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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.

The president highlighted Pakistan's ongoing economic reforms, includ-

ing investment facilitation and privatisation, and explored opportunities for enhanced cooperation with the UAE in infrastructure development, logistics, food security and technology-driven sectors.

President Zardari extended an invitation to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum to visit Pakistan. The leaders underscored the importance of high-level exchanges, recalled the recent visit of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to Pakistan, and acknowledged the UAE's continued support for Pakistan's economic development.

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 Attaulah 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

tics has been reduced to "singing and poetry" rather than serious policymaking. Tarar said politics has transformed into rhetoric on social media, where opponents brand each other as traitors or thieves.

He emphasized that competition among ruling parties should focus on infrastructure development, counterterrorism, and human development indices, noting that skill development is the true measure of progress globally.



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-

Praising the "dynamic youth" of the province, he underscored the importance of student politics in shaping future leaders.

He recalled his own experience, describing the Youth Assembly as a "nursery" for policymaking and

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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.

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

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.



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.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti noted that modern technology has become a central pillar of the government's security framework. He said that under the Safe City Quetta project, 97 percent of surveillance cameras have now been repaired and brought back online, significantly strengthening monitoring systems and enhancing the ability of authorities to prevent and respond to crime. He further explained that the provincial government is following a well-integrated and coordinated plan to stabilize the security situation in Balochistan in a steady and sustainable manner. The Chief Minister reiterated that a strict zero-tolerance policy is in force against terrorists and criminal elements, with no dis-

tinction or leniency.

Commending the role of the police, Mir Sarfraz Bugti stated that the Balochistan Police remain at the forefront of the fight against terrorism and crime. He said the force continues to carry out its responsibilities with professionalism, dedication, and sacrifice to safeguard the lives and property of the public.

Reiterating his administration's resolve, the Chief Minister affirmed that unwavering support for law enforcement agencies will persist until durable peace is achieved throughout the province. He added that every available resource is being deployed to ensure a secure and peaceful environment for the people of Balochistan.



ISLAMABAD: Acting President, Syed Yousuf 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.

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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

the hearing of the matter registered against Sohail Afridi.

During the proceedings, the court noted the accused's absence and moved to issue non-bailable arrest warrants to ensure his presence.

According to court records, the case involves accusations of spreading misleading claims and hampering the credibility of state institutions. The complaint has been registered under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA).



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

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,

Bulgaria, Cambodia, El Salvador, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Mongolia, Morocco, Pakistan, Paraguay, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam, spanning the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Caucasus.

Notably absent from the list are major European countries such as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, amid sharp disagreements with Trump on issues including Greenland and tariff policies, which have strained relations between Washington and several European capitals.

Ukraine questioned how it could participate alongside Russia and Belarus.

Two Pakistan Navy officers promoted to the rank of rear admiral

ISLAMABAD (PR): Two Commodores of Pakistan Navy have been promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral.



Rear Admiral Javed Zia SI (M) to the rank of Rear Admiral.

Rear Admiral Javed Zia was commissioned in Marine Engineering Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1994. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore and National Defence University Islamabad. He did his Master of Science in Manufacturing Science in Manufacturing 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 Kuhnemann 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

for us."

Pakistan 16-member squad:

Salman Ali Agha (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Mohammad Nafay (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Salman Mirza, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, Usman Khan (wk) and Usman Tariq

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 Luden (strength and conditioning coach), Talha Ejaz (performance analyst), Syed Naeem Ahmed (media manager), Lt. Col. @ Usman Anwar (security manager), Dr. Waheed Akram (team doctor), Dr. Raheel 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.



LAHORE: Pakistan's T20 team captain Salman Ali Agha, and his Australian counterpart Mitchell Marsh pose for photograph with T20 Series Trophy at Gaddafi Stadium.

NCCIA launches AI-enabled technology for investigations into online child sexual exploitation, abuse in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) on Wednesday launched 'Katalyst', an AI-enabled investigative tool designed to strengthen the country's capacity to detect, prioritise, and investigate cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

The system was launched by the Minister of State for Interior and Narcotics Control, Talal Chaudhry, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan,

Jane Marriott and the Director General of the NCCIA, Syed Khuram Ali. The system has been developed through a partnership between the Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control and the UK-Pakistan Serious Crime and Law Enforcement (UPSCALE) Programme, funded by the British High Commission, and was formally launched in Islamabad.

Talal Chaudhry appreciated the efforts of the NCCIA and the British

High Commission in improving the country's response to online child abuse and exploitation.

He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to building the NCCIA's capacity to respond to emerging challenges, emphasising the importance of aligning policy and institutional reforms with evolutions in technology.

Closing the ceremony, he said, "Protecting children from online exploitation is a national responsibility."

Info Minister urges..

Continued from page 1

decision-making under pressure, and proposed shadow cabinets to ensure alternative policies on economic and health challenges. Commenting on the state of politics, he said discourse has turned into a "circus," with little focus on long-term policy. He contrasted today's rhetoric-driven politics with earlier development-oriented politics 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

2013 Nawaz Sharif respected PTI's majority in the KP Assembly and allowed it to form the provincial government despite PML-N having the numbers. Highlighting media evolution, he said print journalism reeled on editorial boards, while electronic media brought regulatory frameworks such as PEMRA. In contrast, social media lacks regulation, leading to issues of harassment, intolerance, extremism, and violence, though he acknowledged its positive aspects. Tarar highlighted achievements in healthcare, citing the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Transplant Institute, which has conducted over 1,000 liver transplants.

Govt taking..

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this regard. "Pakistan is taking effective steps towards the complete eradication of polio and is moving steadily towards success", he said. Chris Elias emphasized that constructive consultations on polio eradication will continue with the federal and provincial governments and relevant institutions in Pakistan. "Effective and commendable measures have been taken to eliminate the environmental presence of the polio virus in Pakistan and to ensure access for polio teams in all areas," he added. Director Polio Kathy Neuzil and Deputy Director Polio Michael Galway were part of the visiting delegation.

TENDER NOTICE

The Assistant Director Local Govt & Rural Development Department Killa Saifullah invites sealed tenders as per Government of Balochistan Composite Schedule of Rates 2023 from the interested firms/contractors for the following works:

S. NO	NAME OF WORK	E/COST
1.	CONST OF ROAD MUSLIM BAGH TOWN QILLASAIFULLAH (PSDP No. 3723) TSE-252601956913	39,597,569/-
2.	SOLARIZATION OF DC OFFICE, SSP OFFICE, DAO AND DEO OFFICE KILLASAIFULLAH BSDI (Phase-I) (TSE-252601956853)	9,901,464/-

