

# Independent

Member APNS &amp; CPNE

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## Armed forces fully prepared to defend Pakistan against any threat: Field Marshal Asim

**COAS visits Bahawalpur Garrison, witnesses Field Exercise 'Steadfast Resolve'**

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ visited Bahawalpur Garrison and witnessed a high-intensity Field Exercise "Steadfast Resolve" at Khairpur Tamewali (KPT) encompassing integration of niche technologies like unmanned aerial systems (drones), advanced surveillance assets, Electronic Warfare assets and modern command-and-control mechanisms, reflecting the Armed Forces' focus on technology-enabled multi-domain operations.

The COAS was briefed on various operational, training and admin-

istrative aspects of the Corps, with special focus on preparations for multi-domain warfare, said a press release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

While addressing the troops, the COAS lauded their high morale, professional competence and operational preparedness.

He reaffirmed that the Pakistan Armed Forces remain fully prepared to defend Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity against all threats, emphasizing the need to maintain optimum readiness to meet the requirements of future Battle field and security challenges.

The COAS highlighted that Pakistan Armed

Forces are undergoing major transformation in multiple domains. Character of war has evolved massively, with technological advancements driving the evolution, dictating huge mental transformation at all tiers.

In future, technological manoeuvres will replace physical manoeuvres and will fundamentally alter the way offensive and defensive operations are undertaken. Therefore, Pakistan Armed Forces are embracing and absorbing technology at a rapid pace. In this process, innovation, indigenisation and adaptation shall remain fundamental. Earlier, the COAS & CDF also inaugurated the

*Continued on page 2*



Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir witnesses high-intensity exercise "Steadfast Resolve" at Khairpur Tamewali.

## CJP consults Bars on judicial reforms, citizen-centric justice

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Justice of Pakistan engaged with delegations from the District Bar Associations of Manshera and Kohat on Thursday as part of an ongoing stakeholder consultation process aimed at advancing judicial reforms and improving access to justice.

During the meeting at the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the Chief Justice discussed reform initiatives focused on citizen-centric justice and informed the delegations that he has personally visited remote areas across the country to identify coordination gaps in the timely disbursement of funds under the Access to Justice Fund Program.

To improve service delivery and address iden-

tified challenges, Resident Additional Secretaries have been appointed in the provinces, with priority given to projects such as solarization, establishment of e-libraries, women facilitation centres, and provision of clean drinking water.

The Chief Justice also shared progress on judicial reforms aimed at strengthening court infrastructure and enhancing public access to justice, noting that key initiatives are expected to be completed by August 2026.

The Kohat Bar delegation emphasized the importance of capacity building for young lawyers and welcomed the extension of e-library and clean drinking

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ISLAMABAD: The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, meeting with a delegation comprising members of the District Bar Association Kohat and the District Bar Association Manshera at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

## Provincial leadership steps up polio fight as Balochistan pushes toward total elimination

**Independent Report**

QUETTA: Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan, said the provincial government has intensified wide-ranging and result-oriented efforts to completely eliminate polio from the province, underlining that eradication of the crippling disease remains a non-negotiable priority.

Presiding over a meeting of the Provincial Task Force on Polio Eradication, the chief secretary stated that Balochistan has placed polio elimination at the forefront of its public health agenda, with sustained vaccination campaigns, rigorous oversight, and active community involvement forming the backbone of the strategy. He highlighted that no polio case was recorded in the province during 2025, calling it a clear indicator of the effectiveness of continued preventive measures.

He instructed all deputy commissioners to ensure that LQAS coverage in their districts exceeds 90 percent, stressing that achieving this benchmark is critical for the success of immunization drives. Shakeel Qadir Khan said the government is mobilizing all available resources to reinforce protective mechanisms, warning that polio remains a serious threat and must be eradicated without compromise.

The chief secretary emphasized that polio is a viral disease capable of causing permanent disability in children and reiterated that vaccination is the sole proven means of protection. He said special focus is being maintained on high-risk areas, noting that the province's efforts are vital not only for Balochistan but also for Pakistan's na

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## Ahsan lauds outstanding student Badria Rafique's performance of GU

QUETTA (APP): Federal Minister for Planning and Development, Ahsan Iqbal appreciated outstanding student Badria Rafique's performance of Gwadar University (GU). He expressed these views while holding a special meeting with Gwadar University (GU) students and encouraged them during a seminar arranged at Gwadar Port.

