

# Independent

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## Pak, UAE Presidents discuss measures to strengthen ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari and Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Wednesday, discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral relations, with a focus on expanding economic, trade and investment cooperation between Pakistan and the UAE.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen the brotherly relations between Pakistan and the UAE and expressed satisfaction over the positive trajectory of bilateral ties.

During a meeting at Zabeel Palace, Dubai, President Zardari congratulated Sheikh Mohammed bin

Rashid Al Maktoum, on two decades of leadership as Ruler of Dubai and commended Dubai's remarkable transformation into a global centre for tourism, finance and emerging technologies.

Both sides exchanged views on benefiting from Dubai's development experience, particularly in ports, logistics, infrastructure, information technology and digital financial services, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by First Lady, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Pakistan's Ambassador to the UAE.

They also highlighted the valuable contribution of the Pakistani community in the UAE in strengthening people-to-people links.



ISLAMABAD: President Global Development Gates Foundation Dr Chris Elias along with delegation calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Info Minister urges opposition to offer solutions, not rhetoric

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday called on the opposition to adopt a solution-oriented approach, urging them to move beyond point scoring and criticism by presenting constructive alternatives.

Speaking at the oath-taking ceremony of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Assembly, flanked by Prime Minister's Coordinator for Information on

## Finance Minister, German envoy discuss bilateral relations

ISLAMABAD (INP): German Ambassador to Pakistan Ms Ina Lapel called on Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in Islamabad on Wednesday and discussed bilateral relations.

Both the sides underscored the importance of sustained engagement to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, and development. They reaffirmed their shared commitment to deepening economic ties and promoting a stable, transparent, and predictable business environment that supports long-term growth. The Federal Minister outlined the Government's broad economic outlook and reform priorities, emphasizing the importance of macroeconomic stability, fiscal sustainability, and competitiveness-led growth.

**Askar Khan appointed as DGPR Balochistan**  
Independent Report  
QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan on Monday ordered the transfer and posting of senior officers in the interest of public service with immediate effect.

According to a notification issued by the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD), Mr. Askar Khan (BS-19), who was serving at the disposal of the Chief Minister Secretariat, has been appointed as Director General, Public Relations Balochistan, replacing Mr. Muhammad Noor Khetran has been transferred and posted as Temporary Member, Chief Minister's Inspection Team against an existing vacancy.



KP Affairs Ikhtiar Wali Khan, he said one province continues to lag behind due to narrative-driven politics.

He stressed the need to replicate modern facilities such as forensic labs and crime control departments developed under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, lamenting that poli-

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## Pak tightens border surveillance over Nipah virus threat

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has ordered strict and enhanced health surveillance at all entry points following regional alerts over the Nipah virus, a highly fatal zoonotic disease, the government said.

Nipah is classified as a priority pathogen by the World Health Organisation because of its ability to spark fast-moving outbreaks, its fatality rate of 40% to 75%, and the fact that there is no approved vaccine or cure.

The virus, carried by fruit bats and animals such as pigs, can trigger a deadly brain-swelling fever in humans and can also spread directly from person to

person through close contact. Several vaccines are in development but remain in testing. In an advisory issued by Border Health Services-Pakistan under the Ministry of National Health Services, authorities cited reports of suspected Nipah virus cases in India's West Bengal state and warned of the virus's potential for cross-border transmission. "In view of the recent regional alert regarding Nipah Virus (NiV)... and considering the high case fatality rate, zoonotic nature, and potential for human-to-human transmission, it has become imperative to further strengthen preventive and surveillance measures.

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QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan presides over the meeting to review preparation of PSDP 2026-27.



DUBAI: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai.

## Crime rate in Quetta drops by 70% in two months: CM Bugti

### Govt tightens grip on security and surveillance

#### Independent Report

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has announced a substantial improvement in the law and order situation in Quetta, attributing the progress to a focused government strategy and sustained efforts by law enforcement agencies, which have resulted in a sharp reduction in criminal activity across the city.

In a message posted on social media platform X, the Chief Minister disclosed that crime in Quetta has declined by as much as 70 percent during the last two months. He described the decrease as concrete proof that the provincial government's policies and security initiatives are yielding tangible results.



ISLAMABAD: Acting President, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi.

## Balochistan Govt working on policy for socio-economic prosperity of youth: Meena

3-Day policy dialogue on topic of "Countering Violent Extremism" held by Balochistan Home Dept

#### QUETTA (APP):

Provincial Adviser on Sports and Youth Affairs Meena Majeed Wednesday said that the government of Balochistan under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti is working on a youth policy for the socio-economic prosperity of the youth, for which important projects like the Youth Socio-Economic Development Program have been launched.

Continued on page 2

## Court issues non-bailable arrest warrants against KP CM Sohail Afridi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The District & Sessions Court of Islamabad on Wednesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi in a case related to allegations against state institutions.

The court also directed authorities to arrest him and present him before the court, citing his failure to appear during proceedings. Senior Civil Judge Abbas Shah presided over

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## Govt taking practical steps to eradicate polio disease from Pakistan: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday emphasized that the government was taking practical steps through a comprehensive strategy and an effective team to completely eliminate Polio disease from Pakistan at the earliest.

He was talking to President Global Development Gates Foundation Dr. Chris Elias who along with his delegation called on him at the PM House.

The prime minister expressed the government's resolve that Pakistan will continue its efforts, with the support of trusted partners like the Gates Foundation, until the complete eradication of polio from the country.

"The invaluable services of Bill Gates for the eradication of polio from Pakistan will always be remembered," he said adding Pakistan was deeply grateful for the cooperation of Bill Gates and brotherly Muslim countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, in efforts

to eradicate polio.

Despite significant success in the ongoing fight against the disease, the prime minister noted that further urgent measures were indispensable.

He said the federal government was working in full coordination with the provinces to ensure access for polio teams across the country adding that relevant projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the anti-polio campaign will be continued.

The prime minister also directed the federal health ministry to formulate recommendations, in coordination with all relevant institutions, for public awareness and the supply of vaccines related to polio eradication.

Gates Foundation President for Global Development Chris Elias said the Foundation highly appreciates the prime minister's personal attention to polio eradication and the effective practical measures taken in

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ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Australia Timothy Kane called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

## Pakistan among 26 countries named founding members of Trump's 'Board of Peace'

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Trump administration's newly formed "Board of Peace" on Wednesday announced 26 countries designated as founding members of the initiative, including Pakistan.

A week after United States President Donald Trump formally introduced the "Board of Peace" at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the body launched an official account on US social media company X.

"The Board of Peace welcomes Pakistan as a founding member of our growing international organisation," said a welcome post on X.

The list of founding members includes Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Albania, Bahrain, Belarus,

## Two Pakistan Navy officers promoted to the rank of rear admiral

ISLAMABAD (PR): Two Commodores of Pakistan Navy have been promoted



Rear Admiral Javed Zia SI (M) and Rear Admiral Armanagh Ahmad SI (M)

commissioned in Marine Engineering Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1994. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore and National Defense University Islamabad. He did his Master of Science in Manufacturing Systems Engineering & Management from NUST. The officer has an illustrious service career with vast experience of serving on key appointments. He is currently serving as Managing Director Dockyard (Karachi).

In recognition of their meritorious services, the Flag Officers have been awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military).

**Pakistan-Australia T20 series trophy unveiled**

**Pak all set for Australia challenge  
as T20I series begins on Thursday**

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan will lock horns with Australia in the three match T20I series at the Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore as the visitors return to the country after last year's ICC Champions Trophy 2025. The three T20Is will take place on 29, 31 January and 1 February. The first ball will be bowled at 4pm PKT in all games with the coin toss set to take place at 3.30pm. Australia's 17-member squad arrived in Pakistan on Wednesday led by Mitchell Marsh. Among the players Jack Edwards, Josh Philippe, Mahli Beardman, Matthew Kuhnenmann and Xavier Bartlett are visiting Pakistan for the first time. Beardman and Edwards are uncapped at the international level.

Pakistan's 16-member squad convened in Lahore on 25 January and have prepared for the T20I series with training sessions and a solitary scenario-based T20 match on Monday.

Babar Azam—the leading run-scorer in T20I history—and Shaheen Shah Afridi—the second-leading wicket-taker in T20Is for Pakistan—return to Pakistan squad after missing the Sri Lanka series earlier in January.

On the bilateral front, the two teams have faced each other 28 times in T20Is since their first contest at Johannesburg on 18 September, 2007. Pakistan have won 12, while Australia hold the edge with 14 wins including one at the Gaddafi Stadium in April 2022. The two teams have faced off in nine bilateral series, four of which comprised of one off T20I. Pakistan have won in 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2018. Australia have secured series wins on five occasions against Pakistan.

Salman Ali Agha, Pakistan captain:

"We have prepared really well for this series in the previous 10 days. There are no weak opponents in T20 cricket and our focus is on executing our plans and playing smart, quality cricket."

Having the experienced and senior players in the group is vital, it makes a big difference when you are trying to win a series."

Mitchell Marsh, Australia captain:

"I'm really excited to be here as this series is ideal preparation of the World Cup. Pakistan have a great tradition of fast bowling and I'm looking forward to facing Shaheen Shah Afridi."

"Winning away from home is always tough, especially in these conditions, but that's exactly what makes it a great challenge."