The Procurement shall be carried out in accordance with **Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Rules, 2014** (amended till date) **BASIC ELIGIBILITY:** The Firms/Contractors must have valid registration with the Pakistan Engineering Council, renewed up to 2026, in the relevant Category C-6 & 5 or above along with the specialized code. The bidder must have completed 3 Assignments of similar nature of work. Turnover in the last 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm Valid Registration with Income Tax with active tax payer list (ATLS) Valid Registration with BRA with active tax payer list (ATLS) The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Other Mandatory conditions and Detailed Marking Criteria mentioned in the Bidding Documents. **METHOD OF PROCUREMENT:** Single Stage-Two Envelope procedure. **ISSUANCE:** The Firms can obtain the bidding Documents from the office of the Assistant Director Local Govt & Rural Development District Killa Saifullah up to payment (non-refundable) of bidding documents fee Rs. 1000 & 1500 deposited in A/C title: AD Local Govt District Killa Saifullah, A/c No. 10610040785222 in National Bank of Pakistan (NBP). (The NIT & Bidding Document can also be downloaded from www.bppra.org.pk). **Bid Security:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2% & 3% specified in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.org.pk. **Issuance of tender Documents:** Complete Bidding Documents can be viewed at www.bppra.org.pk. **Last Date of bid submission:** Bid can only be submitted latest by 13th February, 2026 till 11:00 AM. **Tender opening:** E-bids will be opened on same day at 12:00 pm on **EPSS System** and manual bids will be opened at 12:00pm in the office of the undersigned **Address:** office of the Assistant Director Local Govt & Rural Development Department District Killa Saifullah **Phone No: 0823610254 Fax No: 0823610210** **Bid Validity Period: Ninety (90)**

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Local Govt & Rural Development Killa Saifullah

PRQ No.3514/28-01-2026
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TENDER NOTICE

The Executive Engineer-Buildings CWP&H Department District Kachhi, invites sealed percentage rate tender based on composite schedule of rate 2023, Government of Balochistan amended up-to date from interested contractor / firms for the works listed below:

S. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost Rs.	Earnest Money Rs.	Time Limit	Tender Fee	TSE NO.
1	Repair, Construction & Solarization of (07) Civil Dispensaries (CDs), One BHU, (Under BSDI Phase-I) District Kachhi (Health Package-A)	5,445,544	2%	180 Days	1000/-	TSE-252601956873
2	Repair, Construction & Solarization of (07) Civil Dispensaries (CDs), One BHU, (Under BSDI Phase-II) District Kachhi (Health Package-B)	6,435,643	2%	180 Days	1000/-	TSE-252601958703
3	Repair, Construction & Solarization of (07) Civil Dispensaries (CDs), One BHU, (Under BSDI Phase-III) District Kachhi (Health Package-C)	16,831,683	2%	180 Days	1000/-	TSE-252601958723
4	Repair, Construction & Solarization of (07) Civil Dispensaries (CDs), One BHU, (Under BSDI Phase-IV) District Kachhi (Health Package-D)	4,455,445	2%	180 Days	1000/-	TSE-252601958783

The procurement shall be carried out in accordance with Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority rules, 2014. **BASIC ELIGIBILITY:** The Contractor 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, CWP&H Department District Kachhi Telephone No: 0832-415585 **E-mail Address:** enr.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.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (Buildings)
CWP&H Department
District Kachhi

PRQ No.3509/28-01-2026
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CORRIGENDUM/EXTENSION OF DATE

With reference to this office tender Notice vide PRQ No.3211/12.01.2026 under TSE No.252601940573, for the Repair & Renovation of BC Barracks at Headquarters Baddar Line, Quetta, are hereby amended/extended due to some technical reasons, the new date is as follows:-
Last date of bid submission: The Bid must be submitted only electronically latest by **03.02.2026 Till 11:00 AM** through supplier dashboard.
Tender Opening: Bid will be opened on the same day at **12:00 PM** on EPSS System while the term and condition will remain same.
Address: (Office of Add: IGP/Commandant Balochistan Constabulary Headquarters Baddar Line Gulistan Road Quetta)
Phone No. 081-9201407 Fax No. 9201401
Email: balochistanconstabulary@gmail.com

SSP/HEADQUARTER
for Add: IGP/Commandant
Balochistan Constabulary Quetta

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TENDER NOTICE

The Chief Officer District Council Barkhan invites bids from Eligible bidders for execution of following work for the year 2026 based on a composite schedule rates 2023 on percentage rates.
Bid Security 2% and Tender Fee Rs. 1000/- for each work.

S#	Description of work	E/Cost
1.	Construction & Development of Water Supply Scheme at Basti Mir Khan Jokiyo. TSE-252601959763	4,500,000
2.	Construction & Development of Water Supply Scheme at Basti Fazal Khan Salarani Baghao. TSE-252601959793	5,000,000
3.	Construction & Development of Water Supply Scheme at Basti Ahmedani Uchari. TSE-252601959813	5,000,000
4.	Construction & Development of Water Supply Scheme at Basti Samel Shah Lakhi Bhar. TSE-252601959843	5,000,000
5.	Construction of Community Hall at Basti Zareef Khan Gajani Ibrahim Qasmani. TSE-252601959913	3,000,000
6.	Construction of Community Hall at Basti Musa Lohma Gambarg. TSE-252601959933	3,000,000
7.	Construction of Community Hall (3 Nos) at Basti Haji Ishaq Halyani, Basti Mir Hassan Halyani & Basti Haji Sattar Halyani. TSE-252601960023	4,500,000
8.	Construction of Community Hall at Basti Shah Gul Hasni Rarkan. TSE-252601960043	3,000,000
9.	Supply & Installation of Home Solar System for District Barkhan. TSE-252601960053	29,700,000
10.	Construction of Water Tank (12 Nos) at Noor Jan Rehmani, Din Muhammad Jawani, Nabi Bakht Phadal Kachhi, Bazgeer Rakhni, Machmani Rakhni, Haji Azeem Rind Chhapar, Basti Haliyani Baghao, Basti Tehrah Shah Bahodra, Basti Hassan Dahum, Basti Faiz Muhammad Sadarani, Basti Hameed Chanaal Rakhni & Baloch Khan Gadani Baghao. TSE-252601960063	8,400,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. **ELIGIBILITY:** All mandatory requirements are mentioned in Bidding documents for qualifying the eligibility criteria. **PROCEDURE OF PROCUREMENT:** Single stage – One envelope bidding procedure. **BID SECURITY:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **TENDER DOCUMENTS:** The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 1,000 PKR deposited in A/C 4081696202 NBP Barkhan. **ISSUANCE OF 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 ADDRESS:** Chief Officer District Council Barkhan **Phone No. 0333-6497412** **Email:** muhammaddinkhetran@gmail.com

AB No.768/28-01-2026
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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 Chalan in National Bank of Pakistan under the head of account C-0275-02.**