The minister especially lauded the exceptional performance of Gwadar University student Badria Rafique, who recently performed brilliantly by winning the first position in the English speech competition among all Pakistan universities in the Uraan Pakistan National Debate Competition, bringing the title of Best Speaker Debates to herself and the University of Gwadar.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Cabinet Ministers witnessing the exchange of Documents regarding Privatization of PIA between Arif Habib Consortium and the Government of Pakistan, in Islamabad

## CM Bugti says: Baloch and Pakistan are inseparable, our survival and prosperity lie together

**Announces landmark development package which include 50-bed hospital, completion of residential college & Naharkot Dam, granting Rakhni the status of a municipal committee, commencement of work on Rakhni Model Bazaar, establishment of Rakhni Press Club, launch of housing scheme**

RAKHNI (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has announced a comprehensive development package for the newly established Koh-e-Suleman Division, pledging that its creation will not remain symbolic but will be accompanied by the provision of basic facilities and infrastructure to ensure long-overdue progress in the region.

Addressing a large public gathering in Rakhni, declared as the divisional

headquarters, Sarfraz Bugti said the region had remained neglected for centuries and the government was now fully committed to taking responsibility for its development.

"The mountains of Koh-e-Suleman are not just a geographical landmark as it represent the history, honor, and homeland of brave tribes," Sarfraz Bugti remarked, calling the division's creation a major step toward ending backwardness and ensuring good

governance.

Expressing satisfaction over Rakhni's elevation from a union council to a divisional headquarters, the chief minister announced several key development initiatives. These include the establishment of a 50-bed hospital, completion of a residential college, completion of the Naharkot Dam, granting Rakhni the status of a municipal committee, immediate com

*Continued on page 2*



RAKHNI: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti addressing a huge public gathering on the eve of newly established Koh-e-Suleman Division and Rakhni as Divisional Headquarter.

## Pakistan committed to regional peace: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan is actively striving to promote peace and stability in the region amid a tense regional situation, Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said on Thursday.

Addressing a weekly media briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad, Tahir Andrabi said Pakistan's commitment to regional peace had also been highlighted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during his participation in the World Economic Fo-

rum. He said the prime minister attended the World Economic Forum and held several high-level sideline meetings with international leaders and global dignitaries.

The Foreign Office spokesperson said that the United States has upgraded its travel advisory for Pakistan, which will allow more people from the US to travel to Pakistan. He

*Continued on page 2*

## PTI warns of shutdown, wheel-jam if meetings with founder delayed

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has issued a strong political warning after a late-night core committee meeting, demanding access to its founder and announcing possible shutdown protests. The meeting also came amid fresh internal changes, with senior leaders stepping down from the party's political committee.

The core committee of PTI held a late-night meeting in Islamabad, after which a formal announcement was issued. The committee expressed serious concerns over the health and access of the party's founding chairman.

The core committee demanded that clear information be provided regarding the health of PTI Founder Imran Khan. It also called for a medical examination by doctors at Shaikat Khanum Hospital, emphasizing transparency in medical reporting.

The committee strongly condemned what it described as deliberate obstruction of meetings between Khan and his family.

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QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan presides over the meeting of Provincial Task Force for anti-polio campaign.

## Pakistan moves to defuse US-Iran tension as PM speaks to Iranian President

TEHRAN (INP): As threats of a potential United States attack on Iran loom large, Pakistan on Thursday stepped in to defuse the crisis as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spoke to the Iranian president while Islamabad was also in touch with Washington.

Within hours of a telephonic conversation between Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi, PM Shehbaz also held a telephonic conversation with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

The flurry of diplomatic engagements came against the backdrop of renewed escalation in tensions between Iran and the US, which has sent multiple warships to the region. President Donald Trump warned Tehran to strike a nuclear deal or face the consequences.

Pakistan is alarmed by

these developments and is believed to have been making diplomatic efforts to cool off the brewing crisis.

A read out from the PM Office said the two leaders exchanged views on the evolving regional situation. PM Shehbaz underscored the importance of sustained dialogue and diplomatic engagement for promoting peace, security and development in the region.

