of heart patients, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday said that a decision had been taken to restore the legal status of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) Karachi.

Presiding over 84th meeting of the governing body of the NICVD in Karachi, the chief minister said that by removing legal ambiguities, the institute would be enabled to provide services to people without any interruption. He also announced Rs15.50 billion grant in aid

for the institute's operational matters. CM Murad said that the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (ZABICVD) in Landhi area of Karachi would be the world's largest hospital for the treatment of heart patients. Some important decisions were taken at the meeting for the protection of the institute's future and continuity of services.

The meeting also approved the immediate appointment of Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at the NICVD.

CM Murad said that the NICVD needed an additional grant of Rs3.5 bil-

lion in the financial year, 2025-26.

NICVD Executive Director Professor Tahir Sagheer, who gave a detailed briefing to the chief minister, said that so far, the allocation of Rs10 billion had been approved for the hospital, while it was facing a deficit of Rs4.6 billion.

He added that an increase in administrative and service expenditures led to the funding gap.

CM Murad said that over 200 Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI) procedures were performed at the hospital for free, while private hospitals charged Rs4 million for the purpose.

KP Govt holds 5th District Service Delivery Conference

PESHAWAR (APP): The 5th District Service Delivery Conference under the Good Governance Roadmap was held in Peshawar under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi here on Wednesday.

The conference reviewed progress on the provision of public services and facilities at the district level across the province, redressal of public issues and complaints, and measures to further strengthen the governance system.

Addressing the conference, Chief Minister Sohail Afridi directed that the process for the creation of 700 new doctor posts for Basic Health Units be completed within one week. He stated that strengthening and activating health facilities at the local level is essential to reduce unnecessary referrals. He emphasized that while natural disasters cannot be prevented, losses can be minimized through timely planning and improved management. In this context, relevant departments were directed to prepare advance flood contingency plans and immediately share them with the district administration.

Azma Bokhari criticises so-called development in KP claims

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari has criticised the development claims of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, saying that in the so-called "province of change," even installation of manhole covers is being projected as a major achievement.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Azma Bokhari shared before-and-after pictures of manhole covers installed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on social media and remarked sarcastically, "Wow! Such massive development is taking place in the province of change, and we didn't even know about it."

She said it was astonishing that posters highlighting the installation of manhole covers also featured two different images of Sohail Afridi, as if the project were a historic or landmark achievement. Speaking in a sarcastic tone, she added that people are often criticized for pointing out a lack of development, but now even routine tasks such as installing manhole covers are being officially publicized with before-and-after images.

Barrister Qadim Nawaz elected as General Secretary IHCBA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Barrister Qasim Nawaz Abbasi was elected unopposed as the General Secretary of the Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) ahead of bar's annual elections. No candidate contested against him till the deadline for filing nomination papers. He was declared the General Secretary unopposed. Elections will be held on February 14 for the president and other posts in which the lawyers will elect a new cabinet through votes.



Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over National Institute of Cardiovascular diseases meeting at CM House in Karachi.

GB caretaker setup to conduct upcoming polls transparently: Abbas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Information Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Ghulam Abbas on Wednesday said that the first priority of the GB caretaker setup was to conduct the upcoming elections transparently and peacefully.

Speaking on the program Meet the Press in National Press Club (NPC) here, he said that all political parties will be allowed to contest in the upcoming general elections of GB.

He emphasized that the caretaker Chief Minister has given clear directions to identify the problems being facing by the people and efforts should be taken to resolve the issues of electricity, internet and others.

Police launch grand search and strike operation against terrorists

KOHAT (INP): The district police have intensified grand search and strike operations across the district under the vision of Inspector General of Police Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa Zulfikar Hameed to decisively target terrorists, proclaimed offenders, and their facilitators.

The latest operation was carried out under the direct supervision of District Police Officer (DPO) Kohat Shehbaz Elahi in the remote and mountainous areas of Thana Lachi.

Historic steps underway to improve Punjab's health sector: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that historic and far-reaching steps are being taken to improve the health sector under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

He expressed these views while meeting a delegation of Al-Falah Foundation Pakistan at the Department of Specialised Healthcare and Medical Education on Wednesday.

The meeting focused on strengthening the provincial healthcare system, ensuring the provision of quality medical facilities to the public, and highlighting the role of welfare institutions in the health sector.

The minister said that the Punjab government is actively laying a network of new hospitals across the province. He highlighted that the Chief Minister has launched several landmark initiatives, including the Children's Heart Surgery Program, Special Initiative for Transplant Program, Special Initiative for Cancer Patients, Special Initiative for Stroke Management Program, Special Initiative for Dialysis Program, along with many other healthcare reforms aimed at providing relief to patients.



KARACHI: Members of the Human Rights Council of Pakistan light earthen oil lamps in tribute to the victims of the Gul Plaza fire, outside the Karachi Press Club.

CM announces telemedicine system, cardiac surgery services in Jhang

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif announced the introduction of a province-wide telemedicine system and the launch of cardiac surgery services at the District Headquarters Hospital in Jhang, as part of the government's efforts to ensure quality healthcare at people's doorsteps.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of a cath lab in Jhang, the chief minister said construction of the Nawaz Sharif Medical District in Lahore would begin in March, said a handout issued here on Wednesday.

She said the government is committed to providing equal treatment facilities to all citizens, regardless of financial status, and that there will be no distinction between the poor and the affluent in access to healthcare.

Expressing satisfaction over the establishment of a cath lab in a remote district, she said timely medical intervention during the golden hour of a heart attack could save lives. She observed a cardiac procedure at the Jhang cath lab

and noted that patients were now being treated locally instead of being referred to Lahore.

The chief minister said patients had informed her that while they were given appointments several months later in larger cities, procedures in Jhang are being completed in just 48 hours, which she described as a result of improved governance and administrative support.

She said 16 cath labs have been launched across Punjab within weeks and months, while cardiology institutes had been established in Sahiwal, Murree and Sargodha. She added that patients from other provinces, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, were also receiving treatment in Punjab, reflecting the province's inclusive healthcare policy.

The chief minister said dialysis cards allowed patients to receive treatment worth up to one million rupees, while clinics on wheels and field hospitals had provided treatment to over 20 million people. She said free medicines worth

Rs100 billion are being provided across Punjab, along with home delivery of essential drugs, including insulin.

She said telemedicine services would allow doctors to consult patients through mobile phone screens, while specialist consultants from across the world are also being engaged. She added that air ambulance services have also been launched to ensure timely transfer of critically ill patients.