S.#	Name of Work	E/Cost (M)	Earnest Money 4% Through Call Deposit	Tender Fee	Time Limit
1	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI AWAL PATHAK KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601957803	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
2	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI BANDAT PATOZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601957863	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
3	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI SHEKHAN GHORIZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601957923	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
4	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI SIRKAI KHULGA UMARZAI IBRAHIMZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601957963	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
5	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI KHANO CHINA BADINI KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601957983	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
6	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI MALAK KARIM DAD BATOZAI IN KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601958033	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
7	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI KHALIFA & NANGA KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601958143	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
8	CONSTRUCTION OF WSS KILLI SHANAL GAT MANZAKAI BATOZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601958173	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
9	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI TAN NISHPA FOR TORGHAR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601958203	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
10	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI AGHBARGAI MUSLIM BAGH IN KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601958263	4.188	0.168	3000	30-05-2026
11	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI MIRA JAN SHINKAI KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601958373	3.041	0.121	1500	30-05-2026
12	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI JAMAT ABAD BATOZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601958413	2.002	0.080	650	30-05-2026
13	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY SCHEME KILLI SHINKAI MEROZAI KILLA SAIFULLAH. Supply & Installation of Solar Machinery. TSE - 252601958443	0.429	0.017	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 registration with, Tax authorities i.e. FBR / Balochistan Revenue Authority Tax Payer & active (NTN & BRA), registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC- for the year 2025-26) in relevant Category and specialized code is CE09 (Solar), EE11 (Solar only) (Solar Energy System) EE11, Firm must have valid Electrical Contractor license. ISO 9001:2015 Certificate. In comtact return of last three year. Firm must attached Dealership certificates as well as purchase documents i.e invoice bill of lading, goods declaration of solar panel. The bidder must have three assignment of similar nature of work (Solar based Pumping / Water Pumping Schemes) of last two year from PHE Department to 5.00 million. Firm experience with Government department with satisfactory performance certificate shall be considered. Firm may provide address & contact numbers of the Department for verification of their work order. Three work orders for solar based pumping of on-going schemes must be provided. Turn over last three years showing financial capacity of Contractor. Available credit limit line must be amounting to 5.00 million. Firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Declaration of non-blacklisting on company letter head by the bidder The pipe supplier must be manufacturer of pipe. **Method of Procurement:** Single stage, one envelope procedure. **Bidding / Tender Documents:** **Issuance:-** Tender Contractor documents will be issued from the date of advertisement published in newspaper on presentation of requisite documents i.e Tender Fee (Not-refundable). Bid security/earnest money, valid Engineering Council Certificate in relevant /required category, I/Tax certificate (NTN) etc. **Submission:** Last date for submission of documents from advertisement published in newspaper up to 13th February 2026, at 11:00 AM. **Opening:-** The tenders will be opened on 13th February 2026, at 12:00 AM. **Place of Issuance, submission inquires and opening will be:** Address: Public Health Engineering, Division Killa Saifullah. The terms and conditions can be seen / obtain from Office of the undersigned. (Phone No. 0823-610233) (Fax No. 0823-610233) **Email Address:** abduhalaleemkfs@gmail.com.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Public Health Engineering
Division Killa Saifullah.

PRQ No.3506/28-01-2026
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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 Qudus 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 Loralai Top were safely rescued, averting any damage to life or property.

Key routes cleared included the Quetta-Loralai Top-Ziarat Road, Ziarat-Sanjavi Road (Kotal and Chotir sections), and Quid-e-Azam Residency Road. Snow removal 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, thesildars, 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-Sanjavi Road receiving around 24 inches.



GWADAR: MPA Gwadar Maulana Hidayat ur Raman 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 Razaq Khajjak 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 Zhob 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 delays.

Regarding Phase Two, Abdul Razaq Khajjak 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 Saddar Quetta Captain (ret) 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, Samungli 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.



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 Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Khan Bugti and Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani and the clear instructions of Secretary Education Department Asfandiyar Khan, he mentioned.

Dr. Gulab Khan Khilji said that compared to previous years, not only the cost of publishing textbooks was significantly reduced, but also the old curriculum of the 1977s was completely replaced and a new curriculum was introduced that is compatible with the requirements of the modern era.

He said that this success is a manifestation of the hard work, dedication and professional skills of the officers and staff of the Balochistan Textbook

Board.

According to the department's report, 92 lakh 54 thousand 625 textbooks were published in the academic year 2023-24 at a cost of Rs 2 billion 12 crore 46 lakh, while in 2024-25, Rs 1 billion 8 crore 66 lakh was spent on the publication of 93 lakh 9 thousand books, 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 paise 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 paise 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 Kila 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 drugs, 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.



QUETTA: Retired employees of Federal Levies Force protest for acceptance of demands at Quetta Press Club.

Jaffarabad intensifies polio fight as DC calls for united community action

Independent Report

JAFFARABAD: Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan has emphasized that the active participation of parents and local communities is crucial to the success of the ongoing anti-polio campaign, urging citizens to extend full co-operation to vaccination teams to help make the district polio-free.

He made these remarks while formally launching the district-wide anti-polio drive by administering polio drops to children. The inauguration ceremony was attended by District Health Officer Dr Abdul Mannan Lakht, PPHI DSM Faisal Iqbal Khosa,

representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO), and senior officials from the health department.

After the launch, a detailed review meeting was convened under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan, during which officials briefed participants on the planning, logistics, and arrangements finalized for the campaign.

Addressing the meeting, the deputy commissioner said the polio eradication initiative must succeed under all circumstances, with all available resources deployed to ensure the widest possible coverage.

Independent Report

LORALAI: SSP Loralai Malik Muhammad Asghar Usman has reiterated that criminals in the district will face strict action and that law enforcement will be upheld without compromise. The statement came during a meeting with a delegation from Anjuman Tajran Balochistan (Rahim Aga Group), led by district president Haji Abdul Ghaffar Nasir. The delegation, which included Haji Abdul Ghani Nasir, Fayyaz Ahmed, Tariq Shah Kakar, Abdul Khaliq Nasir, Abdul Qadir Nasir, and Sher Zaman Hanif, praised the police for their effective operations against thieves and robbers, acknowledging the department's role in restoring law and order.

SSP Usman thanked the delegation for their appreciation and assured that police actions against criminal elements would continue to intensify. He emphasized that safeguarding the lives and property of residents remains the highest priority and confirmed that efforts to dismantle criminal networks in the district are ongoing and relentless.

All teams must work hard for success of polio drive to start on Feb 2: DC Quetta

QUETTA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini on Wednesday said that all teams should work hard and demonstrate responsibility for the success of the polio campaign to be launched on February 2. He said this while chairing a review meeting regarding the preparations for the five-day anti-polio campaign starting from February 2.

The meeting was attended by District Health Officer Dr. M. Mandokhel, District Polio Coordinator, WHO and other relevant agencies. While giving a briefing in the meeting, it was informed that during the anti-polio campaign

starting from February 2, about 400,000 children will be vaccinated against polio in Quetta district.

During the meeting, a detailed review of the security plan, monitoring plan, formation of teams and other administrative matters for the polio campaign was taken. It was informed in the briefing that a total of 1818 teams will participate in the anti-polio campaign, while 1420 police personnel will provide security for the polio teams. On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner Quetta directed that special monitoring teams be formed where polio coverage is weak so that the campaign is effective and successful.



QUETTA: CEO Arya Hospital Dr. Sohail Ahmed meeting with Principal Secretary to CM Imran Zarkoon.

Barkhan draws hard line on polio as administration enforces total immunization drive

Independent Report

BARKHAN: Deputy Commissioner Barkhan Abdullah Khosa has ordered uncompromising implementation of the forthcoming anti-polio campaign, making it clear that no negligence will be accepted and that every child missed in earlier rounds must be vaccinated without exception.

Presiding over a high-level meeting to review preparations for the campaign, the deputy commissioner said that achieving 100 percent coverage remains the foremost objective of the district administration. The session was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Hafeezullah Qaisrani, District Health Officer Dr Mujeer ur Rehman Bugti, Polio Monitoring Officer Dr Nasir Khethran, and senior officials from the health department and district administration.

During the meeting, officials conducted an in-depth review of operational planning, team performance, security measures, and conditions in sensitive and high-risk localities. DC Abdullah Khosa stressed

that special attention must be given to remote areas and communities where resistance to vaccination persists.

He directed concerned departments to further strengthen awareness efforts aimed at convincing parents who refuse polio drops, while also ensuring robust security and close monitoring of vaccination teams throughout the campaign.