Player support personnel:

Naveed Akram Cheema (team manager), Mike Hesson (head coach), Ashley Noffke (bowling coach), Shane McDermott (fielding coach), Hanif Malik (batting coach), Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist), Grant Lunden (strength and conditioning coach), Talha Ejaz (performance analyst), Syed Naeem Ahmed (media manager), Lt. Col. ® Usman Anwari (security manager), Dr. Wajid Ali Rafai (team doctor), Dr. Raheeb Karim (psychiatrist) and Muhammad Ehsan (masseur) Australia squad:

Mitchell Marsh ©, Adam Zampa, Ben Dwarshuis, Cameron Green, Cooper Connolly, Jack Edwards, Josh Inglis, Josh Philippe, Mahli Beardman, Marcus Stoinis.

**Balochistan..**

*Continued from page 1*

The Home Department of the Government of Balochistan organized a three-day policy dialogue attended by

DIG CTD Aitzaz Ahmed Goraya, Chief Coordination Officer CVE Dr. Dost Muhammad Baraech, Dr. Asmatullah, Israr Ahmad Madani, Iftikhar Firdous, Fahad Nabil and other participants.

The adviser said that the youth of Balochistan are very talented, keeping in mind their capabilities, the Balochistan government is providing them with regular training and by training them, 30,000 youth are being provided with employment opportunities in other countries. She said, "In addition, digital training will be provided to the youth and laptops will be given to them, so that they can become online workers sitting at home."

Commenting on the state of politics, he said discourse has turned into a "cicus," with little focus on long-term policy. He contrasted today's rhetoric-driven politics with earlier development-oriented policies led by feudal lords, recalling that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif entered politics as finance minister in 1985 before becoming chief minister, where he prioritized health and education.

He also recalled that in

**CORRIGENDUM/AMENDMENT**

Pursuant to INT AB NO. 736/20-1-2026 published in daily newspapers on 21-01-2026. The necessary amendment/corrugendum in Evaluation Criteria & condition of contract for work bearing TSE-252601940843 and TSE-252601953293 is hereby made. The others remain same.

**PBF announces second phase of National Boxing Talent Hunt Program**

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Boxing Federation (PBF), in collaboration with the Pakistan Army, has announced the launch of the second phase of the National Boxing Talent Hunt Program, with Inter-Divisional competitions set to begin from January 30 across the country.

According to PBF President Lieutenant Colonel ® Nasir Ijaz Tung, the first phase of the nationwide initiative—conducted at the district level—has been successfully completed in three age categories: Under-17, Under-19, and Under-22, for both men and women.

The second phase will feature Inter-Divisional competitions in 24 cities, including Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar, Faisalabad, Islamabad, Makran, Muzaffarabad, and Gilgit-Baltistan. The competitions will run from January 30 to February 3.

Nasir Tung stated that the National Talent Hunt Program is a landmark initiative aimed at identifying hidden boxing talent from every district of Pakistan and nurturing young talent across the country.

**CORRIGENDUM/AMENDMENT**

Pursuant to INT AB NO. 736/20-1-2026 published in daily newspapers on 21-01-2026. The necessary amendment/corrugendum in Evaluation Criteria & condition of contract for work bearing TSE-252601940843 and TSE-252601953293 is hereby made. The others remain same.

**MANAGING DIRECTOR  
LASBELA INDUSTRIAL ESTATES  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

AB No.769/28-1-2026

**CORRIGENDUM**

With reference to Previous PRO No. 3339 dated 20-01-2026, it is hereby notified for the information of all concerned bidders that:

- Evaluation Criteria has been revised/updated (as per amended provisions).
- The last date for submission of the Tender Documents has been extended up to 10-02-2026.

All other terms, conditions, specifications, and information of the tender shall remain unchanged as mentioned in the earlier Notice Inviting tender.

**Executive Engineer  
Public Health Engineering  
Division Jaffarabad**

PRQ No.3512/28-1-2026

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

The Executive Engineer Public Health Engineering Division Killa Saifullah invites sealed rates tenders based on Composite schedule of Rates, 2023, Government of Balochistan from interested Contractor for the works mentioned below:- The Tender fee will be deposit through Green Challan in National Bank of Pakistan under the head of account C0-2725-02.

**S.#** **Name of Work** **E/Cost (M)** **Earnest Money 4%** **Tender Fee** **Time Limit**

1 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI AWAL PATHAK KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601957803

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601957833 1.065 0.043 650 30-05-2026

2 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI BANDAT PATOZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601957863

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601957883 1.065 0.043 650 30-05-2026

3 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI SHEIKHAN GHIRZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601957923

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601958163 1.065 0.043 650 30-05-2026

4 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI SIRKAI KHULGAI UMARZAI IBRAHIMZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601957963

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601958183 1.065 0.043 650 30-05-2026

5 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI KHANO CHINA BADINI KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601957983

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601958223 1.065 0.043 650 30-05-2026

6 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI MALAK KARIM DAD BATOZAI IN KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601958033

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601958293 0.807 0.032 650 30-05-2026

7 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI KHALIFA & NANGA KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601958143

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601958333 0.807 0.032 650 30-05-2026

8 **CONSTRUCTION OF WSS KILLI SHANAL GAT MANZAKAI BATOZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601958173

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601958133 0.807 0.032 650 30-05-2026

9 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI NANISHA FOR TORGHAR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601958203

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601957993 0.773 0.030 650 30-05-2026

10 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI AGHBARGAI MUSLIM BAGH IN KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 4.168 0.168 3000 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601958263

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601957943 0.274 0.011 650 30-05-2026

11 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI MIRAN SHINKAI KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 3.041 0.121 1500 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601958373

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601957913 0.498 0.020 650 30-05-2026

12 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI JAMAT ABAD BATOZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. 2.002 0.080 650 30-05-2026

TSE - 252601958413

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601957993 0.429 0.017 650 30-05-2026

13 **CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI SHINAKI MEROZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH.**

Supply of Pipe TSE - 252601957943 0.859 0.034 650 30-05-2026

The procurement will be carried out in Accordance with Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority rule, 2014. **ELIGIBILITY:** The firm must have valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council in relevant category C-6 or above in relevant discipline and registration with tax authorities i.e. (NTN & Sales Tax Department), where applicable. Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 2 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turn over of at least for Sr No.1 (3,811,880 PKR), Sr.No.2, (4,504,950 PKR), Sr.No.3 (11,782,178 PKR) and Sr.No.4 (3,118,811 PKR). Amount in 2 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm Registration with Pakistan Engineering council (PEC) C-6 and above (Upto 25 million) In Relevant Category And Specialized Code is EE11(i) (Solar), EE11(ii) (Solar Energy), CE10 General Buildings and maintenance **METHOD OF PROCUREMENT:** Single stage- Two Envelope Bidding Procedure.

**BIDDING / TENDER DOCUMENTS:** **Issuance:** The Contractor / Firms can obtain the bidding documents from the address mentioned below on production of green challan from for an amount of Rs.1000/- (Non-refundable) deposited in the head of account C-02706 through Government Treasury / National Bank of Pakistan or can be downloaded from website of BPPRA under TSE Nos. mentioned above against each work, from the date of publication of this invitation on the website of BPPRA. The contractor / firms who obtain bidding documents by downloading them from BPPRA website will also be required to produce deposited green challan from above mentioned fee. Earnest Money as mentioned above should be submitted in the form of bank guarantee or Deposit at Call from a scheduled Bank. **Dead Line of Submission:** The Bidding Documents duly filled and attached with two copies of supporting documents must be delivered in sealed envelopes by hand or through registered mail to the address mentioned below on or before 13-02-2026, at 12:00 PM. **Opening:** The tender document will be open on same day i.e. 13-02-2026, at 1:00 PM, before procurement committee in the presence of contractors or their authorized representatives / agents. **Place of issuance and submission will be:-** Address: Office of the Executive Engineer-Buildings, CWPP&H Department District Kachhi Telephone No: 0832-415585 **E-mail Address:** eng.civilian@gmail.com **Bid validity 90 days**

**Terms and Conditions:** Terms and conditions are mentioned (incorporated) in detail in bidding documents. A Procuring Agency may cancel the bidding process at any time prior to acceptance of bid or proposal, as per provision in BPPRA, rule 2014. **Note:** It may be noted that no Pay Order will be accepted/Entertained and firm's complete Title/Name should be written on the Call Deposit. Only original contractors / authorized representatives are allowed to participate in the tender's un-authorized representative will not be allowed.

**TENDER DOCUMENTS:** From the date of publication of NIT to 13 February, 2026 during office hours on working days **LAST DATE OF BID SUBMISSION:** The Tenders must be submitted latest by 13 February, 2026 till 11:00 AM. **TENDER OPENING:** All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under signed at 12:00 PM. **PM ADDRESS:** Chief Officer District Council Barkhan Phone No. 0333-6497412 **Email:** muhammadkhettrana@gmail.com

## Asghar champions education, introduces solar facility for Turbat School Library

### Independent Report

TURBAT: Parliamentary Secretary for Energy, Mir Asghar Rind, has highlighted the pivotal role of education in shaping a prosperous future, stressing that the government is committed to providing comprehensive support and facilities to educational institutions.

During his visit to Liaquat English Public School in Seri Kohan, Turbat, the school admin-

istration welcomed him and provided a detailed briefing on ongoing academic activities. Mir Asghar Rind commended the school for delivering quality education and maintaining an organized academic system that benefits students.