Reflecting the close and fraternal ties between Pakistan and Iran, rooted in shared history, culture, and faith, both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to maintain regular high-level engagements and consultations through bilateral institutional mechanisms, to further strengthen cooperation across the full spectrum of bilateral relations.

Earlier, FMDar spoke with Araghchi amid rising

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WAH: Senator Abdul Qadir Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence Production and members of the committee are being briefed during their visit at Pakistan Ordnance Factory (POF).

## PIA to gain new heights under Arif Habib Consortium: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) would gain new heights under the leadership of Arif Habib Consortium as the airline would improve its performance, punctuality, cabin service and professional standards.

He was speaking at a ceremony for signing of transaction documents between the government and Arif Habib Consortium regarding privatization of PIA.

The Prime Minister congratulated the nation on the signing ceremony for PIA privatization.

He said Arif Habib and his team were distinguished business ambassadors of Pakistan and they made a valuable contribution to the country's progress.

He said the first priority of the new owners of PIA would be comfortable journey of passengers and their safety.

He recalled that in the 1960s, PIA was at its peak, with the airline being a prominent and recognizable name in cities across Pakistan and in world capitals.

He congratulated the federal ministers, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Mar

*Continued on page 2*



QUETTA: Journalist giving sweet to winner of Balochistan Union Of Journalist election president Manzoor Baloch Secretary General Shah Hussain.

## Journalists' Panel sweeps BUJ elections 2026-27

QUETTA (ANN): The Journalists' Panel secured a resounding victory in the 2026-27 annual elections of the Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ), winning all key positions with a clear majority.

Manzoor Ahmed of ARY News was elected President with 87 votes, defeating Geo News' Salman Ashraf, who received 23 votes. Fareed Ullah of One News won the Senior Vice President seat with 77 votes, while Saadia Jahangir secured 31 votes.

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## Bugti greets BUJ's newly elected leadership

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has extended his congratulations to the newly elected office-bearers of the Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) following their successful elections. In his message, the CM acknowledged Presi

*Continued on page 2*



## Saim Ayub shines as Pakistan beat Australia in T20I series opener

### Sports Desk

LAHORE: Pakistan opener Saim Ayub's all-round performance helped Green Shirts secure a 22-run victory over Australia in the first T20I of three-match series at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday.

Ayub backed his blazing 40-run knock with two wickets to help the Green Shirts to defend a modest total 168. Set to chase 169, Australia's batting unit faltered and could accumulate 146/8 in 20 overs.

The touring side got off to a briefly flamboyant start to the pursuit, with their opening pair of Matthew Short and stand-in captain raising 21 runs off the first 10 deliveries before Ayub gave Pakistan the breakthrough by dismissing the former, who made a four-ball five. The 23-year-old all-rounder struck again in his next over to get rid of Head, who smashed two sixes and as many fours on his way to a 13-ball 23.

Following Ayub's twin strike, Cameron Green and Matt Renshaw (15) attempted to anchor the run chase by knitting a 40-run partnership for the third wicket, which culminated with the latter's run out on the first delivery of the eighth over.

His dismissal sparked

a collapse as Australia began to lose wickets at an alarming rate, including that of mainstay Green, who remained their top-scorer with a cautious 36 off 31 deliveries, and consequently slipped to 112/8 in 15.4 overs.

No. 10 batter Xavier Bartlett then played a quickfire cameo at the backend, scoring an unbeaten 34 off 25 deliveries, but his efforts were insufficient to steer Australia over the line.

For Pakistan, Abrar Ahmed and Ayub claimed two wickets each, while Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz chipped in with one apiece.

Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha's decision to bat first backfired as his team's batting unit could accumulate 168/8 in their allotted 20 overs.

The home side got off to the worst possible start to their innings as they lost opener Sahibzada Farhan for a diamond duck.

Following the early stutter, Saim Ayub and captain Agha stabilised the innings by putting together 74 runs for the second wicket.

Zampa broke the crucial partnership on the fourth delivery of the eighth over by dismissing Ayub,

who remained the top-scorer for Pakistan with a 22-ball 40, featuring three fours and two sixes.

Agha was then involved in a brief 12-run partnership for the third wicket with Babar Azam until falling victim to Xavier Bartlett in the 10th over and walked back after scoring 39 off 27 deliveries, laced with four sixes and a four.