Participants were informed that the district-wide anti-polio campaign will begin on February 2, with all logistical and administrative arrangements already finalized. Under the plan, vaccination teams will carry out door-to-door visits to administer polio drops to children under five years of age.

Reaffirming the administration's commitment, DC Abdullah Khosa instructed officers to remain actively present in the field, submit daily performance reports, and ensure full coverage in every union council. He emphasized that universal immunization is essential to eliminating polio from Barkhan at the earliest possible stage.



JAFFARABAD: Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan inaugurates anti-polio campaign by administering drops to a child.

Gwadar MoU signed for drinkable water, health facilities, clean environment

GWADAR (INP): In order to ensure potable water, urgent medical facilities and pollution-free environment to the citizens of Gwadar, Alkhidmat Foundation Balochistan and Gwadar Municipal Committee (GMC) signed a landmark MoU, according to a Gwadar Pro's report.

As per the MoU signed by Gwadar Municipal Committee Chairman Majid Johar and Alkhidmat Foundation Balochistan president Abdul Majed, collaboration and joint work will ease the public daily life.

Under the MoU, Alkhidmat Foundation Gwadar will install water filtration plants in various areas. It will also make available the facility of water boring as per the demand.

Gwadar Municipal Committee will build a 20,000-gallon underground water tank.

will set up an emergency response center on its premises where Alkhidmat foundation will not only provide necessary items and modern equipment but also arrange professional training for the staff.

The MoU also encompasses social welfare projects under which disabled people will be provided wheelchairs.

Besides, in connection with the "Green and Clean" project, big and small plants will be provided to all and sundry. Later, GMC handed over a letter to Alkhidmat Foundation requesting it to ensure the provision of Fiber Rescue Boats.

The letter said that fishermen often have to lose their lives having gone through critical hardships due to engine breakdowns and heavy storms in the open ocean. If Fiber Rescue boats are ensured, precious lives might be saved, letter added.



QUETTA: Provincial Secretary for Communication and Works Babar Khan presides over the meeting to review on-going development projects of Sibi Zone.

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 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 proscribed organisations”.

Mentioning X posts made by Imaan Mazari-Hazir in favour of Mahrang Baloch and the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, the order noted that several had been reposted 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 the 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 chiefs 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-

ercise. But the bill has now stopped the ECP from putting the asset statement on the website. It may appear unimportant, but it reflects the mindset of our representatives to avoid any public accountability.

Defending the bill, the federal law minister contended that it empowers the legislative bodies to exercise greater control over the transparency of financial disclosures. One wonders what this controlled transparency means. The conviction of Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Chattha for criticising and questioning the action of the state is a travesty of justice. It also exposes the weakness of the state in not being willing to face public scrutiny of its actions. To raise voice for the victims of state excesses is not an anti-state act. A state becomes strong not by usurping people’s fundamental rights but by allowing itself to be held accountable by those it claims to represent. What we are witnessing is an unaccountable state where power is exercised without any transparency, oversight, or liability.

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

Every few months, Pakistani officialdom and its associated stakeholders return to a familiar, comforting refrain: how Pakistan must ‘exit the IMF’. The vocabulary is predictable and well-rehearsed: exports, productivity, human capital, technology, governance, national coordination. These concepts are presented as panaceas, as if merely invoking them charts a path to freedom from the Fund. What is almost always missing is the road to get there. The discussion rarely addresses concrete policy actions, operational instruments and institutional changes needed to achieve the objective. Wishes are communicated as targets, outcomes are mistaken for reforms, and reform itself is reduced to rhetoric.

Most ‘exit plans’ suffer from a basic flaw which confuses aspirations with instruments. Saying exports must rise is not a policy. Declaring that human capital must improve is not reform. Calling for better coordination or implementation is not an

economic strategy. These are desired results, not mechanisms. The real question is far simpler and far more uncomfortable: what specific changes will alter behaviour tomorrow morning?

This 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 convoluted 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 distortional 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, eroding 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 rant 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 anyhow 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 Israeli-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. A hi-tech 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 crow about has been followed by almost 500 murders by the Israel Defence Forces, including children and journalists, and the demolition of thousands of buildings. The genocide never ended, and the BoP has a recipe for completing it.

At Davos, the US president trumpeted his stature as the self-ordained saviour of Western civilisation. The Canadian PM took a different tack but cast himself in a similar role. Frankly, neither of them fits the bill as a great white hope, with one proclaiming a new world disorder and the other lamenting a status quo ante that benefited the few and dispossessed the many.

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.”

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.

‘Boy oh boy’**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 ‘larkey walley aa gaye’. 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.

The seemingly innocent-sounding term has a sinister psychological and

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, may 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’ vicarious 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, add-

ing that the state is now ensuring training, market access, and employment opportunities.

She said that over 200,000 young people across Punjab have gained access to improved livelihood opportunities, while government teams have been dispatched to the Gulf region to explore job markets for Pakistani youth. She noted that skilled workers are earning up to \$500 per month by working from home after completing vocational training in fields such as tile fixing, welding, electrical wiring, IT, and e-commerce.

Highlighting future-oriented reforms, CM Maryam Nawaz said artificial 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 Alam 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 detailed 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 Sheringal, posing a serious threat to the environment and valuable national resources.



ISLAMABAD: A visitor keenly viewing artwork displayed 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.



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has launched Parwaz Card, Rah-e-Rozgar and Skill Development Portal.

NAB, Sindh Govt agree on joint action against state land fraud

KARACHI (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Sindh government have agreed to carry out joint action against fraud involving state-owned land, reaffirming their commitment to the recovery and protection of public assets.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and NAB Chairman Lieutenant General @ Nazir Ahmed held an important meeting at the Chief Minister House, where both sides reiterated their resolve to work together for the recovery of illegally occupied government land.

During the meeting, the NAB chairman presented the chief minister with a detailed report and documents related to the recovery of state land and its handover to the Sindh government.

A briefing informed the chief minister that investigations in 188 cases related to government land had been completed, resulting in the recovery of more than 461,000 acres from land grabbers.

The NAB chairman further briefed that 635 acres of evacuee land in Karachi had been recovered, along with 350 acres of re-

claimed coastal land in Clifton Blocks I and II. Additionally, 400,000 acres of forest land in Thatta and Sujawal were retrieved from illegal occupation.

It was also shared that in Jamshoro, after the cancellation of 83 fake revenue entries, 1,040 acres of land were recovered. The NAB chairman appreciated the role played by the Sindh government in these recoveries.

The NAB chairman said that the success of land recoveries is clear evidence of effective cooperation between NAB and the provincial administration.

Minister says: Govt committed to strengthen social protection through digital reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Syed Inam Ahmad Shah Wednesday said the government is committed to strengthening social protection systems through transparency, digital reforms and stronger coordination among welfare institutions to ensure timely relief to the country's most vulnerable segments. He expressed these views while chairing a high-level meeting to review the one-year performance of the Ministry's ancillary organizations.

Senior officials from Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM), Benazir Income Support Programme

(BISP), Trust for Voluntary Organizations (TVO) and Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) briefed the Minister on ongoing initiatives related to poverty graduation, climate resilience, social protection and other key areas.

The Minister appreciated the transparency, accountability and effective implementation mechanisms adopted by the institutions. He particularly commended BISP Secretary Amir Ahmad Ali for the programme's digital initiatives, terming the introduction of BISP Digital Wallets a significant step towards improved service delivery.