He also inspected the Mir Akbar Ali Public Library within the school, praising its efforts in fostering reading habits and intellectual development among young learners. Dur-

ing the visit, he announced the installation of a solar system for the library to ensure uninterrupted educational and reading activities, addressing challenges posed by energy shortages.

School Principal Mehrab Taj expressed gratitude to Mir Asghar Rind, noting that the solar system would significantly enhance the school's facilities and contribute to an improved learning environment for students.



HUB: Parliamentary Secretary for Culture, Tourism and Parliamentary Affairs Nawabzada Zareen Khan Magsi participating in the grand joining ceremony.

## Quetta-Ziarat roads reopened after heavy snow, timely rescue operations avert disasters

### Independent Report

ZIARAT: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Quddus Achakzai has reported the successful clearance of major roads in Ziarat district following a severe snowstorm earlier this week, commending PDMA and district teams for their rapid response that prevented casualties and ensured safe passage.

At a press briefing held at the DC Office, attended by PDMA Director Naveed Ahmed, Assistant Commissioner Sajad Rehman, and FC Captain Muhammad Arif, the deputy commissioner detailed the impact of the snowfall. He noted that while the first spell brought light snow, the subsequent storm resulted in heavy ac-

cumulation, blocking roads and disrupting travel across key routes.

Under directives from the Chief Minister, PDMA deployed heavy machinery that enabled coordinated efforts by the district administration, C&W, and other relevant departments to reopen critical highways. Several tourists stranded at Loraili Top were safely rescued, averting any damage to life or property.

Key routes cleared included the Quetta-Loraili Top-Ziarat Road, Ziarat-Sanji Road (Kotal and Chotir sections), and Quaid-e-Azam Residency Road. Snowremoval operations relied on machinery from PDMA and line departments, supplemented by strategic salting at vul-

nerable points to maintain road safety.

Deputy Commissioner Achakzai praised the collective efforts of PDMA Director Naveed Ahmed, Relief Officer Samiullah, FC personnel, assistant commissioners, tehsildars, and district staff for their prompt and coordinated action.

He confirmed that all roads have been reopened and assured that the administration will continue to provide full support and relief during the winter season.

Snowfall measurements indicated approximately 18 inches in Ziarat city, with Kotal and Chotir areas on the Ziarat-Sanji Road receiving around 24 inches.



GWADAR: MPA Gwadar Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman and Director General GDA MOin ur Rehman visiting various development projects after rehabilitation of Old Town.

## BSDI projects Musakhel pushes ahead with development, DC ensures speed and transparency

### Independent Report

MUSAKHEL: Deputy Commissioner Musakhel Abdul Razaz Khajak has directed accelerated and fully transparent execution of development initiatives under the Balochistan Special Development Initiative (BSDI), emphasizing prompt payments and professional tendering practices.

During a detailed review meeting, officials and engineers updated the DC on the technical and administrative progress of Phase One projects. Colonel Irfan of the 67 Wing Zohb Militia joined the session via

video link. The Deputy Commissioner observed that most Phase One schemes are nearing completion and instructed engineers to ensure immediate clearance of bills for contractors whose work has been completed or is close to completion, stressing that verified work must be paid for without delay.

Regarding Phase Two, Abdul Razaz Khajak announced the formal approval of new projects and urged officials to focus on completing all documentation and tendering procedures to enable the prompt start of physical work.



QUETTA: Assistant Commissioner Saddr Quetta Captain (retd) Hamza Anjum inspecting the gas pressure at Marriabad on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Quetta

## Bitter cold tightens its grip on Balochistan as northern regions remain in deep freeze

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The cold wave continues to dominate weather conditions across Balochistan, with particularly harsh and freezing temperatures persisting in the northern and northwestern districts, according to the Regional Meteorological Centre Balochistan.

Meteorologists said

cold and dry weather is ex-

pected to prevail in most parts of the province on Wednesday, while severe cold conditions will remain entrenched in the northern and northwestern areas.

Similar weather patterns are forecast to continue on Thursday, with no immediate relief from the intense chill in colder regions.

During the past 24 hours, rainfall was recorded

in several districts. Pishin received 6.0 mm of rain, followed by Quetta city with 2.4 mm, Ziarat with 2.0 mm, Sammungli with 1.0 mm, and Brewery with 0.8 mm. Light rainfall, recorded as trace amounts, was also reported in Muslim Bagh and Noshki. No snowfall was observed anywhere in the province during the same period.

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QUETTA: People from different walks of life meeting with Provincial Minister for Finance Mir Shoaib Noshervani.

### Dr. Gulab says:

## BSE Dept crossed historic milestone in delivery, publication textbooks for academic 2026

QUETTA (APP): Chairman of Balochistan Textbook Board (BTB) Dr. Gulab Khan Khilji on Wednesday said that the Balochistan Secondary Education (BSE) Department has crossed a historic milestone in the delivery and publication of textbooks for the academic year 2026.

He said this while chairing a meeting regarding textbooks for the academic year 2026. The meeting was attended by concerned officials.

He said that more than 85 percent of the textbooks have been successfully completed and delivered from Lahore to Quetta by the Balochistan Textbook Board which, like last year, would be provided free of cost to students in all districts across the province before the scheduled time this year too.

He said that by ensuring complete transparency in the printing tender pro-

cess, a huge saving of about Rs. 1.25 billion has been provided to the provincial treasury.

All these steps were implemented in the light of the vision of Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Khan Bugti and Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Khan Durran and the clear instructions of Secretary Education Department Asfandyar Khan, he mentioned.

He said that in contrast, 11.5 million textbooks were produced in 2025-26 for a mere Rs. 883.1 million, reflecting extraordinary savings.

He noted that according to the data, the publication of books this year was made possible at a cost of 0.65 paisa per page, which is the lowest cost compared to other provinces of the country.

For example, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the same cost was 0.79 paisa per page.

According to the School Directorate, 11.5 million books were demanded for the current academic year, which is 2.2 million more than last year, he explained.



QUETTA: Transporters of Killa Abdullah meeting with Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzaib Khan Kakar about problems they are facing.

## Hub Police achieve landmark success in 2025: crime rate falls, 1,410 suspects arrested

QUETTA (APP): District Police Hub demonstrated outstanding performance in 2025, maintaining law and order, eradicating crime, cracking down on narcotics and illegal weapons, and ensuring the protection of public life and property.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Hub, Syed Fazal Shah Bukhari, while releasing the comprehensive annual performance report, said that a total of 1,247 cases were registered during the year, of which 1,077 were successfully traced through professional policing, intelligence-based operations, and continuous

monitoring.

He said this achievement reflects the police force's firm commitment to safeguarding public life and ensuring the rule of law.

During indiscriminate operations against criminal elements, 1,410 wanted and absconding suspects were arrested, Syed Fazal Shah Bukhari said and adding that these arrests, achieved through coordinated efforts and intelligence sharing, led to a visible decline in the crime rate across the district.

The report highlighted sustained efforts to eliminate narcotics and illegal weapons, with 170 drug-related cases registered in 2025. SSP Bukhari emphasized that protecting the younger generation from narcotics remains a top priority, with a zero-tolerance policy strictly enforced.

Strict measures were taken against illegal arms, with 113 cases registered and 180 accused arrested.

Weapons were recovered from their possession, reflecting police vigilance against threats to public safety. To improve traffic discipline, 733 individuals were fined for violations, generating Rs 584,700 in fines deposited into the national treasury.

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**Prudent stimulus**

By holding the policy interest rate steady while cutting the cash reserve requirement for banks, the State Bank appears to have clearly signalled a significant recalibration of its stance in favour of economic growth.

When a central bank reduces CRR — the amount banks have to maintain with it against their deposits — while keeping the interest rates high, it is implementing a 'tight money, high liquidity' policy. This indicates that it will continue targeting inflation through higher rates while boosting banks' lending capacity by injecting additional liquidity in the system via lower reserve requirements to support growth.

Prima facie, the two actions appear to contradict each other. Indeed, the increase in money supply can push inflation. Yet, the CRR reduction is far less inflationary than a reduction in the rates.

Reserve requirements have been slashed by 100bps to 5pc on an average fortnightly basis and 3pc on a daily basis. This is expected to free up additional funds of Rs300-315bn for banks to lend. The CRR was increased in November 2021 to mop up liquidity from the market amid higher inflation levels. By reverting to the old ratio, the SBP has also indicated its comfort in the inflation outlook.

While average inflation is expected to stay within the target range of 5-7pc, the bank has revised its economic growth projection by half a percentage point to 3.75-4.75pc. Nonetheless, analysts believe that the impact of the relaxation in CRR on credit uptake and growth is likely to remain modest. The decision is unlikely to stimulate private sector demand growth very much, given banks' aversion to risk and subdued private sector demand for expensive credit in a sluggish economy.

That said, the bank's decision to keep the policy rate unchanged at 10.5pc is a sign of its preference for consolidation of recent gains from economic stabilisation, because recovery so far remains fragile and uneven. Despite a better external position, the widening current account deficit of \$1.2bn in the first half of the fiscal year reflects continued weakness in exports. This fragility in recovery is amply explained by external weakness.