Referring to paediatric cardiac care, the chief minister said she was distressed to learn of a long waiting list for child heart surgeries upon assuming office, adding that thousands of children had since successfully undergone treatment, including patients from other provinces. She said Nawaz Sharif Medical District would house specialised hospitals for children, cardiology, blood diseases, orthopaedics, burn treatment and genetic disorders. Advanced cancer treatment facilities, including modern Chinese technology, are also being introduced, she added.



Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurates announced a Cath Lab in Jhang and the launch of cardiac surgery services at the District Headquarters Hospital in Jhang.

Governor Kundi distributes awards among KP journalists for professional services

PESHAWAR (APP): An awards distribution ceremony for the journalistic community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held at Governor House Peshawar on Wednesday, where Governor Faisal Karim Kundi presented awards to 22 journalists in recognition of their professional services.

The ceremony was attended by Chairman Balochistan International Think Tank and Friends of Universe Society Pakistan Awaiz Jadoon, President Peshawar Press Club M. Riaz, President Khyber Union of Journalists Kashifuddin Syed, office-bearers of the Peshawar Press Club, and a large number of journalists from across the province. The awards were presented on behalf of the Balochistan International Think Tank.

The award recipients included M. Riaz, Farzana Ali, Zia-ul-Haq, Shamim Shahid, Kashifuddin Syed, Zulfikar Ali Shah, Bakht Zada Yousafza, Zahir Shah, Faridullah Khan, Shahid Hameed, Khalid Kheshti, Amdad Ali Khadim, Yaseen Qureshi, Arshad Aziz Malik, Naveed Alam, Saif-ul-Islam Saifi, Farooq Firaq, Wasim Ahmed Shah, Farmanullah Jan, Bilal Ahmed, Shahzad Ahmed and Alamgir Khan. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Balochistan International Think Tank Awaiz Jadoon and President Peshawar Press Club.

PBM, NACTA join hands for rehabilitation of terror victims

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) have joined hands under a UNODC-facilitated agreement to provide comprehensive rehabilitation, medical, educational and livelihood support to families affected by terrorism, making a significant step toward institutional care for victims of violence.

The landmark initiative was formalized through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during a seminar organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The MoU establishes a collaborative framework to extend support and care for the families suffering from the consequences of terrorist attacks, through

rehabilitation, medical care, educational assistance, livelihood support and other reintegration services for the beneficiaries.

Addressing the ceremony, Managing Director PBM emphasized that through joint and coordinated efforts, both organizations can ensure meaningful and enduring support for the persons affected by act of terrorism. "Victims of terrorism suffer immense physical, emotional, and economic hardships."

This MoU reflects our shared commitment to restoring dignity, hope, and stability to those who have suffered due to violence. Capt Shaheen remarked while appreciating NACTA's central role in implementing counterterrorism strategy and linking policy frameworks with welfare delivery mechanisms.



ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt and National Coordinator NACTA Jawad Ahmad Dogar displays the MoU documents formalizing cooperation to support victims of terrorism, during a UNODC-conducted seminar in Islamabad.

Senator Samina flags failure to implement curriculum on reproductive health in schools

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights, chaired by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, convened at Parliament House to review the status of family planning, reproductive health, and population management in Pakistan. The meeting was attended by Senators Khalid Tahir, Amir Waliuddin Chishti, Atta ul Haq, Syed Masroor Ahsan, and representatives from the Ministries of Human Rights, Health, Planning, and Religious Affairs, provincial population welfare departments, and the UNFPA Country Representative, alongside other stakeholders.

During the discussion, Senator Amir

Waliuddin Chishti highlighted the impact of taxation on contraceptives, noting that it has restricted access, leaving many people without essential family planning services. Health officials responded that the matter had previously been reviewed at the Cabinet level and that ongoing efforts are in place to address these issues within the constraints of the IMF program and federal taxation policies.

The role of religious guidance was also discussed. Religious scholars present clarified that they do not oppose family planning or reproductive health initiatives. Their recommendations focus on delivering such messaging in accordance with Islamic teachings, prioritizing

the health of children and mothers. They noted that while nikkah procedures currently include verification of age through CNIC, medical tests remain optional and could be incorporated in a recommended format to help prevent potential health issues, without imposing compulsion.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri emphasized that reproductive health and family planning are fundamental human rights. She underscored the urgent need to implement these programs effectively and ensure they are accessible to all, particularly in schools, where education on puberty, hormonal changes, and family planning must begin early.

Sindh a land of saints, peace, tolerance: Minister Khichi

HYDERABAD (APP): Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Division, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi said the federal government would take comprehensive measures in collaboration with the Sindh government to preserve and promote the province's rich culture and heritage.

Talking to APP after visiting the shrine of renowned Sufi poet Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (RA) in Bhit Shah, the minister said Sindh was the land of saints, and Sufi scholars, where the message of love, tolerance and peace had been passed down from generation to generation. He said his visit to the shrine brought him spiritual peace and inner happiness, adding that the atmosphere of this place was beyond words. The federal minister laid a 'Chadar' at the shrine, offered Fateha and prayed for the security, unity and prosperity of the country and the nation. Aurangzeb Khichi said Sindh's culture enjoys a distinguished position across the world due to its vastness and beauty. He noted that the traditional dress, lifestyle, language, music and Sufi traditions of Sindh were a valuable part of Pakistan's national identity.

He said that Pakistanis are making Pakistan famous all over the world, including the UK, through their skills. The Punjab Governor said that we will not leave overseas Pakistanis alone in any difficulty. The Punjab Governor said that those who incite overseas Pakistanis against Pakistan by false and hateful videos will be dealt with strictly. He said that those who spread false and fabricated news against Pakistan and Pakistani institutions on social media will be dealt with iron hands.



BHIT SHAH: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Division Aurangzeb Khan Khichi laying wreath on the grave of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai at Bhit Shah.

Aurangzeb highlights economic reforms, investment drive at WEF

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a series of important meetings in Davos on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual meeting, focusing on advancing Pakistan's economic reform agenda, strengthening international partnerships, and promoting investment-led growth.

The minister met with President of the Asian Development Bank, Masato Kanda, to review Pakistan's ongoing economic reforms and discuss ways to further deepen the long-standing partnership between Pakistan and ADB, said a press release issued by the finance ministry here on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the ADB President noted that Pakistan was entering a significant phase of economic transformation, with renewed momentum in reforms and growing confidence in the market.

He highlighted ADB's strong and expanding engagement in Pakistan and expressed optimism about the country's economic direction, underscoring ADB's commitment to supporting Pakistan through a close and forward-looking partnership.