11 killed, 1,341 injured in road accidents across Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Eleven people were killed and 1,341 others injured in 1,188 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours, according to a report, issued by the Punjab Emergency Service (PES), commonly known as Rescue-1122, here on Wednesday.

As many as 526 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 815 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams. The data analysis showed that 780 drivers, 46 underage drivers, 161 pedestrians and 411 passengers were among the victims of road crashes. The statistics showed that 205 accidents were reported in Lahore.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik, met with Alexis Roig, Chief Executive Officer of SciTech DiploHub.

Punjab to establish Anti-Rape Crisis Cells in tehsil-level hospitals: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique on Wednesday said that the provincial government has decided to establish Anti-Rape Crisis Cells in tehsil-level hospitals on the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at the Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education. Matters of mutual interest, particularly regarding the establishment and expansion of Anti-Rape Crisis Cells, were discussed during the meeting.

The provincial health minister said that under the traditional investigation system, victims are forced to visit multiple departments, causing further distress. The Anti-Rape Crisis Cells, headed, provide complete facilitation and support to women victims

of sexual violence in their pursuit of justice.

"Societies that fail to protect their children cannot progress," he said, stressing that all stakeholders must play their due role in building a healthy and safe society. He said these cells offer legal protection along with psychological and social support to victims, while proper collection of evidence at the Anti-Rape Crisis Cells is of utmost importance.

Khawaja Salman Rafique said the scope of Anti-Rape Crisis Cells would be expanded across the province, adding that societies that do not respect women descend into lawlessness.

He assured that strict legislation and its implementation would be ensured throughout Punjab. He informed that Anti-Rape Crisis Cells are already fully functional in Lahore, Bahawalpur and Multan.

Two Indhar gang dacoits killed

LAHORE (APP): The joint Katcha operation of Punjab and Sindh police is continuing, during which two dangerous dacoits of the notorious Indhar gang were killed, a Punjab Police spokesperson said on Wednesday.

According to details, the dacoits were identified as Asghar Mallah and Sharif Gopang. District Police Officer (DPO) Rahim Yar Khan Irfan Ali Samo said that the eliminated criminals were involved in heinous crimes including the martyrdom of police officials, kidnapping for ransom, murder and robbery.

He said the dacoits were considered symbols of fear in the area. Bulletproof jackets and modern weapons were recovered from their possession, spokesperson added.

The DPO further said that a joint search operation is still underway in the area and actions will continue until the complete restoration of law and order.

Governor Kundi visits Bara, reaffirms support for Tirah TDPs

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi visited Bara tehsil of merged district Khyber on Wednesday and attended a relief distribution ceremony for the affectedes of Tirah Valley organized by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) at Dogra.

The Governor, accompanied by Leader of the Opposition in the KP Assembly Dr Ibadullah Khan, Chairman PRCS Imran Wazir met local elders of Bara and temporary displaced persons (TDPs) from Tirah Valley.

On the instructions of the Governor of Punjab, PRCS Punjab dispatched relief consignments which were distributed by PRCS Merged Districts. The relief packages, each weighing 20 kilograms, included flour, rice, sugar, ghee, other essential food items and bottles of clean drinking water. Besides, PRCS

Merged Districts has set up a medical camp in Bara where affectedes are being provided medical treatment along with free medicines.

Talking to the media, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said he visited Bara to assess ground realities. He said statements by the Chief Minister and provincial leaders had created an impression that a military operation would soon be launched in Tirah, while the federal government had already clarified its position.

He said irresponsible statements by the provincial government forced the people of Tirah to migrate, claiming that nearly 60 percent of the displacement occurred due to statements issued by PTI and the provincial government.

He urged the provincial government to improve governance and form a committee to engage with the federal government, assuring cooperation.



LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Information Azma Bokhari addressing a Press conference regarding Ramzan Nigehban Package. Parliamentary Secretary Shazia Rizwan is also present.

Punjab govt launches Rs 47b Nigehban Ramazan Package for 4.2m families: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari on Wednesday announced that the Punjab government is launching a Rs 47 billion Nigehban Ramazan Package this year, aimed at providing relief to approximately 4.2 million deserving families across the province.

Addressing a press conference at the Directorate General Public Relations (DGPR), she said the assistance will be delivered directly to beneficiaries through Nigehban Ramzan Cards, ensuring transparent and dignified doorstep relief.

The package targets families with a monthly in-

come below Rs45,000, while Maryam Nawaz Rashan Card holders, including labourers and the Suthra Punjab workforce, will receive additional support.

Azma Bokhari revealed that the amount under the Maryam Nawaz Rashan Card has been increased from Rs3,000 to Rs10,000 for Ramzan, enabling families to meet their essential needs with dignity.

She further announced that "Nigehban Ramzan - Maryam Ke Mehman Dastarkhwan" will be set up in every tehsil, where at least 2,000 people will be served Iftar daily.

Secretary Information & PIO congratulate newly elected body of RIUJ

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Ashfaq Ahmed Khalil, and Principal Information Officer (PIO), Mo Bashir Hassan, have extended their heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected office bearers of the Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ) on their victory in the recent elections.

Both the officials, in a news statement, felicitated Asif Bashir Chaudhry on his election as President.

Bashir Usmani as General Secretary, and Izhar Khan Niazi as Finance Secretary.

They also conveyed their best wishes to Vice Presidents Tauseef Abbasi and Rasheed Malik, as well as Joint Secretaries Raja Imran Janjua and Rana Farhan Aslam.

The Federal Secretary and the PIO lauded the role of the RIUJ, stating that the union plays a vital part in protecting the collective interests of the journalistic community.



KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon reviews development projects at NIPA Chowrang.

LHC reviews plea against social media ban for children under 16

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has taken up a petition challenging the proposed ban on social media use for children under 16, emphasizing the matter's sensitivity and the need for a thorough government policy review. Chief Justice Alia Neelam heard the petition filed by an eighth-grade student seeking reconsideration of the proposed restriction. The petition argues that social media, while having certain drawbacks, plays a key role in communication and learning for young people.

Justice Alia Neelam described the issues as "sensitive" and directed that all concerned parties, including the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the Ministry of Law and Justice, submit their responses by February 10.

The Chief Justice emphasized that the use of social media by minors should not only be addressed through legal measures but also through comprehensive government policies. "This should also be a policy measure of the government," she noted. Authorities representing the PTA and other departments are expected to detail their positions on the psychological



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi and Opposition leader Dr. Ibad Ullah Khan being briefed about Relief Package Distribution among the Tirah IDPs by PRCS Merged Districts branch during his visit to Tehsil Bara district Khyber.

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 capabilities, 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.

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 on 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-

velopment Authority of Pakistan's (TDAP) December 2025 Monthly Trade Report, Pakistan's goods exports fell sharply to \$2.317 billion in December FY2025-26, compared with \$2.911 billion in December FY2024-25, reflecting a 20.41% year-on-year decline.

During the same month, goods imports increased to \$6.022 billion from \$5.904 billion, up 2%, pushing the monthly trade deficit to \$3.705 billion, widening from \$2.993 billion last year, with an increase of 23.79%.

Russian ambassador visits SCCI to boost Pak-Russia trade ties

SIALKOT (APP): A high-level diplomatic engagement at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) was held in collaboration with Regional Rapport, Islamabad on Wednesday.

The Chamber had the honour of welcoming Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan Albert P. Khorev, accompanied by Trade Representative Denis Nevzorov, Chief of Protocol Sergey Chekalin, third Secretary (Bilateral Section) Anton Vereshchagin and Executive Director, Regional Rapport

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.