Though the current account deficit remains contained within the targeted range of 0-1pc of GDP owing largely to stronger workers' remittances and stable global oil and commodity prices, exports are declining and foreign official and private flows shrinking. Similarly, fiscal vulnerabilities — as highlighted in the growing shortfall in the tax collection target — remain unresolved despite a decreasing interest payment burden on rate reductions.

Likewise, the growth momentum continues to rely on consumption driven by earlier monetary easing and rising remittances rather than productivity gains or competitiveness. In sum, it is better to be safe than sorry.

**Zahid Hussain**

Accountability is an essential component of a democratic and rules-based system. There is no such concept of responsibility under authoritarian rule, which seeks to consolidate power without being subjected to checks and balances. In such a situation, the entire political system is designed to serve the interests of a narrow power elite. Freedom of expression is stifled in the name of national interest.

This is what is happening in this country as the shadows of absolutism lengthen. In an effort to consolidate its power, the hybrid set-up has imposed several draconian laws to curb democratic rights and freedom of expression. The recent conviction of Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her spouse, Hadi Ali Chattha, under the controversial Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), 2016, appears to be a grim reminder that the country is slipping into an Orwellian nightmare.

The two lawyers-cum-human rights activists have been sentenced to a

total of 17 years' rigorous imprisonment for "tweeting and retweeting" some posts deemed by the authorities as seditious. According to the ruling, "The content, including tweets, re-tweets, shared and uploaded by the accused persons, expressed solidarity and support for the pro-scribed organisations".

Mentioning X posts made by Imaan Mazari-Hazir in favour of Mahrang Baloch and the Baloch Yaqjehti Committee, the order noted that several had been re-posted by Hadi Ali Chattha. The two have also been accused of defaming the forces through their posts on social media. They have been charged under antiterrorism laws.

There are questions about the fairness of the trial. According to lawyers, the couple were not given an opportunity to defend themselves. They were arrested when they were on their way to a sessions court for a hearing of the case.

A young firebrand lawyer, Imaan Mazari-Hazir had taken up the cases of missing persons and had raised her voice against state excesses. She

has been fighting for those who have been incarcerated for years without being charged. Though detained previously, clearly, she did not give in to intimidation. The government, whose mandate is widely questioned, seems threatened by any voice of dissent. The couple are the latest in a list of prisoners of conscience.

The ruling set-up has weaponised Peca, which criminalises free comment, dealing a serious blow to whatever little democratic freedom is left. Even the private exchange of messages can be liable for prosecution. Criticism of state institutions is punishable under this draconian law, thus making the state and the government unaccountable.

The situation is such that Peca can be used against those who question the involvement of unelected state circles in politics. The defence minister has defended the hybrid power arrangement. But the question is whether there is any constitutional provision that lends legitimacy to such an arrangement. The political parties, which are part of the cur-

rent set-up and who voted for the draconian laws, had, while in opposition, been critical of those involved in political manipulation and change of government. Now they are happy sharing power with them.

It gets worse, as there is little judicial recourse left after the enforcement of the 26th and 27th constitutional amendments. These controversial amendments have significantly undermined the independence of the superior judiciary, making it an extension of the executive. It has rendered the Constitution virtually ineffective, clearing the way for authoritarianism, which is not constrained by the rule of law or subjected to accountability through strong and independent institutions. Parliament is simply used to rubber-stamp the dictates of those beyond constitutional boundaries.

But all these actions are signs of weakness and insecurity in a system that seeks to earn legitimacy through enforcing laws aimed at silencing dissent. A repressive and authoritarian state loses credibility. It becomes weak, even if it has pow-

erful instruments and agents of coercion. The use of hard power against its own people makes any state weaker. This is the lesson of history that officialdom has refused to learn.

The 27th Amendment grants the president and defence chief lifelong immunity from criminal proceedings; conversely, the rule of law in real democracies requires top state officials to be accountable to the public. Another recent example of the rulers and public representatives trying to make themselves unaccountable is the bill recently passed by the National Assembly, which aims to conceal the assets of lawmakers. All members of parliament are bound by the law to annually declare their assets to the Election Commission of Pakistan, the details of which are put on the election body's website. This was meant to fulfil the requirement of transparency and allow the public access to information about their elected representatives. The practice was seen as part of the accountability ex-

**Road to exiting IMF****Nadeem ul Haque | Shahid Kardar**

Every few months, Pakistani officials and its associated stakeholders return to a familiar, comforting refrain: how Pakistan must 'exit the IMF'. The

confusion is not accidental. Pakistan does not return to the IMF because it lacks ideas or plans. It returns because the design of its economic system systematically produces balance-of-payments crises. IMF dependence is not a technical failure but the predictable outcome of a political economy that rewards rent-seeking, blocks entry, protects incumbents, misprices energy, taxes exports obliquely, and relies on administrative discretion instead of rules. You do not exit the IMF by declaring independence from it. You exit by dismantling the domestic machinery that repeatedly recreates the financing gaps which invite the Fund back into the parlour.

The IMF appears when three conditions converge. First, foreign exchange earnings fail to grow fast enough to close the external gap. Second, fiscal deficits are financed by printing money or unsus-

tainable borrowing. Third, credibility collapses, shutting the country out of global capital markets. Pakistan finds itself in this position repeatedly not because of bad luck or external shocks alone, but because an extractive state apparatus actively suppresses productivity and growth, particularly through trade, by distorting incentives. The result is a structurally weak economy that periodically runs out of foreign exchange and credibility.

The starting point, therefore, is to abandon the illusion of planning.

For decades, Pakistan has treated growth as something that can be engineered through plans, projects, committees and conferences. Strategies are announced, PSDPs approved, monuments built, and targets proclaimed. Meanwhile, the real economy is strangled by a predatory and unfair consolidated tax regime, discretionary permissions, distorted prices, and regulatory sludge, which is manifested in primitive, excessive, opaque regulations applied unevenly, reflecting a deep distrust of markets and an exaggerated belief in the

state's omnipotence. Growth does not emerge from better plans. It occurs when firms can enter, scale, export, hire, and invest without begging for permissions — within a competitive, predictable and rule-based environment. That is where IMF dependence is born, and that is where it must be defeated.

Reform must begin with energy — electricity and gas — because this is where every IMF programme eventually unravels. Pakistan's energy crisis today is not a capacity problem. It is a failure of policy, pricing and governance. Consumers and taxpayers are punished for government inefficiencies through unreliable and unpredictable supply and pricing of energy, steadily eroding state credibility.

The energy sector is neither competitive nor realistically priced. It is governed by a fragmented institutional structure involving nearly two dozen entities operating without integrated coordination.

Policy incoherence (a mix of guaranteed returns, illogical subsidies, and politicised operational decisions) along with weak

management across the supply chain disfigures the tariff structure and shields inefficiency. Distribution companies continue to flounder without accountability for losses, theft, or recoveries. The consequences are entirely predictable: distorted and mispriced consumption, corrupted investment signals, rapid off-grid migration through falling solar costs, and a permanent circular debt that becomes a quasi-fiscal deficit. This eventually resurfaces as inflation, borrowing, or IMF conditionality.

The solution is neither more subsidies nor ad hoc bailouts. It is a rules-based pricing system: transparent, cost-reflective tariffs under a competitive framework, automatic adjustment mechanisms, and enforceable governance contracts that hold utilities accountable. The poor should be protected through direct, targeted cash transfers, not by penalising commercial and industrial activity through pricing distortions that bankrupt the entire system.

Next comes taxation. The structure needs to be fixed, not the rates. Pakistan's tax system is

broken by design. It is fragmented across multiple agencies and jurisdictions, riddled with inconsistent thresholds and legal interpretations, and undermined by weak trust.

The problem is not a shortage of tax policy papers; it is the distortionary structure created by exemptions, lack of equity, discretion and predatory enforcement. Tax authorities aggressively pursue those already in the net while tolerating habitual non-payers. The illusion that high rates, complexity, and coercion can force formalisation must be discarded. Decades of experience demonstrate the opposite. Punitive, tortuous and unpredictable tax regimes entangle the taxpayers' navigation of a labyrinth of arbitrary changes in laws, rates and procedures, shrinking the formal sector, expanding informality, ending compliance and discouraging investment.

A growth-oriented tax system must be simple, predictable, low-rate, and broad-based, treating all income streams uniformly. Its purpose should be to attract firms into formality, not to punish them for entering it.

**Great white hopes****Mahir Ali**

A pair of North American leaders delivered remarkably different speeches in Switzerland last week. Donald Trump's address was a largely predictable, self-aggrandising ram that ranged from justifications for his claim on Greenland (or possibly Iceland) to a racist diatribe against Somalis, interpolated with denunciations of Joe Biden. Mark Carney acknowledged that the rules-based international order was always partially fictitious, and that the rupture cannot be reversed.

The Canadian PM uttered some truths that most of his European counterparts would struggle to enunciate. Carney has, therefore, widely been hailed as a viable anti-Trump by the usual centrists and some progressives. He called upon middle powers to act together in dealing with the foremost hegemon, "because if we're not at the table, we're on the menu". But Denmark has been at the table, yet Greenland is on the menu.

Since last week, Trump has seemingly rescinded his invasion plan and dropped the threat of increased tariffs against European nations that resisted his acquisition of Greenland, citing a 'framework agreement' with Nato for establishing military bases (which would have been possible). Details are still murky, although Guantánamo Bay has been cited as a possible model. The lesson many analysts have drawn is that, like a typical bully, Trump backs down in the face of resolute resistance. If it's as simple as that, one is forced to wonder why he has not been challenged more frequently.