He thanked the ADB President for his continued support and guidance, noting that Pakistan's relationship with ADB had entered a new and more strategic phase. He shared that the past year marked a decisive shift toward macroeconomic stability, with this positive trajectory continuing.

The minister highlighted improvements across key economic indicators, including easing inflation, declining policy rates, strengthening foreign exchange reserves, and improving investor sentiment, all reflecting renewed confidence in Pakistan's reform path.

He briefed the ADB President on progress in

structural reforms, particularly the government's renewed focus on privatization and private sector participation. He noted that recent initiatives had generated strong market interest and helped establish important benchmarks, with additional projects in the pipeline across multiple sectors.

Aurangzeb emphasized the importance of continued collaboration with development partners, including ADB, to support these reforms and unlock Pakistan's growth potential.

Discussions also covered efforts to modernize Pakistan's energy sector and advance sustainable and clean energy solutions. He highlighted ongoing reforms aimed at improving efficiency, strengthening systems, and supporting long-term economic sustainability.

Both sides agreed to maintain close coordination to identify practical solutions that support inclusive and durable growth.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry chairing a meeting during his visit to SUPARCO Headquarters.

Pakistan, Canada explore enhanced cooperation in minerals, energy sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting with the High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan Tarik Ali Khan, to discuss strengthening bilateral cooperation in the minerals and energy sectors.

During the meeting, High Commissioner Tarik Ali Khan stated that the success of Barrick Gold at Reko Diq is a strong example to build upon Pakistan Canada mineral cooperation, said a press release issued here Wednesday.

He said that Canada is actively working to bring more Canadian companies to the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum (PMIF). Highlighting the evolving global landscape, the High Commissioner remarked that in a changing multilateral world order based on networks, shared values, and common interests, there is openness and willingness to engage with Pakistan.

The High Commissioner further conveyed that the Ministry of Natural Resources Canada is ready to support mineral sector cooperation with Pakistan. Sharing his personal experience, he said he had visited the Reko Diq site and was delighted to witness tangible community uplift initiatives, including the development of schools, hospitals, and water purification projects.

Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik underscored that Reko Diq has secured international financing, making it one of the most significant funding rounds for Pakistan.

He emphasized that the Government of Pakistan is committed to ensuring the highest standards of labour safety and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance, and that such projects are being developed for the long-term benefit of the people of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting with High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan, Tarik Ali Khan.

USF Launches Rs. 1.16bn Broadband projects for 9 districts

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a major push toward nationwide digital inclusion, the Universal Service Fund (USF) on Wednesday signed contracts worth PKR 1.16 billion with Jazz to roll out high speed broadband across nine underserved districts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, aiming to connect over 533,000 rural residents within 6 to 18 months as part of the Prime Minister's "Digital Pakistan" vision.

The signing ceremony, held at the USF Head Office in Islamabad, was attended by Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Ms Shaza Fatima Khawaja as Chief Guest.

The agreements were formally signed by USF Chief Executive Officer Chaudhry Mudassar Naveed and Jazz Chief Executive Officer Aamir Ibrahim for four Next Gen-

eration Broadband for Sustainable Development projects.

Addressing the ceremony, Ms Shaza Fatima Khawaja said the government was not merely awarding contracts but laying the digital foundation of a "Digital Nation."

She said Pakistan is witnessing a historic surge in IT exports and international technology partnerships, adding that the government is in the final stages of spectrum auction and preparations for a 5G launch to further strengthen connectivity.

"My unwavering mission is to catalyze ICT growth across every avenue. Today, we are witnessing unprecedented momentum in the technology sector. These projects are a concrete step toward resolving long standing connectivity challenges in rural Pakistan," the minister said.

PSX sheds 1,588 points to close at 187,033 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday turned around to bearish trend, losing 1,588.52 points, a decline of 0.84 percent, to settle at 187,033.27 points compared to 188,621.78 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1,325.597 million shares with a traded value of Rs 69.583 billion, against 1,225.807 million shares valuing Rs 63.898 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization declined to Rs 21.134 trillion from Rs 21.305 trillion a day earlier.

Out of 488 active companies in the ready market, 118 advanced, 331 declined, while 39 remained unchanged.

K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 263.237 million shares, followed by Hasco Petroleum with 100.763 million shares and Fauji Foods Limited with 74.973

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where six ships, Hansa Africa, GFS Giselle, Odelmar, PVT Jupiter, Al-Soor-II and Horizon-I, were scheduled to load/offload containers, Cement, Palm oil, Gas oil, and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, FOTCO Oil Terminal, and Sui Southern Gas Terminal, respectively, during the last hours.

Meanwhile, another bulk cargo carrier, 'Richland Singapore', with Soya Bean Seed also arrived at outer anchorage.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, ABK Tiger and Horizon-I, are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 126,944 tonnes, comprising 80,871 tonnes imports cargo and 46,073 export cargo carried in 1,878 Containers (351 TEUs Imports & 1,527 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 17 ships at Outer Anchorage of the Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Manina and Kallone & another ship, APL Oregon, carrying Fertilizer, Coal, and Container, expected to take berths at FAP, PIBT, and QICT today.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan meets Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong to discuss enhanced agricultural trade and broader economic cooperation.

Govt balanced sugar trade to protect farmers, consumers: Rana Tanveer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain told the National Assembly on Wednesday that the government allowed sugar exports last year to protect farmers and the sugar industry from losses caused by surplus production, and later permitted limited imports to stabilise prices for consumers.

Replying to questions in the House, the minister said climate-related factors later affected production estimates.

Initial projections of around seven million tonnes were revised downward, with actual production standing at about 6.8 million tonnes.

After accounting for

domestic consumption and reserve requirements, the shortfall made limited imports necessary to stabilise the market.

He acknowledged that sugar prices rose due to market manipulation by manufacturers and producers, but said timely government intervention prevented prices from reaching the feared level of Rs250 per kg. Instead, he said, prices were largely contained at around Rs200 per kg, even in remote areas of Balochistan.

The minister said current estimates suggested sugar production this year could range between 6.8 and seven million tonnes, which would help stabilise prices.

He clarified that price regulation did not fall un-

der the federal government, while the Sugar Advisory Board only assessed production levels and recommended export or import decisions.

Referring to health concerns, Rana Tanveer Hussain said nearly 40pc of the population was affected by diabetes or related conditions due to excessive sugar consumption, and urged greater public awareness.

He noted that many countries imposed sugar taxes to discourage consumption.