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

Govt assures adequate wheat stocks across all provinces

ISLAMABAD (APP): The committee reviewed the wheat supply position across the country and expressed satisfaction over the availability of sufficient stocks to meet national wheat requirements for the current food year.

It was categorically stated that there is no shortage of wheat and that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure smooth availability of wheat until the upcoming harvesting season.

The committee discussed provincial procurement strategies and emphasized the importance of

said a press release.

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The committee discussed provincial procurement strategies and emphasized the importance of

protecting farmers from exploitation. Provinces briefed the meeting on measures being taken to ensure that farmers receive fair economic returns, particularly through effective monitoring and implementation at the district level.

The role of the private sector in wheat procurement was also reviewed, with assurances that regulatory mechanisms are being enforced to safeguard farmers' interests.

Inter-provincial coordination was a key focus of the meeting.

Pakistan, Sri Lanka agree to deepen economic cooperation at 13th JEC session

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

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.



Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik addressing the Pak China Minerals Cooperation Forum in Islamabad.

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 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' incomes.

reviewed a handicrafts exhibition organized by the chamber, in which women displayed a range of handcrafted 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 Sanf-e-Ahan Conference at CCI Haripur, where she was warmly received by President CCI Malik Umair Khalid, Executive Member Syed Ahmed Jan Sikandar, and other members of the chamber.

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

The Chairperson also

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, Engro Elengy Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively on Tuesday. Meanwhile another container carrier 'Ren Jian-26' also arrived at outer anchorage on Wednesday early morning. A total of nine ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a General cargo carrier 'Gio vanni Topic'.

Net metering credit issue resolved after minister's intervention

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Power Division Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari has taken notice of complaints regarding non-crediting of net metering users' units under Power Planning and Monitoring Company (PPMC) instructions.

Following the minister's directives, PPMC promptly reviewed the instructions sent to all power distribution companies (DISCOs) regarding the credit of units of net metering consumers. The issue of crediting units is resolved after issuance of revised directives, said a statement issued on Wednesday.

As per details some net metering consumers have installed systems ex-

ceeding the approved capacity under their license (DG Capacity).

As a result, during the previous month, a few such consumers were not provided any credit for the electricity they exported to the grid. Clarifying the issue, the Power Division stated that this method was incorrect. Under the revised directives, only the units generated beyond the approved capacity will not be credited.

After the revised instructions Now, credit will be given for units supplied to the national grid, as per the approved capacity.

The Power Division further confirmed that all DISCOs have been issued directives in this regard for immediate implementation.



Farmers in Hyderabad Pack Unripe Vegetables for Market Dispatch.

Aurangzeb vows to address textile sector challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, here on Wednesday assured the textile industry of the government's continued engagement to address key challenges facing the sector.

The minister, along with Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, was talking to a delegation of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA), according to press release issued by finance ministry.

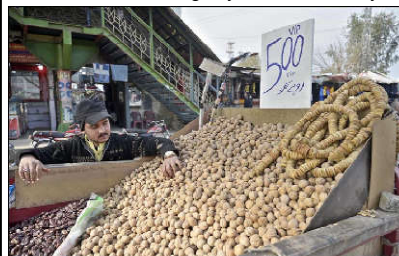
During the meeting, the Ministers emphasized that the textile industry remained a cornerstone of Pakistan's economy due to its significant contribution to exports, employment and industrial activity, and reiterated the government's resolve to support its sustainability within the broader economic reform framework.

The Ministers further reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintaining

a fair and predictable policy environment for businesses, highlighting the importance of equity, transparency and broad-based participation across the economy. It was emphasized that efforts are underway to address genuine concerns of compliant sectors, while advancing structural reforms through consultation and institutional processes.

Aurangzeb acknowledged the concerns raised by the delegation and stated that the government was actively reviewing various issues affecting the cost of doing business for export-oriented industries.

He noted that energy affordability and reliability remain important priorities and that relevant options are being examined in consultation with concerned ministries and stakeholders to improve efficiency and competitiveness, while ensuring fiscal responsibility and system sustainability.



RAWALPINDI: A vendor sells a variety of dry fruits at Faizabad as demand rises amid chilly weather following a drop in temperature in the twin cities.

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 the 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 Balochistan, 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 supported 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.



Emergency personnel and people gather at the site of a plane crash, in which Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others were killed, in Baramati, Maharashtra, India.

Indian deputy state leader killed in plane crash

MUMBAI (AFP/APP): An Indian state's deputy leader was killed along with four other people on Wednesday after their chartered aircraft crashed in the country's west, officials said.

The plane carrying Ajit Pawar, Maharashtra's deputy chief minister, crashed in an open field at about 8:44 am (0314 GMT) while landing at the state's Baramati airport, the civil aviation ministry said in a statement.

The 66-year-old, a key political figure in Maharashtra which is home to India's financial hub Mumbai, was travelling in a Bombardier Learjet 45 aircraft, operated by private firm VSR Aviation.

Pawar's personal security officer and an assistant as well as two crew

members were also on board at the time of the crash, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said in a statement.

VSR Aviation owner V.K. Singh said the aircraft was "very well maintained", ruling out any technical failure.

"There was absolutely no problem in the aircraft. There was no technical failure as far as we know," he told reporters in New Delhi where the company is based.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Pawar as a "leader of the people" in a post on X following the crash.

Modi said Pawar's death was "shocking and saddening", calling him a "widely respected" and "hardworking" political stalwart.

Death toll from Indonesia's landslide rises to 50

JAKARTA (QNA/APP): The death toll from last weekend's landslide in West Java, Indonesia, has risen to 50, with 33 people still missing. West Java Police spokesman Hendra Rochmawan said, Wednesday, that the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) team received 50 body bags from the landslide site in West Bandung following additional recovery operations conducted by joint search and rescue teams, noting that 34 victims were successfully identified. Heavy rain triggered the landslide that barreled through Pasirlangu on Saturday, wrecking dozens of homes and displacing hundreds.

A total of 50 victims had been identified by 6:30 pm (1130 GMT) on Wednesday, Ade Dian Permana, head of the Bandung Search and Rescue Agency, said in a statement. The number of people

still missing was revised down to 27, he said, from an earlier tally of 32. Rescuers have been scouring the unstable area in Java island's West Bandung region by hand and using heavy equipment. But they are treading carefully for fear of more landslides due to severe weather.

The navy said on Monday that 23 troops, who were training in the area ahead of a deployment to Indonesia's border with Papua New Guinea, were among those caught in the landslide. The disaster seriously damaged more than 50 houses and displaced more than 650 people, according to local authorities.

West Java's governor Dedi Mulyadi blamed the landslide on the sprawling plantations around Pasirlangu, which is mostly used to grow vegetables, and pledged to relocate affected residents.



Indonesian rescue members carry a body bag containing the remains of a victim from the site of a landslide following heavy rains in Pasir Langu village, West Bandung regency, West Java province, Indonesia.

Russia's military chief visits troops in east Ukraine: defence ministry

MOSCOW (AFP/APP): The Russian army's chief of staff, Valery Gerasimov, has visited troops fighting in eastern Ukraine, Russia's defence ministry said on Tuesday.

Gerasimov "inspected the progress of combat missions conducted by formations and units of the Zapad (West) force group," the ministry wrote on Telegram, without providing details on when or where the visit took place.