It is notable, meanwhile, that there wasn't even a passing mention of

Israel or Gaza — under whose rubble the last vestiges of any international order lie buried, alongside the bones of Palestinian children, women and men — in Carney's oration.

Perhaps because Canada has been complicit in the genocide, alongside various other Anglophone or European nations. It is also notable that whereas a bunch of European countries turned down membership of Trump's ridiculous Board of Peace (BoP) on the basis that an invitation had been extended to Vladimir Putin, none of them cited the inclusion of Benjamin Netanyahu, a genocidal maniac by any measure, as a sufficient cause for steering clear of the imperial entity.

The BoP charter attested at Davos by Trump with the same flamboyance as his birthday greetings to Jeffrey Epstein was signed with a bunch of supplicants hovering in the background, much like the farce at Sharm el-Sheikh last October. The BoP was stupidly endorsed by the UN Security Council last year, when it was considered purely a Gaza-related initiative. The charter doesn't mention the Israel-devastated territory at all, but the draft text of its first resolution, revealed on Monday, offers disturbing details.

Even Israel-approved Palestinians are relegated to the fourth tier of the arbitrary structure with Trump at its helm for as long he wishes (or gets bored with peace), with a broad range of reprobates in the higher echelons of this travesty. Trump's ghostly son-in-law Jared Kushner laid out a bizarre plan at Davos, reinforcing the impression that Palestinians barely matter (except as a potential labour force) in the reconstruction of Gaza as a tourist resort. The UAE will reportedly bankroll a

Potemkin village in Rafah to house 25,000 Palestinians vetted by their overlords, and biometrically scanned each time they move in or out of their abodes. Ahi-tec refugee camp, in other words.

The enablers, by and large, are autocratic states eager to participate in a global kakistocracy. The fate of Gaza has been handed over to real-estate agents. More than half of the narrow strip is already under Israeli control, and that's where any construction activity might take place. The ceasefire that Trump crows about has been followed by almost 500 murders by the Israel Defense Forces, including children and journalists, and the demolition of thousands of buildings.

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**Shahzad Sharjeel**

One is not too sure about other cultures, but in the South Asian context, the only time a man likes being referred to as a boy is when the bridesmaids announce the arrival of the groom's party at the bride's home as 'larkay walay aa gaey'. On all other occasions, even spindly little lads prefer to refer to themselves as men.

The glee and reckless abandon with which some grown men present themselves as boys, albeit with the prefix 'wonder' attached, is sadder than it is silly. No prize for guessing who could have messed up a well-known term such as 'boy wonder', meaning an extraordinarily talented lad. Only the boys themselves could better Merriam-Webster's language in looking for the country's future prime minister, or is it a boy king, that's been kept in mind?

I once happened to visit the ancestral home of a family who, at one time, held the largest agricultural estate this side of our eastern border; a foreign guest present there later asked me how come everyone in the household staff was named the same? It took me a while to figure out that he was referring to the call made all too often in these households, ie, 'chora' meaning 'boy' to refer to anyone ranging from a minor used as a gofer to an elderly cook whose father and perhaps grandfather was also called a chora. The guest, however, was quick on the uptake as his countrymen shared the shameful past of referring to house help and farmhands as 'boy', even long after slavery was abolished in the US.

It's impossible to hold back the tears, but I doubt it would evoke a similar response in either of the great white hopes. If a better world is possible, neither Trump nor Carney will be part of it.

Nor does either of them offer a viable vision for the future. The actor Jackie Chan recently revealed that he broke down while watching a video in which a Palestinian child was asked, "What will you be when you grow up?", and the boy nonchalantly responded: "Children on our side don't grow up."

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**'Boy oh boy'**

historical background. Used widely in America and South Africa, on plantations and in factories alike, it was the white man's tool for dehumanising and infantilising the black population.

By calling someone 'boy', they are told, nay reminded, that they cannot be treated as equals, and that they would perpetually remain dependent and inferior to white men and women.

According to the Harvard Law and Policy Review, in 2011, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals acknowledged that a supervisor's use of the term 'boy' to refer to black employees was sufficient evidence of racism. Earlier, a three-judge bench had not found the term's use to be evidence of discrimination, and it took a reprimand from the Supreme Court to reverse that verdict.

This cruel practice, unfortunately, is entrenched in our parts of the world as well; the rural term 'chora' is replaced by 'beta' (son), another condescending term in urban settings. It is sickening to hear people address grown men, sometimes elderly, working in the service industry as beta.

It is believed that in England from the 15th to the 17th centuries, because princes could not be disciplined by their tutors as ordinary pupils were, a young companion was assigned to study alongside them and be punished instead of the prince, who would infer the intended lesson by feeling his companion's pain. The unfortunate, learning sidekick was called a whipping boy.

Although Barnaby Fitzpatrick and William Murray are named as whipping boys of King Edward VI and King Charles I, respectively, historians believe these

accounts are fables, like the one in Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper.

Have no doubt that the wonder boy theory is floated among the old foxes of the Pakistani political class with a purpose. The purposes are actually multiple; ie, have all wannabe suitors vie for the attention of the mistress called power, and listen to what the powerbrokers want them to do. They could have easily set the media to spread the word about their search for a 'Superman', but they know it all too well that anyone with such a title would soon become too big for his britches and not only start wearing underpants over them but also believing he could fly. To keep the ambition in check and as a constant reminder of his perpetual subservience, they search for a 'wonder boy'.

If and when the wonder boy is found and anointed, it would be interesting to see how he would reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio, increase direct tax-to-GDP percentage, enrol 26 million-plus out-of-school children in formal and informal schools, ensure that the 57m or so fortunate to be enrolled actually learn something, increase the social sectors' share in the national budget, manage population, eradicate polio, address climate change, reduce the trust deficit between the state and the citizens, improve relations and trade with neighbours, and put the militancy genie back in the bottle while keeping all his local and foreign patrons happy. The metamorphosis from wonder boy to whipping boy will be swift and incredibly painful, meant for the citizens' vicious learning. Amidst this collective, sinking feeling, let us all look for a lifebuoy.

## Punjab CM launches Parwaz Card, Rah-e-Rozgar & Skill Development Portal

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has inaugurated the province's first-ever flagship youth empowerment initiative, the Parwaz Card, aimed at providing financial assistance and employment opportunities to skilled youth across Punjab.

Addressing graduates of technical training institutes, here on Wednesday, the chief minister said that 250,000 young people have completed technical training, while over 114,000 have secured employment, including 97,000 within Pakistan and 33,000 abroad. On the occasion, she also launched three complementary initiatives, Creative Hands, Rah-e-Rozgar, and the Skill Development Portal, to further strengthen the province's skills development ecosystem.

Under the Parwaz Card programme, CM Maryam Nawaz announced interest-free financial assistance of up to Rs300,000 for skilled

youth, particularly those seeking overseas employment, to protect them from exploitation by unscrupulous agents.

The chief minister met 90 students trained in various technical trades, interacted with them at their seats, and inquired about their skills and employment status. Expressing satisfaction over their success stories, she appreciated students excelling in multiple disciplines, including a mosque imam who had also completed an electrician's course. She also met transgender students and assured them of dignity, inclusion, and full state support.

Speaking to graduates of institutions affiliated with the Punjab Skills Development and Entrepreneurship Department, the chief minister said the provincial government is committed to investing every rupee of the public exchequer in the youth. She emphasized that scholarships alone are insufficient, adding that the state is now ensuring training, market access, and employment opportunities.

Highlighting future-oriented reforms, CM Maryam Nawaz said artifical intelligence (AI) education has been made mandatory in schools, adding that she herself had attended an AI training session along with provincial ministers, a first for any chief minister. "In the age of AI, every decision must be knowledge-based," she remarked.



Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Chairman National Accountability Bureau Lt. Gen (Rtd) Nazir Ahmed Collaborate Against State Land Fraud in Sindh.

## KP cabinet panel proposes new organizational structure for Civil Defence

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting of the Cabinet Standing Committee was held here on Wednesday with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights, Aftab Akram in the chair.

The meeting thoroughly discussed matters related to energy, forest conservation, and the administrative and organizational affairs of Civil Defence.

The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister for Public Health Engineering Fazal Shakoor Khan, Advisor to the Chief Minister for Finance Muzammil Aslam, Secretary Energy and Power Nisar Ahmed, officials from the Law Department, Home Department, Civil Defence, Relief Department, Forest Department, PEDO, Finance Department, and other relevant

departments.

During the meeting, issues concerning the improvement of Civil Defence performance and its restructuring along modern lines were deliberated upon.

The committee was briefed on the proposed new organizational structure for Civil Defence, under which it was suggested to place the department under the administrative control of the Home and Tribal Affairs Department to enhance its effectiveness.

While discussing realignment and restructuring, emphasis was laid on ensuring that Civil Defence remains fully functional during both wartime and peacetime, with its performance clearly visible on the ground.

It was informed that since Rescue 1122 is already functioning under the Relief Department, it would be more appropriate

for Civil Defence to operate under the Home Department rather than the Relief Department.

Officials of Civil Defence also briefed the meeting on the department's 418 sanctioned posts and its annual operational activities.