He said a high-level committee on deregulation, formed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif under the leadership of Sardar Awaiz Leghari, had submitted its report after consultations with stakeholders.

Pakistan, China discuss enhanced agricultural trade, economic cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday held a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong and discussed ways to enhance agricultural trade and economic cooperation.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the ongoing Pakistan-China Agriculture Investment Conference, underscoring the strategic priority both nations place on strengthening economic ties, said a news release. Pakistan's delegation, led by the Commerce Minister, comprised key stakeholders in the nation's trade ecosystem. It included the Secretary of Commerce, the Chief Executive of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Minister welcomed the Chinese Ambassador and reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to boosting its exports through a multi-faceted strategy.

Govt moves to revive PSM, sets May 2026 deadline for decision

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has decided to move towards the revival of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM), reversing its earlier plan to liquidate the state-owned enterprise, the National Assembly was informed on Wednesday.

Parliamentary Secretary for Industries and Production Shahid Usman told the House that two protocols had been signed between Industrial Engineering LLC of Russia and PSM under the Ministry of Industries and Production.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Mr. Qaisar Ahmed Sheikh, attends the Sustainable Tourism Forum & Expo (STF) 2026, organized by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce & Development (ICCD) in collaboration with FPCCI as Guest of Honour at PC Hotel, Karachi.

Robert-Jan says: Pak-Netherlands undertaking concrete initiatives to further strengthen trade, investment ties

FAISALABAD (APP): The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands to Pakistan, H.E. Robert-Jan Siegart, has said that Pakistan and Netherlands are steadily moving toward enhanced economic cooperation, which will lay long-term impact on the economic relations of the two countries.

Both countries are undertaking concrete initiatives to further strengthen trade and investment ties, he added.

Speaking at Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA) on Wednesday, he emphasized the importance of joint efforts to make the business environment more facilitative and attractive for foreign investors by addressing existing challenges.

While acknowledging that bilateral trade relations are robust and growing, he observed that there remains scope for further progress, particularly in investment cooperation.

He underlined the need for simplification of regulatory procedures, improved ease of doing business, and broad-based reforms beyond special economic zones, calling upon both sides to jointly advocate business-friendly reforms. He invited Pakistani textile exporters to actively participate in the EU-Pakistan Business Forum scheduled to be held in the last week of April in Islamabad.

Gold prices surge Rs12,700 to all-time high

ISLAMABAD (APP): Gold prices surged to an all-time high in the local market on Wednesday as the price of 24-karat gold per tola jumped by Rs12,700 to settle at Rs506,362.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also jumped by Rs10,888 to Rs434,123, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs9,981 to Rs397,960, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Silver prices also witnessed an upward trend, with the price of 24-karat silver per tola increasing by Rs64 to Rs9,933, whereas the price of 10 grams of silver went up by Rs54 to Rs8,515.

In the international market, gold prices climbed by \$127 to reach \$4,840 per ounce, marking a fresh record.



ISLAMABAD: Provincial Secretary Agriculture Noor Ahmed Pirani presides over the meeting of Collection Points Companies Board of Directors under PHDEC.

Junaid calls for space-based monitoring for port expansion and maritime safety

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Wednesday said advanced space-based monitoring systems could play a vital role in safeguarding seas, improving maritime management and strengthening responses to environmental threats.

Junaid Chaudhry made the remarks during a visit to the headquarters of the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), marking the first-ever such visit by any maritime affairs minister in the country.

During the visit, Chairman SUPARCO Yusuf Khan and senior officials provided the minister with a detailed briefing on the organisation's operations and technological capabilities. The discussions high-

lighted SUPARCO's role in satellite monitoring, maritime safety, and port management.

The minister was also presented with a satellite-based assessment of potential sites for new ports, reflecting Pakistan's focus on expanding its maritime infrastructure. In addition, officials outlined plans for relief and rescue operations within national maritime boundaries, leveraging satellite technology and artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency and response times.

Addressing the participants, Junaid Chaudhry stressed the importance of leveraging satellite technology to tackle environmental and ecological challenges, including the impacts of climate change and disaster risks facing the country's coastline and maritime sector.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Haroon Akhtar Khan addressing a press conference at PID Media Center.

'Made in Pakistan' expo to begin on Jan 24, Haroon links MSME development to sustainable growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Announcing the launch of Pakistan's first "Made in Pakistan SME Cluster Showcase Expo 2026" to be held in Lahore from January 24, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday linked sustainable economic growth to the strengthening of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

"MSMEs are the backbone of Pakistan's economy and essential for achieving sustainable GDP growth of 6-7 per cent," he said while addressing a press conference here. He was accompanied by Secretary Ministry of Industries and Production Saif Anjum.

He said, the three day expo will be held at the Lahore Expo Centre from January 24 to 26 to showcase the country's untapped entrepreneurial and industrial potential and bring together thousands of MSMEs from the country.

MSMEs are the backbone of Pakistan's economy and essential for achieving sustainable GDP growth of 6-7 per cent," he said while addressing a press conference here. He was accompanied by Secretary Ministry of Industries and Production Saif Anjum.

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US will not use force to gain Greenland, Trump tells Davos

Monitoring Desk
DAVOS: US President Donald Trump ruled out the use of force in his bid to control Greenland on Wednesday, but said in a speech in Davos that no other country can secure the Danish territory.

"People thought I would use force, but I don't have to use force," Trump said at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Switzerland.

"I don't want to use force. I won't use force." Trump took a hectoring tone, chastising the United States' European allies for their insolence, disloyalty and policy mistakes in areas ranging from wind power and the environment to immigration and geopolitics.

Trump's increasing threats to Europe over Greenland have frayed

transatlantic ties and worried Europeans, overshadowing a speech that was intended to focus primarily on the US economy.

Calling Denmark "ungrateful," the Republican US president played down the issue as a "small ask" over a "piece of ice" and that an acquisition would be no threat to the NATO alliance, which includes Denmark and the United States.

"No nation or group of nations is in any position to be able to secure Greenland other than the United States," Trump said, adding: "I'm seeking immediate negotiations to once again to discuss the acquisition of Greenland by the United States." On several occasions during a speech that lasted more than an hour, Trump mistakenly referred to Greenland as Iceland.

Trump, who marked the end of a turbulent first year in office on Tuesday, is set to overshadow the agenda of the WEF, where global elites chew over economic and political trends.

NATO leaders have warned that Trump's Greenland strategy could upend the alliance, while the leaders of Denmark and Greenland have offered a wide array of ways for a greater US presence on the strategic island territory of 57,000 people.