Babar was then joined by Fakhar Zaman in the middle, and the duo batted cautiously to add 37 runs for the fourth wicket before Zampa struck, dismissing the former, who made 20-ball 24 with the help of one six and a four.

Babar's dismissal followed two more setbacks for Pakistan as Zaman (10) and wicketkeeper batter Usman Khan (10) perished in quick succession, bringing the total down to 149/6 in 17.5 overs.

All-rounder Mohammad Nawaz then added valuable runs at the backend with an unbeaten 15 off 14 deliveries amid Pakistan's disappointing death batting, during which they lost two more wickets.

Adam Zampa spearheaded Australia's bowling attack with economical bowling figures of 4/24 in his four overs.



LAHORE: Pakistani batter Babar Azam playing shot during the first Twenty20 International Cricket match between Pakistan and Australia at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium.

## Three terrorists..

Continued from page 1

launched in the area to apprehend the fleeing terrorists. Security personnel had cordoned off the surroundings to ensure that no suspect escaped.

DIG Bannu Region Sajjad Khan said that terrorists would be taken to their logical end and that the situation of law and order would be maintained at all costs.

He reaffirmed the resolve of police and security forces to continue operations against anti-state elements to ensure lasting peace in the region.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday lauded the police and security forces for conducting a successful operation against militants in Bannu, neutralizing three terrorists and thwarting their subversive designs.

The prime minister paid tribute to the timely and coordinated action by the police and security forces, and underlined that their joint operation prevented a potential threat and safeguarded lives, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

**CORRIGENDUM**

With reference to the previous PRQ No. 3319 dated 19th January, 2026, it is hereby notified for the information of all concerned bidders that:

1. In continuation of the Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority's directions vide its letter No. BPPRA/Pr-Sp(G&S)/01/2025/1565-70 dated 21 January, 2026, necessary changes have been made relating to the location of delivery of items as per Rule 27, sub-rule (1), the delivery period as per Rule 27, sub-rule (1), the eligibility criteria as per Rule 37, and the tender document fee as per Rule 26, sub-rule (2). Accordingly, the evaluation criteria have been revised/updated as per rules.

The last date for submission of tender documents has been extended up to 05th February, 2026.

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

**SECTION OFFICER (B&A)  
LAW & PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS  
DEPARTMENT**

**PRQ No.3535/29-1-2026**

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**TENDER NOTICE**

The EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (Building), City QUETTA CWPP&H invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items: TSE-252601960331 Only electronic bid will be submitted, No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. T/fee Not Required

S.No	Class of Object	Bid Security
1	Machinery & Power Plant (Total Item(s) Count: 1)	2%

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** 2 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 20,000,000 in Previous 3 Years Turn over of at least 20,000,000 PKR in 3 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List Sales Tax Certificate The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan JV is not permissible Submission of the required Bid Security in case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be declared as ineligible and non-responsive **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage Two 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 NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk **Issuance of tender Documents:** Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk **Last Date of bid submission:** Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 12 February, 2026 till 11:00 AM through supplier dashboard. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at 12:00 PM on EPPS System Address: whyte Road Quetta Phone no: 0819203188 Email: executiveengineerquettacity@gmail.com

**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (Building),  
City QUETTA CWPP&H**

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## Armed forces..

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ROHI eSkills Learning Hub (STP) aimed at promoting digital skills and learning opportunities for students, particularly from Southern Punjab and across the country. He also inaugurated the APS Abbasia Campus, reaffirming Pakistan Army's commitment to quality education and character building.

The COAS & CDF later visited the EME Regional Workshop, where he was briefed on maintenance regime to sustain modern platforms through advanced technologies, indigenization and other combat support measures.

Earlier, upon his arrival at Bahawalpur Garrison, the COAS & CDF was received by Commander Bahawalpur Corps. He also laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada and offered Fateha, paying tribute to the supreme sacrifices of the martyrs.

## CJP consults..

Continued from page 1

water facilities to their Bar. In response, the Chief Justice highlighted Continuing Legal Education programs offered by the Federal Judicial Academy, encouraging young lawyers to benefit from the training. He added that the academy's training calendar is available on its official platform.

Meanwhile, the Mansehra Bar delegation raised concerns regarding infrastructure and water availability at the Judicial Complex in their district.