The meeting also carried out a review of the illegal cutting and transportation of timber from the forests of Arandu Gol in district Chitral. Participants were informed that due to the weak law and order situation during the period from 2004 to 2010, large-scale illegal deforestation took place in the area.

It was further reported that approximately one million cubic feet of timber is burnt annually in Dir Kohistan and Shergal, posing a serious threat to the environment and valuable national resources.



ISLAMABAD: A visitor keenly viewing artwork displayed paintings during the "Imdad Nau Bahar" Mega Art and Literature presented by AKL through the exhibition of Qamar Siddiqui's family group at PNCA.

## Significant improvements in ongoing polio eradication campaign reported in Kohat

KOHAT (INP): District authorities in Kohat have reported significant improvements in the ongoing polio eradication campaign, reducing the number of poorly performing union councils (UCs) from 26 to just 5, while missed child cases have also declined markedly. This progress was shown during a meeting chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Muhammad Nawaz Wazir on Wednesday to assess preparations for the upcoming polio vaccination campaign scheduled from February 2 to 7.

Officials highlighted improved field supervision, expanded vaccination coverage and timely data reporting as key factors behind the gains. According to district health officials, overall performance has improved in 33 percent of Kohat's union councils, reflecting stronger coordination among field

teams and enhanced monitoring mechanisms.

Earlier, the upcoming polio drive was formally launched by the Deputy Commissioner along with the District Police Officer, who administered polio drops to children at the inaugural ceremony. Security arrangements, availability of vaccination teams and parental cooperation were reviewed in detail to ensure smooth implementation of the campaign.

Authorities have set a target of vaccinating approximately 193,000 children across the district during the campaign.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Nawaz Wazir said the district administration, health department and law enforcement agencies were working on the front lines to achieve complete eradication of polio.

Azma visits LPC, congratulates newly elected body

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari on Wednesday visited the Lahore Press Club and congratulated the newly elected governing body on its success. She extended special congratulations to the newly elected President Arshad Ansari, on securing a decisive victory by a large margin.

Speaking on the occasion, Azma Bokhari said that holding Lahore Press Club elections annually in a timely manner is a positive and commendable democratic tradition that helps strengthen journalistic values. She appreciated the journalists of the Lahore Press Club for conducting peaceful, transparent, and orderly elections. The minister said that journalists of Lahore have once again expressed their confidence in the leadership of Arshad Ansari, which reflects recognition of his professional capabilities and valuable services to the journalistic community.

Security arrangements, availability of vaccination teams and parental cooperation were reviewed in detail to ensure smooth implementation of the campaign.

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Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Nawaz Wazir said the district administration, health department and law enforcement agencies were working on the front lines to achieve complete eradication of polio.

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## ECC approves key economic, sectoral measures on food security, energy, health, education

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Wednesday approved the disposal of 500,000 metric tons of PASSCO wheat stock through competitive bidding, with the objective of managing surplus stocks, reducing carrying and storage costs, and ensuring price stability in the domestic wheat market while safeguarding food security considerations.

The ECC met under

the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb to consider a range of important economic, fiscal and sectoral matters aimed at ensuring macroeconomic stability, protecting consumers, strengthening social services and addressing operational requirements of key public sector entities.

The meeting was attended by Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer

Hussain, Minister for Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the concerned ministries, divisions and regulatory bodies, said a press release.

During the meeting, the ECC approved the disposal of 500,000 metric tons of PASSCO wheat stock through competitive bidding, with the objective of managing surplus stocks, reducing carrying and storage costs, and ensuring

price stability in the domestic wheat market while safeguarding food security considerations.

In a related decision, the committee approved the provision of 300,000 metric tons of PASSCO wheat to the Food and Consumer Protection Department of the Government of Punjab, aimed at maintaining adequate wheat supplies for flour mills, stabilizing prices and ensuring uninterrupted availability of wheat flour to consumers.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain chairing 4th meeting of the National Wheat Oversight Committee.



SIALKOT: Russian Ambassador Mr. Albert P. Khorev addresses exporters at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

## Pervaiz Malik invites Chinese firms to Pakistan minerals investment forum 2026

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik on Wednesday invited Chinese companies to participate in the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum (PMIF) 2026, scheduled to be held on April 8 and 9 this year.

Addressing the Pakistan-China Minerals Cooperation Forum, the minister said, "I extend a formal invitation to all the Chinese companies and delegates present here to participate in the Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2026 scheduled to be held in April."

"We would particularly welcome participation through a country pavilion showcasing mining capabili-

ties, technologies and equipment.

The forum will serve as a focused platform for structured engagement with policymakers, regulators and project sponsors," he said. The minister thanked the Chinese Chamber, Metallurgical Corporation of China Ltd (MCC), and all delegates for contributing to the success of the forum.

Highlighting decades-long Pakistan-China cooperation, the minister said the partnership had translated into tangible outcomes across multiple sectors of Pakistan's economy.

Under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, he said, Chinese investment

had played a pivotal role in rapidly expanding Pakistan's power generation capacity through a diverse portfolio of energy projects, helping address a long-standing constraint on economic development.

Beyond the power sector, he added, Chinese collaboration had supported mass transit solutions, modern road networks and electric mobility initiatives, contributing to productivity growth and employment generation.

The minister noted that China was among the early countries to recognise the strategic importance of the mining sector and now holds a dominant position in rare earth elements.

The 13th Session of the ePakistan-Sri Lanka Joint Economic Commission (JEC) was held in Colombo. A key outcome of the session was the decision to establish a Joint Working Group on IT and Digital Economy, reflecting both countries' resolve to collaborate in emerging technologies and digital transformation. The two sides also agreed to enhance cooperation in advanced and innovative technological fields. Discussions were held on expanding industrial collaboration and increasing bilateral trade, with Sri Lanka inviting Pakistani pharmaceutical companies to explore investment opportunities.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Sri Lanka on Wednesday reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral economic relations and expand cooperation across multiple sectors during the 13th Session of the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Joint Economic Commission (JEC).

The Pakistani delegation was led by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Haroon Akhtar Khan, said a news release. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-Sri Lanka ties and expanding cooperation across multiple sectors of mutual interest.

The 13th Session of

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## SCCI committee discusses upcoming trade delegations

SIALKOT (APP): Chairman of the Departmental Committee on Fairs and Exhibitions/Delegations of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Qaiser Baig, on Wednesday presided over a meeting held at the SCCI Auditorium to review arrangements for upcoming trade delegations and business forums in coordination with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP). According to participants, the meeting discussed proposed international markets and priority sectors for participation, with emphasis on effectively showcasing Pakistan's export potential and strengthening business-to-business linkages with global partners.

## Pak-US exports slide for Third straight month as Trade deficit widens

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's exports to the United States have continued their downward trajectory, marking the third consecutive month of decline and underscoring growing pressures on the country's external trade performance, according to a Gwadar Pro's report Wednesday.

As Pakistan's largest export destination, the sustained softening of shipments to the U.S. signals broader challenges for key export sectors and raises concerns about momentum in the months ahead.

As per the Trade De-

## Gold prices surged Rs21,100 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 Rs21,100 to settle at Rs551,662.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also jumped by Rs18,090 to Rs472,961, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs 16,583 to Rs433,563, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Silver prices also wit-

nessed an upward trend,

with the price of 24-karat silver per tola increasing by Rs271 to Rs11,911.

## FBR directs tax offices to remain open on Jan 31

ISLAMABAD (APP): For

facilitation of the taxpayers,

the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has directed that all Large Taxpayers' Offices (LTOs), Medium Taxpayers' Offices (MTOs), Corporate Tax Offices (CTOs) and Regional Tax Offices (RTOs) will remain open on Saturday, the 31st January, 2026.

According to an FBR directive, all such offices will observe January 31, 2026 as a normal working day for the collection of duties and taxes.

## Pakistan, Turkey agree to boost rice trade

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and Turkey have agreed to significantly increase bilateral rice trade, focusing on competitive pricing, higher export volumes, and stronger business linkages as part of broader efforts to deepen economic cooperation.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and the Turkish ambassador, where both sides discussed ways to enhance rice trade between the two countries.

The Ministry of

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships, GFS Genesis, Al-Khor and Unity Adventure carrying Container, LNG and Coal, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Engr Elengy Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively on Tuesday. Meanwhile another container carrier 'Ren Jian-26' also arrived at outer anchorage on Wednesday morning.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a General cargo carrier 'Giovanni Topic'

Commerce said steps are being taken to promote agricultural exports on the instructions of the prime minister. Officials highlighted that Pakistan has produced one of its best rice crops in recent years, resulting in an abundant export surplus available for international buyers.

The government assured Turkey of a steady supply of both basmati and non-basmati rice at competitive rates, while prioritizing an increase in export volumes without compromising farmers' comprome-

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According to a press

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## Russian ambassador visits SCCI to boost Pak-Russia trade ties

Dr. Almas Haider Naqvi. The visit underscored growing Pakistan-Russia economic engagement, with focused discussions on trade facilitation, industrial collaboration, and unlocking new avenues for cooperation between Russian partners and Sialkot's globally competitive export sectors.

During an important meeting held at SCCI Auditorium, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan Albert P. Khorev said that the Russia is intending to boost the mutual trade ties with Pakistan.

According to an FBR directive, all such offices will observe January 31, 2026 as a normal working day for the collection of duties and taxes.