"We want a piece of ice for world protection, and they won't give it," Trump said in his speech to a packed congress hall. Hundreds of delegates gathered in the lobby to listen or watch Trump's speech on video monitors or on mobile phones. After an hour, most of them had tuned out and resumed chatting.



US President Donald Trump speaks during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos.

UN strongly condemns Israeli demolition of UNRWA headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The demolition underway on Tuesday of the headquarters of UN agency UNRWA by Israeli forces in occupied East Jerusalem—reportedly "under the watch of lawmakers and a member of the Tel Aviv Government"—has prompted swift condemnation from the global body.

Responding to the dramatic development, head of the UN agency tasked with delivering humanitarian services to millions of Pales-

tinians, Philippe Lazzarini, described it as an "unprecedented attack" against the UN, whose premises are protected under international law. The move represents "a new level of open and deliberate defiance of international law, including of the privileges and immunities of the United Nations, by the State of Israel," the UNRWA Commissioner-General said on X.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the demolition "in

the strongest terms".

The UN chief has repeatedly and unequivocally stated that the compound remains UN premises and is "inviolable and immune from any form of interference." "The Secretary-General views as wholly unacceptable the continued escalatory actions against UNRWA," the statement from his office continued.

Guterres called on Israel to halt the demolition and restore the compound to the UN "without delay".

Syria army enters Al-Hol camp holding relatives of jihadists: AFP

ALHOL CAMP (AFP/APP): Syria's army on Wednesday entered the vast Al-Hol camp that houses relatives of suspected Islamic State jihadists after Kurdish forces withdrew from the site, said an AFP journalist at the scene.

The government announced a new ceasefire with the Kurds on Tuesday after taking swathes of north and east Syria that had long been under the control of Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The United States, which has long headed an international coalition and backed the Kurds against IS,

said the purpose of its alliance with the SDF had largely ended years after they defeated the jihadists.

Now, the United States was backing Syria's new Islamist authorities who are seeking to extend their control across the country after years of civil war. Thousands of former jihadists, including many Westerners, have been held in seven Kurdish-run prisons in north and east Syria, while tens of thousands of their suspected family members live in the Al-Hol and Al-Roj camps. At Al-Hol, the AFP correspondent saw soldiers open the camp's metal gate and enter.

Gunman jailed for life in killing of Japan ex-PM Abe

NARA (AFP/APP): The gunman charged with killing Japan's former prime minister Shinzo Abe was found guilty Wednesday and jailed for life, more than three years after the broad daylight assassination shocked the world.

The shooting forced a reckoning in a country with little experience of gun violence, and ignited scrutiny of alleged ties between prominent conservative lawmakers and a secretive sect, the Unification Church. As he handed down the sentence at a court in the city of Nara, judge Shinichi Tanaka said Tetsuya Yamagami, 45, had been "determined" to shoot Abe.



Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi delivers a speech during the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos.

CPC congratulates Vietnamese party on 14th National Congress

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on Tuesday sent a congratulatory message on the convening of the 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV).

The CPV is the strong leadership core of the Vietnamese people and the cause of socialism in Vietnam. Since the 13th National Congress of the CPV, the Central Committee of the CPV has united and led the Vietnamese people in making remarkable achievements in advancing socialist construction and reform, read the message.

Amid complex international situations, Vietnam has maintained political and social stability, experienced rapid and sustainable economic development, and seen its international status rise steadily. These accomplishments have demonstrated the advantages of the communist party leadership and the socialist system, and have made positive contributions to peace, stability, development and prosperity in the region and the world, it said.

UK annual inflation rises more than expected in December

LONDON (AFP/APP): Britain's annual inflation rate rose more than expected in December, official data showed Wednesday, reinforcing expectations that the Bank of England will hold off on cutting interest rates next month.

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose to 3.4 percent in December, compared to 3.2 percent in November, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. The analysts' consensus forecast had been for inflation of 3.3 percent.

However, price pressures are widely expected

to ease in 2026, with inflation set to move closer to the Bank of England's two-percent target. The ONS attributed December's rise to higher tobacco prices, airfares and food costs. Along with weak unemployment figures and some recent positivity on the economic growth front, the inflation numbers will be used by the BoE to determine its next moves on interest rates.

Official data released Tuesday showed unemployment remained at 5.1 percent, a near five-year high, at the end of last year.

Uganda president's son and possible heir threatens opposition leader

NAIROBI (AFP/APP): Uganda's army chief, who is the son of newly re-elected President Yoweri Museveni, threatened Tuesday to hunt down and kill opposition leader Bobi Wine, who is in hiding after losing last week's election.

General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, 51, has made no secret of his desire to succeed his father, who was declared winner of a seventh term as president on Saturday at the age of 81 in a vote declared a "sham" by the opposition.

Kainerugaba, who is typically referred to by his first name in Uganda, was unusually quiet during the electoral campaign but returned to his habitually provocative online postings soon after the results.

"We have killed 22 NUP terrorists since last week," Kainerugaba wrote on X, referring to the opposition National Unity Platform, led by Wine, the singer-turned-politician who came second in the ballot.

"I'm praying the 23rd is Kabobi," he added, using his nickname for the opposition leader.

Wine has gone into hiding since the vote, accusing the security forces of raiding his home and attempting to capture him. His whereabouts have been unknown since Saturday.

"I'm giving him exactly 48 hours to surrender himself to the Police," Kainerugaba wrote.

Israeli fire kills 11 Palestinians in Gaza, including two children, local hospital officials say

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Israeli forces on Wednesday killed at least 11 Palestinians in Gaza, including two 13-year-old boys who were collecting firewood, three journalists and a woman, hospitals in the war-battered enclave said.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on any of the incidents.

The two boys were killed in separate incidents. In one strike, the 13-year-old, his father and a 22-year-old man were hit by Israeli drones on the eastern side of the central Bureij refugee camp, according to officials from Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central town of Deir Al-Balah, which received the bodies.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the men had crossed into Israeli-controlled areas.

The other 13-year-old was shot and killed by troops while collecting firewood in the eastern town of Bani Suheila, the Nasser hospital said, after receiving the body. In a footage circulated online, the boy's father is seen weeping over his son's body on a hospital bed.

Later Wednesday, an Israeli strike on the central town of Zahraa hit a vehicle carrying three Palestinian journalists who were filming a newly established displacement camp managed by an Egyptian government committee, said Mohammed Mansour, the committee's spokesman.