Taking notice of the matter, the Chief Justice directed the relevant Resident Additional Secretary to visit the site and ensure swift resolution of the issues.

The engagement reflects the judiciary's broader commitment to sustainable reforms, improved legal services, and stronger collaboration with the legal community.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzaib Khan Kakar presiding over the meeting of designing committee of Urban Planning.



DUBAI: President Asif Ali Zardari is seen off by His Excellency Abdul Rahman bin Mohamed Al Owais, Cabinet Member and Minister for Federal National Council Affairs of UAE, at the airport.

## Balochistan Officers begin study tour Civil service training key to strong governance, says Gujranwala Commissioner

### Independent Report

GUJRANWALA: Commissioner Gujranwala Division, Syed Naveed Haider Shirazi, emphasized that rigorous and effective training of civil service officers is essential for establishing a responsive, transparent, and people-oriented administrative system. He was speaking at a high-level meeting of assistant commissioners held at the Commissioner Office Gujranwala in connection with the 1st Inland Study

Tour of Balochistan Civil Service officers. The study tour has been organized under the leadership of Director Civil Services Academy Quetta, Shabana Sultan.

The commissioner stated that the tour, comprising 55 officers, is designed to expose Balochistan Civil Service officers to practical and successful models of governance in Punjab, particularly in areas of revenue administration, develop-

ment planning, and public service delivery. He directed assistant commissioners to fully share their professional knowledge, field experience, and administrative practices with the visiting officers to ensure meaningful learning outcomes.

Syed Naveed Haider Shirazi noted that thorough preparation of training sessions, a well-coordinated schedule, and high-quality briefings are critical for the success of the study tour.

## Pakistan committed..

Continued from page 1

added that the revised travel advisory reflects Pakistan as a safer destination for travel.

Andrabi said President Asif Ali Zardari is currently on an official visit to the United Arab Emirates, which reflects the long-standing and brotherly relations between Pakistan and the UAE.

The spokesperson said that Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar recently visited Davos, where he held meetings with several global leaders, and during his return journey also held meetings with senior officials during a stopover in

Abu Dhabi. He added that Ishaq Dar also met senior officials of Etisalat in Abu Dhabi.

The Foreign Office spokesperson said that the deputy prime minister held two separate telephone conversations with Iran's Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi.

He said that Ishaq Dar also held telephonic contacts with the foreign ministers of Qatar, Egypt and Bangladesh.

The spokespersons further said that a round of bilateral political consultations was held between Pakistan and Belgium, while Pakistan and Ghana also held their first-ever political consultations.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry talking to Rwandan High Commissioner Harerimana Fatou who called on him.

## Pakistan moves to..

Continued from page 1

tensions in the Middle East, following renewed threats by Trump to take military action against Iran.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dar expressed concern over the evolving regional situation and stressed that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable way forward. Both leaders agreed to remain in close contact as the situation develops.

Separately at a weekly news briefing, Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi reiterated Pakistan's long-standing position that dialogue and diplomacy remained the

only viable path to resolving regional disputes, warning that the Middle East could not afford another war that would derail economic development and regional stability.

He said Pakistan had consistently opposed the use of force, interference in internal affairs and the imposition of unilateral sanctions, particularly against "brotherly country" Iran.

"As war clouds hover, Pakistan has always advocated peace and diplomacy to settle all outstanding issues," he said, adding that FM Dar held two telephone conversations this week with his Iranian counterpart to discuss the evolving situation.

## PIA to gain new..

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shal Syed Asim Munir for their commitment to the national interest. He also appreciated Advisor for Privatization Muhammad Ali for the successful privatization of PIA.

The Prime Minister said the privatization process of PIA was telecast live and conducted in a transparent manner. He said bidding was closed at the price of Rs 180 billion, out of which the consortium will spend Rs 135 billion on improvement of PIA while the government would get Rs 55 billion.

PM Shehbaz Sharif

said through untiring efforts and innovation, new PIA owners would regain past glory of PIA. The nation was expecting that it would get best travel services and name of Pakistan would gain new recognition, he added. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and federal ministers attended the ceremony.

Advisor for Privatization Muhammad Ali explained the salient features of the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Shahzaib Khan Kakar presiding over the meeting of designing committee of Urban Planning.