## Rubina Khalid calls for linking skilled women with global markets

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Senator Rubina Khalid on Wednesday underscored the need to equip women with modern skills and connect them with national and international markets to ensure sustainable livelihoods and economic empowerment.

She was speaking during her visit to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Haripur, where she was warmly received by President CCI Malik Umar Khalid, Executive Member Syed Ahmed Jan Sikandar, and other members of the chamber.

The Chairperson also

reviewed a handicrafts exhibition organized by the chamber, in which women displayed a range of hand-crafted products, including garments and traditional handicrafts, said a news release.

She visited various stalls and appreciated the quality, creativity, and dedication of the women artisans.

Later, Senator Rubina Khalid attended the San-e-Ahan Conference at CCI Haripur as chief guest. The conference focused on initiatives aimed at providing women with modern technical skills and empowering them in line with international standards so they can effectively meet economic challenges at national

level for the establishment of a Bank of Balochistan on the lines of Bank of Punjab, Bank of Khyber and Sindh Bank.

He said that the federal and provincial governments should facilitate the creation of a provincial bank to improve access to finance, making it possible and viable for local entrepreneurs to set up industries in Balochistan.

He further maintained that the Bank of Balochistan should devise lending policies tailored to the specific socio-economic conditions of the province, keeping in view the limitations faced by the local business community.

According to him, this single step could usher

Balochistan into a new era

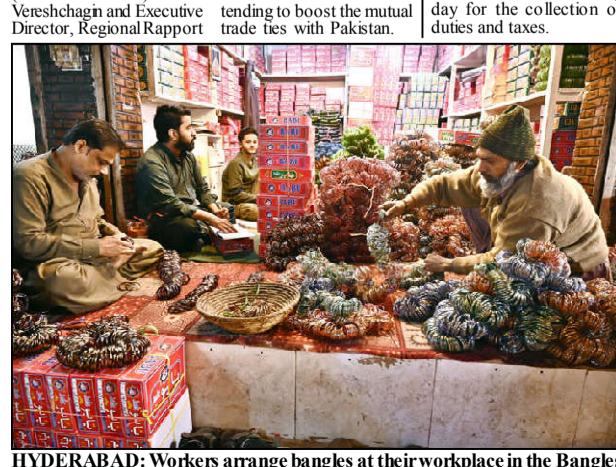
of economic development and attract foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as domestic investment from other parts of Pakistan.

PBF Vice Chairperson

Zubaida Jalal, highlighted the resilience of the people of Balochistan and noted that business, commercial, trade, investment, industrial and economic activities continue despite persistent challenges due to their dynamism.

However, she emphasized that cottage industries and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) must be protected and sup-

ported to keep the provincial economy afloat.



HYDERABAD: Workers arrange bangles at their workplace in the Bangles Market. The bangles are supplied from Hyderabad to shops across the country.

## PBF seeks industrial, financial reforms for Balochistan

QUETTA (INP): The Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) has emphasized that the province urgently requires special attention from the government to unlock its economic potential.

Chairman of PBF Balochistan, Daroo Khan Achakzai said that Balochistan must be prioritized in terms of industrialization through tax and duty waivers, effective establishment, incentivization and operationalization of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to flourish and to attract both domestic and foreign investors.

According to a press release, PBF Provincial Chief stressed the critical

need for the establishment of a Bank of Balochistan on the lines of Bank of Punjab, Bank of Khyber and Sindh Bank.

He said that the federal and provincial governments should facilitate the creation of a provincial bank to improve access to finance, making it possible and viable for local entrepreneurs to set up industries in Balochistan.

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ported to keep the provincial economy afloat.

## Gaza ceasefire is making a difference, but situation is still deadly for children: UN

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The fragile ceasefire in the Gaza Strip is making a difference to the lives of over a million children, and improving overall access to food - but more aid still needs to enter, according to senior officials from two UN agencies.

The officials from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), speaking on Monday to journalists in New York following a week-long visit to the enclave and the occupied West Bank said the two agencies have brought more than 10,000 trucks of aid into Gaza since the 10 October truce between Israel and Hamas, representing some 80 per cent of all humanitarian cargo.

Three months later, "the food security situation has improved and famine has been reversed," said Ted Chaiban, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, Hu-

manitarian Action and Supply Operations.

Carl Skau, WFP Deputy Executive Director, added that most families he met "were eating at least once a day" - sometimes twice. Commercial goods have reappeared in Gaza's markets, including vegetables, fruits, chicken and eggs. Recreational kits to help children heal from the stress and trauma of two years of war are now in their hands. UNICEF and partners have provided more than 1.6 million people with clean drinking water and distributed blankets and winter clothes to 700,000. They have also restored essential life-saving paediatric intensive care services at embattled Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City.

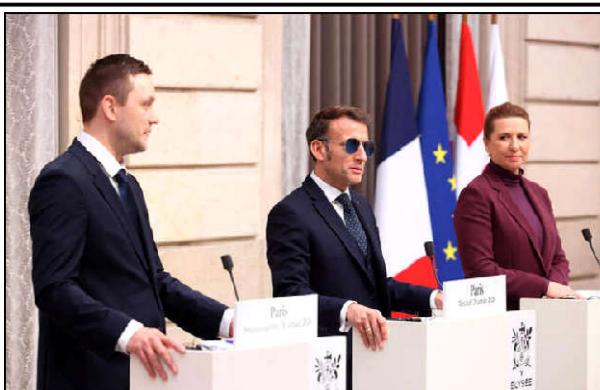
The second round of a Gaza-wide "catch-up campaign" for routine childhood vaccinations is currently underway, while another 72 UNICEF-supported

nutrition facilities have been established, bringing the total to 196.

"These gains matter," said Chaiban. "They show what is possible when the fighting pauses, political commitments are sustained and humanitarian access opens." WFP has also scaled up massively over the past 100 days, said Skau, speaking from Rome. Teams have reached more than a million people every month with full rations for the first time since the war began.

They are "serving 400,000 hot meals every day and delivering school snacks to some 230,000 children in 250 temporary learning centres," in addition to operating hundreds of distribution points and some 20 warehouses.

Other humanitarian organizations are bringing in tents, blankets, mattresses and other essentials thanks to WFP's shared logistics services.



French President Emmanuel Macron, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, and Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen speak to the media as they meet at the Elysee Palace in Paris.

## Trump warns of 'bad things' if Republicans lose midterms

CLIVE (AFP/APP): Donald Trump warned Tuesday of "very bad things" if Republicans lose the US midterm elections, as the US president kicked off a travel blitz under the shadow of unrest in Minneapolis and voter worries about the economy.

At a rally in Iowa—one of the first stops for primary campaigns in US presidential elections—Trump said his party must win both the Senate and the House in November despite his own poor approval ratings.

"I'm here because I

love Iowa, but I'm here because we're starting the campaign to win the midterms. Got to win the midterms," second-term president Trump said in his speech. "If we lose the midterms, you'll lose so many of the things that we're talking about, so many of the assets that we're talking about, so many of the tax cuts that we're talking about—and it would lead to very bad things."

But Trump's economy-focused speech was largely overshadowed by events in the neighbor-

ing state of Minnesota, where two people have died this month in a deadly immigration crackdown.

Trump told Fox News earlier he would "de-escalate a little bit" after federal agents shot 37-year-old nurse Alex Prett in Minneapolis at the weekend, but he largely avoided talking about it in his speech.

The White House

says Trump will be making weekly trips across the country ahead of the midterms, in which voters have historically punished US presidents.

While acknowledging that development of the rocket launcher system had "not been plain sailing", Kim said the test was "of great significance in improving the effectiveness of our strategic deterrent".

Photos released by state media showed Kim and his daughter, who analysts believe is called Ju Ae, watching the missile launch.

The rockets "hit a target" in waters 358.5

kilometres (222.7 miles) away, according to the North Korean leader.

The ballistic missiles

were fired toward the Sea of Japan, with two missiles

landing outside the

country's Exclusive Economic Zone, Japanese state

news agency Jiji Press had

reported, citing defence

ministry sources.

"The result and sig-

## NATO chief says Europe can't defend itself without US

BRUSSELS (AFP/APP): NATO chief Mark Rutte warned Monday Europe cannot defend itself without the United States, in the face of calls for the continent to stand on its own feet after tensions over Greenland.

US President Donald Trump roiled the transatlantic alliance by threatening to seize the autonomous Danish territory—before backing off after talks with Rutte last week.

The diplomatic crisis gave fresh momentum to those advocating for Europe to take a tougher line against Trump and break its military reliance on Washington.

"If anyone thinks here again, that the European Union, or Europe as a

## North Korea to soon unveil 'next-stage' nuclear plans, Kim says

SEOUL (AFP/APP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will unveil plans to bolster his nuclear forces at an upcoming ruling party meeting, state media reported Wednesday, after a missile launch the despot

said would bring "excruciating mental agony" to his enemies.

The landmark congress of North Korea's ruling Workers Party is expected in the coming weeks and is its first in five years.

Overseeing a ballistic missile test on Tuesday, Kim said the conclave "will clarify the next-stage plans for further bolstering up the country's nuclear war deterrent," the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

Kim accompanied by senior North Korean officials as well as his young daughter, who analysts believe is called Ju Ae, watching the missile launch.

The rockets "hit a target" in waters 358.5

kilometres (222.7 miles) away, according to the North Korean leader.