Turkiye's Erdogan says Kurdish forces in Syria must lay down arms and disband now

Monitoring Desk
ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday that Kurdish forces in northern Syria must lay down weapons and disband now to avoid further bloodshed, after Damascus struck a ceasefire with the group and gave them four days to agree on integrating into the central state.

Syria's Turkiye-backed government forces seized swathes of territory from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeast Syria this week, as part of President Ahmed Al-Sharaa's efforts to bring all the country under central government authority.

The United States, the group's main ally, said its wish for the group had in nature since the emergence of the new government in Damascus, and urged Kurdish fighters to integrate into Syria's state apparatus.

Turkiye views the SDF as a terrorist organization linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group. It has been engaged in a peace process with the PKK for months and says the group—and its extensions—must disband and disarm.

Speaking members of his AK Party parliament, Erdogan said Turkiye welcomed 's ceasefire agreement between the SDF and Damascus, adding hoped the group's "full integration" would herald a new era in Syria.

"Our hope is for this issue to be solved permanently without any more bloodshed, for the terrorist organization, which is now stuck in some areas in northern Syria, to lay down its weapons, disband, and for there to be no more conflict," he said.

Laying down weapons is the only way out, he added, and any provocation would be a "suicide attempt."

North produces enough nuclear material a year for 10-20 weapons: S. Korea president

SEOUL (AFP/APP): North Korea is producing enough nuclear material a year for up to 20 weapons, South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung said on Wednesday.

"Even now, nuclear materials sufficient to produce 10 to 20 nuclear weapons a year are still being produced" in North Korea, Lee told reporters at a New Year news conference.

At the same time, the North is continuing to improve its long-range ballistic missile technology aimed at striking the US mainland, Lee added.

"At some point, North Korea will have secured the nuclear arsenal it believes it needs to sustain the regime, along with ICBM capabilities capable of threatening not only the United States but the wider world," he said, referring to intercontinental ballistic missiles.

"And once there is excess, it will go abroad—beyond its borders. A global danger will then emerge," he said.

The suspension of nuclear material production and ICBM development, as well as a halt to overseas exports, would also be a gain," he said.

"It would be a gain for everyone," he added, noting that he had laid out the argument to both US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

Since his inauguration in June, Lee has pushed for dialogue with the North without preconditions, a stark departure from the hawkish approach of his predecessor.

But Pyongyang has not responded to his overtures and recently accused South Korea of flying a drone into the border city of Kaesong.

Lee's office has denied it was behind the incursion but alluded it might have been carried out by civilians.

AI reshaping the battle over the narrative of Maduro's US capture

CARACAS (AFP/APP): Since the US captured Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro in early January, pictures and videos chronicling the events have been crowded out by those generated with artificial intelligence, blurring the lines between fiction and reality.

The endless stream of content ranges from comedic memes to dramatic retellings.

In one, a courtroom illustration of Maduro in a New York courthouse springs to life and announces: "I consider myself a prisoner of war."

In another, an AI-generated Maduro attempts to escape a US prison through an air duct, only to find himself in a courtroom with US President Donald Trump, where they dance with a judge and an FBI agent to a song by American rapper Ice Spice.

Maduro was captured alongside his wife Cilia Flores during US strikes in Caracas on January 3.

They have since been taken to a prison in New

said. A pragmatic approach was needed in addressing North Korea's nuclear issue, he said.

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Najwa Al-Rajoudi, mourns over the body of her nephew Moussa Al-Rajoudi during his funeral at Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, after he was killed in an Israeli fire.

Hong Kong ferry disaster ruled 'unlawful killing' after 13 years

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): A Hong Kong ferry collision in which 39 people died more than a decade ago was an unlawful killing, according to a long-awaited court ruling on Wednesday.

The Lamma IV ferry sank after colliding with another vessel on October 1, 2012, killing 31 adults and eight children in what became the Chinese city's deadliest maritime disaster since 1971. A judge-led commission later found "a litany of errors" related to the Lamma IV, including a missing bulkhead door, which contributed to the ferry sinking within two minutes.

The coroner's court held an inquest last year following a lawsuit brought by victim representatives.

Coroner Monica Chow said on Wednesday

that the crash happened because of gross negligence by the coxswain from each vessel. "I find each of the 39 deceased was killed unlawfully," she said.

Both coxswains were jailed in 2015 as part of a criminal case and completed their sentences years ago.

Coroners in Hong Kong look into the cause and circumstances of death but have no authority to punish culprits. The inquest spanned more than 40 days and called 84 witnesses, including those responsible for designing, building and certifying the Lamma IV.

Chow only delivered part of her ruling and will continue on Thursday. Some of the coroner's remarks proved divisive among the victims' families.

Alice Leung, who lost her brother in the tragedy,

Norway will not participate in Trump's 'Board of Peace': PM's office

OSLO (AFP/APP): Norway's government said Wednesday it would not join the "Board of Peace" initiated by US President Donald Trump, who has vented his frustration at the Nordic country after being snubbed for the Nobel Peace Prize.

"The American proposal raises a number of questions" requiring "further dialogue with the United States", State Secretary Kristoffer Thoner said in a statement.

"Norway will therefore not join the proposed arrangements for the Board of Peace, and will therefore not attend a signing ceremony in Davos," Thoner said. Norway would continue its close cooperation with the United States, he added. Trump's Board of Peace was originally conceived to oversee the rebuilding of Gaza.

One dead, four seriously injured in train accident near Barcelona

BARCELONA (AFP/APP): One person died and four were seriously injured after a train near Barcelona ploughed into the rubble of a collapsed wall on Tuesday, firefighters said.

Spain's second deadly rail accident in days. The latest incident is likely to raise more questions about Spanish rail safety after the collision of two high-speed trains in the southern region of Andalusia on Sunday killed 42 people and injured more than 120. On Tuesday, "a retaining wall collapsed onto the tracks, causing an accident involving a passenger train" in the municipality of Gelida, around 40 kilometres (25 miles) west of Barcelona, the northeastern Catalonia region's civil protection agency posted on social media.

President of Uzbekistan holds meeting with Prime Minister of Italy

TASHKENT (Uza/APP): In the city of Tashkent, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev met with the Prime Minister of the Italian Republic Giorgia Meloni, who made a stopover in Tashkent. Practical aspects of strengthening the strategic partnership and expanding multifaceted cooperation between Uzbekistan and Italy were reviewed.

The consistent implementation of agreements reached at the highest level in the city of Samarkand in May 2025 was noted with satisfaction. Active contacts at various levels are continuing. Bilateral trade turnover and the number of joint ventures grow steadily. Interregional exchanges, including with Lombardy, are expanding. Quotas have been allocated for the organized labor migration of Uzbekistan citizens.