## PSB announces \$115 daily allowance for Pakistan hockey team

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has approved a daily allowance of \$115 for national hockey team players participating in the upcoming FIH Pro League, providing a much-needed financial boost ahead of crucial international fixtures.

The Pakistan Sports Board has officially announced a daily allowance of \$115 for each player of the national hockey team during the FIH Pro League. The move marks a significant increase in financial facilities for the team.

DG PSB Muhammad Yasir Pirzada confirmed that the allowance has been approved and will be applied throughout the team's participation in the tournament.

According to officials, national team players have been instructed to receive the daily allowance before their departure for the Pro League matches. The step aims to ensure smooth preparations and avoid logistical or financial issues during the tour.

Pakistan hockey team captain Imad Butt welcomed the PSB's decision, calling it a positive development for the players' morale.

He said the improved financial support would help players focus fully on performance rather than off-field concerns. The national hockey team is scheduled to play its FIH Pro League matches from February 10.



Provincial Minister for Education, Balochistan Raheela Hameed Khan Durani offering Fateha for the departed soul of the wife of the elder brother of the Acting Chairman Senate Syed Aal Khan in Islamabad.

## Baloch and Pakistan..

Continued from page 1

ment of work on the Rakhi Model Bazaar, establishment of a Rakhi Press Club, launch of a housing scheme, and renaming the municipal committee as Municipal Committee Dera Khetran.

He emphasized that the purpose of establishing a divisional headquarters was to accelerate development and improve service delivery for the people. "The districts of this division are bound together like brothers, and just as Koh-e-Suleman stands tall, so do the people of this region," he remarked.

The Chief Minister strongly criticized attempts to push Baloch youth into what he termed a "futile conflict", warning of conspiracies aimed at alienating them from the state.

"Baloch and Pakistan are inseparable, and our survival and prosperity lie together," he said, urging youth to focus on character, education, and hard work rather than slogans.

Saffraz Bugti assured the public that every commitment made would be fulfilled, stressing that resentment against the state is unacceptable despite governance challenges.

The rally was attended by large numbers from the Khetran, Bugti, Zarkoon, Buzdar, Gharshin, and Leghari tribes, along with political leaders including MPAs Zark Khan Mandokhail and Hapi Ali Madad Jattak, PPP leader Mir Baz Muhammad Khetran, former minister Naseebullah Marri, National Party leader Abdul Karim Khetran, District Chairman Dera Bugti Wadera Ghulam Nabi Shambani, District Chairman Kohlu Mir Nisar Ahmed Marri, and Sami Khan Zarkoon.

**CORRIGENDUM**

It is to notify that in NIT published through PRQ No. 3494/27-01-2026, the TSE-252601955383 TSE-252601955423 TSE-252601955443 TSE-252601955503 TSE-252601955513 TSE-252601955543 TSE-252601955573 TSE-252601955593 TSE-252601955613 TSE-252601955643 TSE-252601955933 is Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure

**Executive Engineer Buildings  
CWPP&H department district  
Zhob**

**PRQ No.3540/29-1-2026**

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**CORRIGENDUM**

The Notice Inviting Tender published in the Daily newspaper on 21st January, 2026 vide PRQ No. 3340/20-01-2026, as well as uploaded on the BPPRA website under TSE-252601948533 for the work "Construction of 1.5 KM B/T Road Killa Setan Paizai, Tehsil and District Killa Saifullah BSOI Phase-II", has been amended. The necessary corrections and amendments have been made in the bidding documents. Interested bidders are requested to download the updated bidding documents from the BPPRA website. The timelines for bid submission and opening are hereby extended, and the new date of bid opening will be 06-02-2026. The place of issuance and opening of tenders will be the Office of the Executive Engineer (Roads), CW, PP&H Department, District Killa Saifullah. All other terms and conditions will remain unchanged.