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## Trump says to 'de-escalate' Minneapolis, as aide questions agents' 'protocol'

MINNEAPOLIS (AFP/APP): US immigration agents may have breached "protocol" in Minneapolis before shooting dead a nurse during protests, a senior White House aide said on Tuesday, as President Donald Trump suggested he would "de-escalate a little bit" in the city.

The comments came the same day a man sprayed Minnesota Congresswoman Ilhan Omar with a syringe of unknown liquid at a Minneapolis town hall meeting, where she called for curbing the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

White House Deputy

Chief of Staff Stephen

Miller told AFP the adminis-

tration is evaluating

whether the Customs and

Border Protection (CBP)

agents who gunned down

37-year-old Alex Prett on

Saturday failed to follow

"clear guidance" to "create

a physical barrier between

the arrest teams and the

disruptors."

"We are evaluating

why the CBP team may

not have been following

that protocol," Miller said

in a statement, though the

White House later said

Miller was referring to "gen-

eral guidance" to immigration

agents in Minnesota.

Trump, meanwhile,

told Fox News that the ad-

ministration was "going to

de-escalate a little bit" its

operations in Minneapolis,

adding that the plan was not

a "pullback." He admitted

that Gregory Bovino, a

hardline Border Patrol com-

mander who is now ex-

pected to leave the city,

was "a pretty out-there

kind of guy" whose pres-

ence may not have helped

the situation.

## Russian strikes in Ukraine kill 12, target passenger train

ODESA (AFP/APP): Russian forces in Ukraine killed 12 people and struck energy infrastructure and a passenger train overnight on Tuesday, authorities said, days after negotiators from both sides held direct talks aimed at ending nearly four years of war.

In the northeastern

Kharkiv region, a drone hit

a carriage of a train trans-

porting nearly 200 passen-

gers, killing at least five

people, Ukraine's Prime

Minister Yuliia Svyrydenko

posted on X.

"There is not and can-

not be any military justifi-

cation for killing civilians in

a train carriage," Ukrainian

President Volodymyr

Zelensky said on Telegram.

Prosecutors posted

images of the smouldering

carriage on social media,

which regional emergency

services later said had been

extinguished.

A barrage of more than

50 Russian drones killed

three people and wounded

more than 30 in the south-

ern city of Odesa, regional

officials said.

The Black Sea city

key for Ukrainian exports

has been routinely

pummelled by Russian

forces.

Regional governor

## Rubio to warn Venezuela leader of Maduro's fate if defiant

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): Secretary of State Marco Rubio was expected to warn Wednesday that oil-rich Venezuela's leader will suffer the fate of US-deposed predecessor Nicolas Maduro if she fails to comply with US wishes.

Rubio, a former senator, agreed to testify before the committee after weeks of Democrats accusing the Trump administration of both deceiving lawmakers and exceeding its authority by using force. US forces raided Caracas on January 3 and seized

Maduro, a longtime leftist nemesis of Washington, and his wife, Cilia Flores.

Maduro was "well aware of the fate of the US-deposed predecessor Nicolas Maduro if she fails to comply with US wishes," Rubio told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, according to prepared testimony.

"It is our belief that her own self-interest aligns with advancing our key objectives," Rubio was to say.

Since leaving in 2006 — the same year Poland became a member of the European Union — the country has become the world's 20th largest economy, and its GDP per capita has more than tripled.

Speaking at her daily morning press conference, Sheinbaum said interest in the group's tour in Mexico was unprecedented, noting that around one million young people want to buy

tickets, while only about 150,000 tickets are currently available.

BTS's world tour is set to begin in April, shortly after the release of the group's first studio album in three years, titled Arirang.

The band has been on hiatus since 2022 while its members completed South Korea's mandatory military service.

Only three concerts were initially scheduled in Mexico, triggering huge demand and a wave of complaints from fans over the ticket sales process.

## Russian rare-earth metals cluster to be launched in 2027

MOSCOW (TASS/APP): The rare-earth metals processing cluster in the Angara-Yenisei region is planned to start operations in 2027, the press service of the cluster told TASS.

"Russia will join the rare-earth metals development race this year. The cluster is intended to be launched in 2027 and it will cover four regions: the Krasnoyarsk Region, the Irkutsk Region, Khakassia and Tuva," the press service said.

The cluster will be connected to the Angara-Yenisei region's energy infrastructure and a passenger train overnight on Tuesday, authorities said, days after negotiators from both sides held direct talks aimed at ending nearly four years of war.

In the northeastern

Kharkiv region, a drone hit

a carriage of a train trans-

porting nearly 200 passen-

gers, killing at least five

people, Ukraine's Prime

## Pakistan eyes mineral-led growth under CPEC 2.0, links mineral rich regions to Gwadar: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday said Pakistan and China were entering a decisive new phase of economic partnership by placing mineral development at the centre of CPEC 2.0, aimed at transforming connectivity into productivity, exports and sustainable growth.

Addressing the launching ceremony of the China-Pakistan Mineral Cooperation Forum here, he said the two countries were repositioning their strategic partnership towards minerals-led industrialization, with Gwadar emerging as the principal gateway to connect Pakistan's mineral-rich regions with regional and global markets.

The minister said the initiative reflected a delib-

erate shift from infrastructure-centric cooperation to value-added, export-oriented collaboration, as both countries approach the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations.

"As we approach 75 years of Pakistan-China relations, our partnership stands as a model of continuity, trust and strategic depth. This is a relationship that has never witnessed a season of autumn; it has always flourished in spring and reached newer heights every year," he remarked.

Ahsan Iqbal said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) phase-I remained the most visible expression of this enduring partnership, noting that projects completed under the corridor had added over 8,000 megawatts of energy capacity, upgraded more than 1,000 kilometres of road infrastructure, modernised Gwadar and

strengthened national connectivity.

Referring to his recent visit to Gwadar, the minister said the China-built international airport had positioned the port city to play a pivotal role in Pakistan's next phase of growth. "Gwadar is now ready not only to function as a smart port city but also to serve as a hub for the mining industry by linking Pakistan's mineral resources with global markets," he added.

He said CPEC Phase-II was focused on addressing Pakistan's long-standing structural weaknesses, particularly its weak export base.

"Infrastructure for its own sake is not enough. Our objective is to translate connectivity into productivity, productivity into exports, and exports into jobs and sustainable growth," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi addresses the closing ceremony of the photography exhibition and book launch titled KASHMIR, WAIT & SEE by Shah Zaman Baloch and internationally renowned photographer CA@dric Gerbehaye at PNCA.

## Development and prosperity elusive sans enduring peace in KP: Acting President

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday underscored that development and prosperity appeared elusive sans enduring peace in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The acting president met Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi here and detailed discussions were held on the overall political situation of the country, the law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, good governance, and the province's overall socio-political conditions, a Presidency's news release said.

Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani stated that Pakistan's Upper

House of Parliament, which ensures equal representation of all provinces, is playing an effective role in promoting development and prosperity across the country.

He emphasized that senators from all provinces serve as a strong voice for their respective regions and are actively working to address public issues. He affirmed the commitment to adopting a comprehensive and improved strategy to ensure balanced development and prosperity for all provinces.

The acting president paid rich tribute to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for their unparalleled bravery, sacrifices, and resilience in the

fight against terrorism.

He said that lasting peace in the province is the cornerstone of sustainable development and prosperity. He particularly acknowledged the immense sacrifices rendered by the people of the merged districts for the restoration of peace, stating that their contributions can never be forgotten.

Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani reiterated that the development, welfare, and prosperity of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the merged districts, remain a top priority and core mission of the government and assured that all available resources will be utilized to achieve this objective.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) to accelerate work on key road projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), stressing that timely completion, transparency and quality construction would be ensured at all costs.

Presiding over a high-level review meeting on NHA projects here, the minister was informed that major infrastructure projects in KP had been completed and were now awaiting formal inauguration by the Prime Minister. These include the Kohat-Jhang-Pindi Gheb Road and the Old Bannu Road Highway, which are ex-

pected to significantly enhance regional connectivity and facilitate economic activity, said a press release.

Addressing the timing of ongoing works, Abdul Aleem Khan was informed that the Indus Highway (N-55) Kohat Section and the Peshawar Northern Bypass are on track to be completed by June 2026. Furthermore, the development of the N-140 Highway, connecting Chitral to Shandur and Shandur to Gilgit is expected to be finalized by December 2026.

The minister issued categorical instructions to further accelerate the pace of work on the N-55 Kohat Section and announced his decision to personally visit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa soon to inspect the progress on-site.

He also congratulated Raja Imran Janjua and Rana Farhan Aslam on their success as joint secretaries, along with all newly elected members of the executive council.

## Minister orders early completion of key roads in KP

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He also congratulated Raja Imran Janjua and Rana Farhan Aslam on their success as joint secretaries, along with all newly elected members of the executive council.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Wednesday, extended congratulations to the newly elected office-bearers of the Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ).

The acting president congratulated Asif Bashir Chaudhry on his election to President, Tauseef Abbasi and Rashid Malik as Vice Presidents, Bashir Usmani as General Secretary, and Isha Khan Niazi as Finance Secretary, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

He also congratulated Raja Imran Janjua and Rana Farhan Aslam on their success as joint secretaries, along with all newly elected members of the executive council.

ISLAMABAD (APP):

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