Large-scale industrial

cooperation projects are being implemented in partnership with companies such as Finopera, ANCI, Pietro Fiorentini, Danieli, and others. At the end of last year, a branch of the University of Tuscia was opened in Samarkand.

This year, meetings of the strategic dialogue between the foreign ministries and the intergovernmental commission, as well as the second Forum of Rectors, are scheduled. Priority attention was given to promoting joint projects in the textile industry, geology, energy, chemicals, construction materials, financial market, and other priority sectors. An agreement was reached to hold the cross-cultural Days of Uzbek and Italian Cinema. Plans were supported for Uzbekistan's participation in the next Venice Biennale and for holding exhibitions of applied arts and artifacts in Milan this year.



People visit the memorial for former prime minister Shinzo Abe in Nara, Nara Prefecture shows people.

India's weaponisation of water: Pak sounds alarm at UN over water security crisis

NEW YORK (INP): Pakistan has warned that India's unilateral decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in abeyance has created an unprecedented crisis for Pakistan's water security and regional stability.

Calling the move a deliberate "weaponisation of water," Pakistan's representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, said India's actions amounted to material breaches of the landmark 1960 treaty.

Speaking at the Global Water Bankruptcy Policy Roundtable hosted by Canada and the United Nations University on Tuesday, Ambassador Jadoon said that since April last year, India had committed several serious violations of the treaty, including unannounced disruptions of downstream water flows and the withholding of critical hydrological data. "Pakistan's position

is unequivocal; the treaty remains legally intact and permits no unilateral suspension or modification," he said.

He stressed that for more than six decades, the Indus Waters Treaty had provided a time-tested framework for the equitable and predictable management of the Indus River basin, which sustains one of the world's largest contiguous irrigation systems.

The basin, he noted, provides over 80 percent of Pakistan's agricultural water needs and supports the lives and livelihoods of more than 240 million people. Ambassador Jadoon said water insecurity had emerged globally as a systemic risk, affecting food production, energy systems, public health, livelihoods, and human security.

"For Pakistan, this is a lived reality," he said, describing the country as a semi-arid, climate-vulnerable, lower-riparian state

facing floods, droughts, accelerated glacier melt, groundwater depletion, and rapid population growth — all of which are placing immense pressure on already stressed water systems.

Highlighting Pakistan's response, he said the country was strengthening water resilience through integrated planning, flood protection, irrigation rehabilitation, groundwater replenishment, and ecosystem restoration.

He cited initiatives such as 'Living Indus' and 'Recharge Pakistan' as key national efforts. However, he emphasized that systemic water risks could not be managed by any country in isolation, particularly in shared river basins.

Predictability, transparency, and cooperation in transboundary water governance, he said, were matters of survival for downstream populations.



DAVOS: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Ms. Kristalina Georgieva on the sidelines of 56th Annual meeting of the World Economic Forum.

Talal rejects allegations of non-responsiveness

ISLAMABAD (APP): State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry told the National Assembly on Wednesday that his attendance in the House and parliamentary committees ranged between 100 to 110 per cent, rejecting allegations of non-responsiveness or non-compliance.

Speaking on a point of order, he said no member of the National Assembly or Senate could claim that replies were not provided or that standing committees were ignored.

He said heads of departments regularly attended committee meetings and full compliance was ensured.

Referring to concerns about detained individuals in Rawalpindi, the minister said he had personally spoken to senior police officials and was informed that no Pakistani children were being held.

He said a list of seven individuals was under review and the verification process was expected to be completed the same day, after which verified Pakistani nationals would be released.

On the issue of Afghan nationals in Pakistan, Talal Chaudhry said he had discussed the matter with

Sheryar Afridi and clarified that the process was being carried out in accordance with the law.

He cautioned against politicising the issue along provincial or ethnic lines.

He said some Pakistani citizens had attempted, for personal or financial gain, to register Afghan nationals as Pakistani citizens in the national database.

He said Nadra had carried out two major verification drives and penalised the officials involved, and that the process was continuing to ensure Afghan nationals were correctly identified.

The minister said the recent controversy over jail visits was being unnecessarily politicised.

He said organising public gatherings or creating law and order situations inside jails was unacceptable.

He said some inmates in the country had spent decades in prison without receiving as many visits as the current high-profile inmate, who, he said, had already met more than 850 people, including family members, political leaders and lawyers. He said the inmate also had access to separate medical facilities.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzaib Khan Kakar presides over the meeting to review preparation of concept papers of development projects.

IGP Balochistan announces rewards for officers' outstanding performance

QUETTA (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Balochistan Muhammad Tahir has announced commendation certificates and cash rewards for police officers and personnel of four districts in recognition of their outstanding performance, particularly in the ongoing anti-narcotics campaign.

According to a spokesperson for Balochistan Police, the announcement was made to acknowledge the effective role played by police formations in Quetta, Khuzdar, Kech, and Panjgur in combating drug-related crimes and strengthening law enforcement efforts in their respective areas.

Under the scheme commendation certificates will be awarded to senior officers, including the DIG Quetta and the SSPs of Khuzdar, Kech, and Panjgur.

The spokesperson said that the cash rewards had been allocated for subordinate officers and personnel who contributed to successful operations.

The spokesperson said that Rs250,000 has been allocated for police personnel in Quetta district, Rs200,000 for Khuzdar district, Rs150,000 for Kech district, and Rs100,000 for Panjgur district. IGP Muhammad Tahir praised the dedication, professionalism, and commitment of the police force, stating that such incentives are aimed at boosting morale and encouraging officers to continue their efforts against narcotics and other crimes.

He reaffirmed that the Balochistan Police will continue to take firm action to ensure public safety and uphold the rule of law across the province.

Musadik Malik reviews environment related projects in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): To review various ongoing environmental projects in Sindh, the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik jointly chaired a meeting with Sindh Minister for Planning and Development, Jam Khan Shoro on Wednesday.

The meeting, attended by World Bank representatives, Chairman P&D Board Najam Ahmed Shah, senior officials from environment and other relevant departments reviewed in detail matters regarding Pak Flow project, transforming Carbon Finance and carbon emission reduction, said a statement issued here.

Federal Minister Dr. Musadik Malik appreciated the Sindh government for taking effective measures in environmental projects, particularly in the promotion of mangroves and the carbon credit sector. These projects will not only contribute to environmental protection but will also benefit the national economy, he added.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti in a group photo with Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq during her visit to Quetta.