**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (ROADS),  
CW, PP&H Department,  
District Killa Saifullah**

**PRQ No.3524/29-1-2026**

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**TENDER NOTICE**

TSE-252601960823 Only electronic bid will be submitted, No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The DIRECTOR ELECTRICITY NORTH invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Rates

**Tender Fee 1500 PKR and Bid Security 2%**

S.No	Name of Works	E/Cost
1	SOLARIZATION OF (REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES CENTER) R.H.S.A. DISTRICT POPULATION WELFARE OFFICES DPWO AND FAMILY WELFARE CENTERS.	170,000,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** 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 1 Assignment of similar nature of work Turn over of at least 150,000,000 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C-4 and above (Upto 200 million) In Relevant Category And Specialized Code is EE11(i) (Solar), EE11(ii) (Solar Energy), EE11(iii) (Solar Energy system), EE11(iv) (General Electrical Works Only). **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage Two 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 NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk **Issuance of tender Documents:** Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk **Last Date of bid submission:** Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 18 February, 2026 till 10:30 AM through supplier dashboard. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at 11:30 AM on EPPS System Address: Office Near night star complex, Samungli road Quetta Phone no: 0812442007 Fax no: 0812442007 Email: ishaqagr@gmail.com

**Director Energy (North)  
Energy Department**

**PRQ No.3527/29-1-2026**

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RAKHNI: MPAs Haji Ali Madad Jatttak, Zarak Khan Mandokhail and others addressing public gathering on the eve of establishing Koh-e-Suleman as Division and Rakhnias Divisional Headquarter.

## Minister slams disinformation campaign, dismisses social media claims as fabricated

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Public Health Engineering and WASA Balochistan, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran, has firmly denied statements circulating on social media that are being falsely attributed to him, terming them baseless, misleading, and entirely fabricated.

In a clarification issued through the minister's spokesperson, it was stated that the news items and remarks being shared

under the name of Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran did not originate from him or his office. The spokesperson emphasized that such claims have no connection whatsoever with the minister's official views, policies, or decisions.

The spokesperson further explained that the minister's authentic stance is conveyed exclusively through official press releases, recognized and credible media outlets, and verified social media platforms.

Any content spread via unofficial or unverified sources, it was stressed, should not be treated as genuine.

Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran has called upon the general public, journalists, and social media users to exercise responsibility by confirming information from relevant and authorized sources before circulating it. He warned that unchecked dissemination of false information only fuels confusion and undermines public trust.



QUETTA: Secretary Livestock Muhammad Tayab Lehri and Secretary Women Development Sara Atta presenting shield to Provincial Minister for Livestock Sardar Faisal Khan Jamali.

## PPAF supporting climate resilient community development in Balochistan

KILLA SAIFULLAH (APP): Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), through its partner organizations, is playing a vital role in restoring essential social services and strengthening climate resilience in flood-affected communities across Pakistan.

The devastating floods of 2022 severely disrupted access to health, education, water and sanitation, and livelihoods in many vulnerable districts.

In response, PPAF launched the Restoring Social Services and Climate Resilience (RSSCR)

project, a two-year initiative aimed at rebuilding damaged infrastructure, improving service delivery, and enhancing communities' ability to cope with future climate-related shocks.

Funded by PPAF and implemented through its partner organizations, the project focuses on addressing critical gaps in social services by working on both the supply and demand sides.

It also emphasizes citizen engagement with local governments and the promotion of local leadership to ensure climate-resilient and

sustainable development outcomes. The RSSCR project is being implemented in 61 union councils across 19 districts of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

These districts were selected due to their high vulnerability to floods and other climate hazards, ensuring that support reaches communities most in need.

In Killa Saifullah, PPAF partner organizations are implementing a total of 58 Community Physical Infrastructure schemes. These include the establishment and rehabilitation of rural health centers to improve healthcare access, construction of irrigation water channels to support agriculture, development of flood protection walls to safeguard settlements, and repair and renovation of essential community infrastructure.

## BUMHS opens doors for aspiring nurses with province wide admission test

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Bolan University of Medical and Health Sciences (BUMHS) Quetta has announced the Nursing Colleges Admission Test (NCAT) for entry into the four-year BS Nursing Program across 14 nursing colleges in Balochistan.

According to the university, admissions are open exclusively to candidates from Balochistan and will be awarded strictly on the basis of merit. Applicants must have secured at least 50 percent marks in FSc, and the maximum age limit for eligibility is 30 years. Seats are available at the College of Nursing BMC Quetta, Nursing College Civil Hospital Quetta, Nursing College Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Hospital Quetta.