The announcement of his visit came days after US-brokered trilateral talks in the United Arab Emirates between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators, aimed at ending the nearly four-year conflict.

The next round is expected to take place on February 1, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Polish migrants return home to a changed country

WARSAW (AFP/APP): Unemployment was soaring and the country was in economic turmoil when Monika Pudlik first left Poland to find a job in Ireland just over two decades ago.

Now, Poland is thriving and, like tens of thousands of her fellow citizens, she is planning to return to her home in the central city of Plock.

"Poland looks completely different than it did over 20 years ago," said Pudlik, a 48-year-old machine operator. "I see many more opportunities for myself."

Since leaving in 2004 - 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.



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 Pretti 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.

Republican quits US governor race after deadly federal shootings

MINNEAPOLIS (AFP/APP): A Republican candidate for governor of Minnesota withdrew from the race Monday in protest at the

Trump administration's immigration crackdown in Minneapolis that has resulted in two civilian deaths at the hands of federal agents.

The rare move highlighted deep political and legal tensions over immigration enforcement that have thrust the Midwestern state and its largest city into the international spotlight.

Chris Madel, a Minneapolis attorney known for defending law-enforcement officers, had been seeking the Republican

nomination in a crowded field, but criticized his party's response in the resignation video posted to social media.

"I cannot support the national Republicans' stated retribution on the citizens of our state," he said, signaling a profound break with the party establishment. "Nor can I count myself a member of a party that would do so."

Madel drew widespread attention recently for providing legal counsel to Jonathan Ross, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent who fatally shot Renee Good, a 37-year-old Minneapolis woman, on January 7.

Syrian leader to meet Putin, Russia seeks deal on military bases

MOSCOW (AFP/APP): Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa will meet Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Wednesday, as the Kremlin seeks to secure the future of its military bases in the country.

Putin and Sharaa struck a conciliatory tone at their previous meeting in October, their first since Sharaa's rebel forces toppled Moscow-ally Bashar al-Assad in 2024.

But Russia's continued sheltering of Assad and his wife since their ouster remains a thorny issue. Sharaa has repeatedly pushed Russia for their extradition.



A man is tackled after spraying an unknown substance at US Representative Ilhan Omar during a town hall she was hosting in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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.

Delcy Rodriguez, who was vice president and now acting president, "is well aware of the fate of Maduro," Rubio would tell 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.

"Make no mistake, as the president has stated, we are prepared to use force to ensure maximum cooperation if other methods fail," he said in the prepared testimony, referring to President Donald Trump.

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 commandos raided Caracas on January 3 and seized Maduro, a longtime leftist nemesis of Washington, and his wife, Cilia Flores.

Mexico president asks South Korea for additional BTS concerts

A S T A N A (KAZINFORMAPP): Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum has sent a diplomatic letter to South Korean President Lee Jae Myung requesting assistance in arranging additional concerts by South Korean group BTS in Mexico amid record demand for tickets, Kazinform News Agency reports.

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.

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

whole, can defend itself without the US - keep on dreaming. You can't," Rutte told lawmakers at the European Parliament.

He said that EU countries would have to double defence spending from the five percent NATO target agreed last year to 10 percent and spend "billions and billions" on building nuclear arms. "You would lose the ultimate guarantor of our freedom, which is the US nuclear umbrella," the former Dutch prime minister said. "So hey, good luck." France's foreign minister Jean-Noel Barrot hit back at the NATO chief's statements, posting on X on Monday evening that "Europeans can and must take responsibility for their own security".

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, watched the test-firing of a "large-caliber" multiple rocket launcher that fired four missiles, KCNA said.

"The result and sig-

nificance of this test will be a source of excruciating mental agony and serious threat to the forces that attempt to provoke a military confrontation with us," Kim said.

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.

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 administration is evaluating whether the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents who gunned down 37-year-old Alex Pretti 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 "general guidance" to immigration agents in Minnesota.

Trump, meanwhile, told Fox News that the administration 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 headline Border Patrol commander who is now expected to leave the city, was "a pretty out-there kind of a guy" whose presence 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 northeastern Kharkiv region, a drone hit a carriage of a train transporting nearly 200 passengers, killing at least five people, Ukraine's Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko posted on X.

"There is not and cannot be any military justification 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 southern city of Odesa, regional officials said.

The Black Sea city key for Ukrainian exports has been routinely pummelled by Russian forces. Regional governor

Oleg Kiper said a woman, 39 weeks pregnant, and two girls were among the wounded.

An AFP journalist at the scene saw the collapsed facade of a residential building and rescue workers searching the rubble for victims.

Zelensky said the bombardment undermined peace efforts and urged allies to step up pressure on Moscow to end the war.

"Every such Russian strike erodes the diplomacy that is still ongoing and undermines the efforts of partners who are helping to end this war," he wrote on social media.

Deadly strikes on energy infrastructure that have left many Ukrainians without power in freezing temperatures have continued since Russian and Ukrainian negotiators met in the United Arab Emirates last week for US-brokered talks aimed at ending the conflict.

The next round is expected to take place on February 1, according to Zelensky.

Ukrainian private energy firm DTEK said Russian forces had inflicted "enormous" damage on one of its facilities in the Odesa region overnight.

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: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan presides over high level meeting of NHA.

Politicizing terrorism against national interests, unity imperative: Amir Muqam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engr Amir Muqam Wednesday said that politicising every issue was against the national interests and stressed that terrorism was not the problem of any single political party or government, but of the entire nation, requiring collective resolve and unity.

Talking to the media on the sidelines of the "Kashmir: Wait & See" exhibition closing ceremony at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), the minister said intelligence-based operations were being carried out across the country under a single policy and there had been no change in the operational framework in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He rejected what he called misleading propaganda regarding the situation in Tirah, saying that all matters had been openly discussed in the cabinet and a clear decision had been taken to approve Rs4 billion. He said deputy commissioners, commissioners and government representatives had remained part of continuous negotiations.

Amir Muqam said spreading fear among the

public by distorting facts was unfair, adding that if there was any alternative to intelligence-based operations, it should be presented.

He said despite 12 years in power, no alternative roadmap for sustainable peace had been given.

He said double standards on terrorism were unacceptable and urged the provincial government to focus on public safety, economic challenges and governance instead of blame games.

He maintained that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was receiving its due share under the NFC Award on a regular basis, like other provinces, and called for a transparent account of the utilisation of resources.

"The chief minister is the representative of the entire province, not of a single slogan or individual. Politics is everyone's right, but presenting solutions is also necessary," he added.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi also spoke to the media and said the provincial government was unwilling to sit with the federal government, which, he said, was not in the interest of the province.



QUETTA: Director General Public Relations Muhammad Noor Khetran and Deputy Commissioner Quetta Captain (ret'd) Mehrullah Badini meeting with Principal Secretary to CM Imran Zarkoon.

Commissioner directs to end encroachments on all storm drains of Quetta city

QUETTA (APP): Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzeb Khan Kakar on Wednesday directed that a comprehensive plan would be formulated to eliminate encroachments and illegal occupations on all the storm drains of the city and accelerate cleaning process of them on emergency basis.

He said this while conducting a detailed inspection of various storm drains of Quetta city.

On this occasion, Director Development Quetta Division Zahoor Ahmed, Action Irrigation Jalil Ahmed and officers and engineers of the relevant departments were also present.