CM Bugti vows unrelenting drive to eradicate polio across Balochistan

Senator Ayesha lauded the serious efforts of the Balochistan govt to improve anti-polio campaign & routine immunization coverage

Independent Report

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has reaffirmed the provincial government's unwavering commitment to eliminating polio, emphasizing that the campaign is treated as a national priority and pursued with full seriousness. He highlighted that protecting children from the debilitating disease remains at the forefront of government initiatives, with security measures, monitoring, public awareness, and the health system coordinated to ensure comprehensive coverage.

The chief minister expressed these views

during a meeting with the Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq, who visited Quetta on Wednesday. National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Coordinator Anwar-ul-Haq and Provincial EOC Coordinator Inam-ul-Haq also participated in the discussions.

The meeting provided a platform for both sides to review strategies for strengthening and co-ordinating the anti-polio campaign in Balochistan, enhancing routine immunization coverage, and addressing critical operational challenges on the ground.

Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq praised the provincial government's dedicated efforts under Chief Minister Bugti's leadership, noting that a unified strategy and effective field operations have begun to yield positive outcomes. She emphasized that robust collaboration between federal and provincial authorities is essential for achieving full polio eradication and confirmed that this partnership would continue to be reinforced.

Chief Minister Bugti stressed that expanding routine immunization alongside polio eradication is crucial to building a resilient health system.

PM informs MD IMF on improving macro-economic indicators, reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Wednesday, apprised Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Kristalina Georgieva of Pakistan's improving macro-economic indicators, stabilization efforts, and progress on structural reforms. He underscored Pakistan's commitment to fiscal discipline, revenue mobilization, and sustainable growth.

The prime minister met the IMF MD in Davos, Switzerland on the sidelines of the 56th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb and Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attallah Tarar.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan addressing the Business Facilitation Centre soft launching ceremony.

Govt of Balochistan launches one-stop business hub to boost investment and employment

Independent Report

QUETTA: Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakil Qadir Khan, has unveiled a strategic initiative aimed at promoting investment and accelerating trade and business activities across the province. Speaking at the soft launch of the Business Facilitation Center at Sikandar Jamali Auditorium, organized by the Balochistan Investment Board, he highlighted that digitization of public services and innovation across government departments are central to improving transparency, efficiency, and governance.

Addressing the province's pressing challenge of unemployment, the chief secretary said the new center will provide investors and entrepreneurs with all necessary services through a single-window system, streamlining procedures and reducing bureaucratic delays. He also proposed expanding the initiative to divisional headquarters to further enhance accessibility for business stakeholders.

Balochistan Investment Board Vice Chairman Bilal Khan Kakar emphasized that the center reflects Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz

Bugti's vision of positioning the province as a business-friendly hub. He noted that the board has prioritized attracting investment projects since assuming office a year ago, generating encouraging results.

CEO of the Balochistan Investment Board, Qaim Lashari, briefed attendees on the center's objectives, explaining that the one-window platform is designed to simplify regulatory processes, remove governmental bottlenecks, and modernize the Ease of Doing Business framework to attract investment.

Peace cannot be established at gunpoint, Hafiz Naeem

Says the ongoing displacement of patriotic residents of KP & adjoining tribal districts must be stopped

Independent Report

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Engineer Hafiz Naeem Rehman, has said that the ongoing displacement of patriotic residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the adjoining tribal districts as a result of repeated military operations must be stopped.

He stated that problems can never have a lasting solution through the use of force, and that the government should try to resolve issues through dialogue. Before launching any new military operation, previous operations should be reviewed and the nation should be informed.



QUETTA: Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq and Provincial Minister for Health Bakht Muhammad Kakar being briefed by Provincial Secretary Health Mubeen Rehman Panezai regarding Health Leadership Conference 2026.

Govt to focus on relief for salaried class in coming budget

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed that no mini budget will be introduced this fiscal as the government works on a comprehensive budget strategy for the next financial year focusing on relief for the salaried class and industrial sector.

Official sources on Wednesday told media that the government would attempt to bridge the tax shortfall through enhanced revenue collection rather than imposing new taxes. Efforts would be made to persuade the IMF to agree to no additional taxes during the remaining period of the current fiscal year, they added. According to the sources alternative measures would be adopted to

increase tax revenues while efforts to curb smuggling would be intensified. Action against tax evaders and non-filers would continue, with the Federal Board of Revenue stepping up enforcement. A special wing of the FBR has been auditing non-filers who display lavish lifestyles on social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Covert operations are reportedly underway to collect data and take action against such individuals, they continued.

Work has begun on the directive of prime minister on providing relief to the salaried class, and a strategy is being formulated for inclusion in the upcoming federal budget.



BEIJING: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq meets Chairman Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Mr. Wang Huning, in Beijing, China.

Implementation of agreement with JAAC foremost priority of government: AJK PM

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, has reiterated his government's commitment to address public grievances and further strengthening the ties between the people of Kashmir and Pakistan.

Addressing a large public gathering in his native constituency Haveli on Wednesday, the prime minister highlighted his close bond with the people of Haveli, stating that this relationship is not merely political but a deep, inherited connection that will continue to grow stronger with the passage of time.

He said that the present government is making sincere efforts to ensure the implementation of the recently signed agreement with the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC).

He added that during his meetings with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, he made it clear that the implementation of this agreement would be the foremost priority of his government.



QUETTA: Grand Alliance Balochistan Central President AbdulQuddus Kakar and members arrested by police officers in Quetta protest.

Pakistan on path to growth, stability & prosperity: Danyal

RAWALPINDI (APP): Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry said on Wednesday that Pakistan had moved past severe economic difficulties, negative propaganda and fears of default, and was now firmly on the path of growth, stability and improvement. He said improving economic indicators, better overall performance and rising confidence were clear signs that the country was heading in the right direction and that the coming period would bring greater prosperity.

Addressing a furniture exhibition ceremony here, Barrister Danyal said there was a time when the opposition claimed the country would default within 20 to 48 hours, but it had instead emerged as an example of economic recovery and stability.

He said prudent government policies had resulted in a marked reduction in inflation and helped put the economy back on its feet. He expressed confidence that Pakistan would eventually exit the International Monetary Fund programme, which would, he added, automatically strengthen the economy and provide tangible relief to the public. The parliamentary secretary said controlling inflation, fiscal deficits and other economic challenges over the past few years was a major achievement of the government.

He said Rawalpindi had always played a central role in Pakistan's economy, adding that the local trader community had consistently stood at the forefront during difficult times for the country.