The Commissioner Quetta Division was inspected at various parts of the Main City Drain including Mizan Chowk, Zarghun Road, Jail Road Hadda, University Drain, Lodkarez Drain and Kechi Beg Drain.

During the inspection, he was given a detailed

briefing regarding the condition of drain cleaning, encroachments, illegal encroachments and repair projects.

Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzeb Khan Kakar said that most of the storm drains of Quetta city have lost their original capacity due to garbage, encroachments and encroachments, which severely hinders the flow of rainwater.

He said that due to blockage in the drains, rainwater enters nearby settlements, causing difficulties and financial losses to the citizens.

The Commissioner Quetta Division further said that throwing garbage in the storm drains by the public is also a serious problem, as a result of which the drains often become blocked and heavy machinery and additional expenses have to be borne to open them.

He said that the public should also realize their responsibility in this regard.

Adviser for LG calls on Balochistan finance minister

QUETTA (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Nawabzada Amir Hamza Khan Zehri called on Balochistan Finance Minister Mir Shoaib Noshirwani on Wednesday.

The meeting discussed the overall situation of the province, local government affairs and the current political situation in detail.

During the meeting, various issues related to making the local government system effective, development projects and solving public problems were discussed.

On this occasion, both leaders agreed to promote mutual cooperation and take joint steps for the development of the province.

On this occasion, Secretary Finance Lal Jan Jafar, Secretary Local Government Rauf Baloch, Director General Local Government Ayub Qureshi, District Chairman Khuzdar Haji Salahuddin Zehri, Murtaza Badini and other relevant officials were also present.

Court disposes of two cases against Imran in Azadi March case

ISLAMABAD (INP): A court in Islamabad on Wednesday disposed of two cases registered against former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan in connection with the Haqqeeqi Azadi March in 2022.

Judicial Magistrate Azhar Nadeem heard the cases. Sardar Muhammad Masroof Advocate, who represented the former prime minister, told the court that both these cases dated back to 2022 and several suspects in these cases had already been acquitted.

He further said that the acquittal petition filed by his client had been pending in court for the last two years. "Moreover, my client is not being produced in the court either."

Masroof requested the court to adjourn the hearing until tomorrow. "I will give arguments for the acquittal of the PTI founder tomorrow," he went on to say that the court could also dispose of these cases. Following that, the court disposed of both these cases.

Two cases had been registered against Imran Khan at Kohsar Police Station of the federal capital.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzeb Khan Kakar being briefed by XEN Irrigation Jalil Ahmed regarding cleanliness of main city drainage.



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 Gerbehe 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 reaffirmed 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.

Minister orders early completion of key roads in KP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan 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-Jhand-Pindi Gheb Road and the Old Bannu Road Highway, which are expected to significantly enhance regional connectivity and facilitate economic activity, said a press release.

Addressing the timeline for 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.



QUETTA: DIGTAD Aitzaz Ahmed Goraya in a group photo with participants of three-day policy dialogue on the topic of "Countering Violent Extremism". Organized by Home Department of the Government of Balochistan.

Reinstatement does not guarantee back wages, clarifies Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan has laid down key legal principles regarding reinstatement and back wages for police employees, ruling that annulment of a dismissal order does not automatically entitle an employee to full salary and benefits for the intervening period.

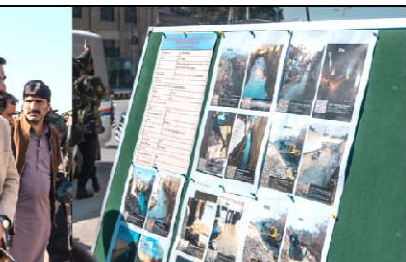
Instead, the authority to grant or deny back wages rests with the competent authority, which must exercise this discretion fairly, reasonably, and transparently.

In a reporting-approved detailed judgment, a five-member bench headed by Justice Shahid Waheed issued a consolidated decision on multiple civil appeals and petitions involving employees of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. Other members of the

bench included Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan, Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, and Justice Shakeel Ahmed.

The central question before the court was whether an employee, after reinstatement following the annulment of a dismissal order, is automatically entitled to full back wages and benefits for the dismissal period.

The court ruled that under Section 17 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Servants Act, 1973, the grant of back wages is a discretionary power, but this discretion is neither absolute nor arbitrary. It must be exercised in line with Article 10-A of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to a fair trial, and the broader principle of a "culture of justification."



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzeb Khan Kakar being briefed by XEN Irrigation Jalil Ahmed regarding cleanliness of main city drainage.

Transparency, digitization drive improved ministry's performance in 2025, says Sardar Yousaf

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Wednesday attributed the improved performance of the ministry over the past year to transparency, promotion of interfaith harmony and effective governance, reaffirming the commitment to ensuring better facilities for pilgrims and promoting the true message of Islam.

While sharing the performance of the ministry from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025, with the media, the minister said that for the first time in Pakistan's history an International Qirat Competition was held from November 24 to 29, 2025 at the Jinnah Convention Centre, Islamabad, with participants from 37 countries.

He said such initiatives enhanced youth interest in religious activities and projected Pakistan's positive religious image at the international level, adding that more countries would be included in future competitions.

Sardar Yousaf said national-level competitions of Hifz-ul-Quran and Husn-e-Qirat were also held in September 2025 after provincial rounds, featuring 10 categories for men, women, Huffaz, Qaris and youth.

According to the minister, prominent participants from previous national competitions were nominated to represent Pakistan in international contests in Dubai, Russia, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Morocco.

Highlighting steps taken to promote the Seerat of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Sardar Yousaf said the 50th Seerat Conference was held at the Convention Centre, Islamabad, under the OIC-declared theme "Nabi-ur-Rahma," marking 1,500 years since the blessed birth of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Nursing, paramedical staff backbone of healthcare system, says Mustafa Kamal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, emphasized that nursing plays a vital role in the healthcare sector, as doctors interact with patients for a limited period, whereas nurses and paramedical staff remain engaged in patient care for several hours.

Addressing a ceremony at Sultana Foundation on Wednesday, Mustafa Kamal praised the foundation for rendering valuable services in the fields of education and health for a long time, which is highly commendable.

He urged healthcare staff to treat patients with compassion and kindness, highlighting that hospitals are places where people turn in times of severe pain and distress.

He remarked that serving suffering humanity is among the noblest acts, and the reward for good deeds continues even after death.

Mustafa Kamal stressed that collective efforts are required to bring meaningful improvements in the health sector, adding that alongside the government, the private sector is also playing an important role in healthcare delivery.

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QUETTA: People enjoy snowfall in the Hanna Orak area of the city.

Quetta moves to end educational stagnation as administration orders revival of closed schools

Independent Report
QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini has unveiled a comprehensive plan to restore all non-functional schools in the district, declaring education a foremost priority and signaling firm administrative action to ensure uninterrupted learning for students.

The announcement was made during a high-level meeting in which DC Badini examined detailed reports submitted by Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) regarding inactive schools and the progress made on institutions already brought back into operation. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Muhammad

Anwar Kakar, the District Education Officer, District Finance Officer, representatives of RTMS, and other senior officials from the education department.

During the session, the deputy commissioner directed that schools located in low-population areas be merged with nearby functional institutions to optimize resources.

He further instructed that new school buildings be constructed in localities where student strength is adequate but educational infrastructure is lacking. Officials were told that a phased activation plan would be followed to ensure that all non-functional schools resume academic activities without delay.