## Notice for Change of Address

It is hereby notified for general information that the address of the firm Build Max Construction Co, PEC Constructor License No. C4/20864, has been changed as under:

Old Address: House No 2 Ward No 06, Ghousia Road Sialkot Cantt Sialkot

New Address: Seed Noor House Shekhan Town Zhob, Balochistan, Pakistan all concerned are requested to note this change.

Build Max Construction Co

## GoB moves to tighten oversight of public endowment fund as billions approved for lifesaving treatment

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Parliamentary Secretary for Social Welfare, Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzai, announced that concrete steps are being taken to further strengthen transparency and accountability in the Balochistan Public Endowment Fund (BPEF), a flagship initiative providing free medical treatment to financially vulnerable patients suffering from expensive and critical illnesses.

He made these remarks while chairing the 24th meeting of the Balochistan Public Endowment Fund Board held on Thursday. The session was attended by Secretary So-

cial Welfare Ismatullah Qureshi, Additional Secretary Health Shahak Baloch, Additional Secretary Chief Minister Secretariat Rohina Kakar, Director Headquarters Social Welfare Ashraf Gichki, Programme Director BPEF Sameena Ehsan Baloch, Assistant Director Social Welfare Inayatullah Kasi, representatives of the Finance Department, medical specialists, and members of civil society.

During the meeting, Programme Director Sameena Ehsan Baloch presented a comprehensive overview of cases previously supported by the fund. These included treatments for cancer, cardiac

ailments, implants and limb-saving surgeries, end-stage renal disease and dialysis, hepatitis, liver transplants, thalassemia, cochlear implants, and other serious health conditions, along with details of inspections of panel hospitals.

The board was informed that 404 cases had been approved in the previous meeting with a total financial implication of Rs 930 million. Of this amount, Rs 269 million had already been utilized for the treatment of 321 patients, while medical care for the remaining 83 cases was still underway.

Members were further briefed that 1,054 new

cases, carrying an estimated cost of Rs 2.72 billion, were placed before the board and approved. It was also disclosed that Rs 520 million held by panel hospitals under the Endowment Fund had been recovered, out of which Rs 242 million had been adjusted against approved cases, while the remaining amount was sanctioned for adjustment.

The meeting was told that medicines worth Rs 200 million had already been procured, raising the total number of beneficiaries to 492 patients. However, an additional Rs 200 million was required to meet further medicine requirements, which the

board approved. The Programme Director was also directed to complete the necessary formalities for the inclusion of Arya Hospital in the panel of approved hospitals.

Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzai informed participants that discussions had also taken place with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who assured full support for further strengthening the fund. Stressing that public health remains a top priority, he said the Balochistan Public Endowment Fund represents a public trust and its transparent, efficient, and responsible utilization is a collective obligation of all concerned.

## Khetran denounces killing of Colonel Imran, promises firm action against terrorists

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Provincial Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran expressed deep sorrow over the killing of Colonel Imran in a shooting by unidentified assailants in Dera Ismail Khan, describing the officer's martyrdom as an irreparable loss for the nation. In his condolence message, the minister paid tribute to Colonel Imran's dedicated ser-

vice to the country, affirming that the sacrifices of martyrs would never be forgotten. He stated that the entire nation shares in the grief over this tragic incident.

Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran underscored the government's unwavering support for the Pakistan Army and law enforcement agencies in the ongoing fight against terrorism. He vowed that terrorist ele-

ments would be brought to justice and that anti-state actors would face strict accountability, stressing that the war on terrorism will continue until its objectives are fully achieved.

The minister also conveyed his prayers for the speedy recovery of those injured in the attack and prayed that Almighty Allah grant patience and strength to the bereaved family of the martyr.



SIBI: Commissioner Sibi Division Asadullah Faiz inspecting the DHQ Teaching Hospital Sibi.

## Quetta traffic to ease soon as Gahi Khan and customs flyovers near operational stage

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Secretary Communications and Works, Babar Khan, highlighted the critical role of the Gahi Khan and Customs Flyovers in reducing traffic congestion across Quetta, noting that their completion will ensure smoother transit for residents and traders alike.

Acting on directives from Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Babar Khan conducted an on-site inspection of both flyover projects. The Gahi Khan Flyover is approaching its final phase, while work on the Customs Flyover is advancing rapidly. Both structures are expected to ease congestion around major commercial

centers, including Hazar Ganji Market, and improve connectivity with Sindh, Punjab, and other parts of the province.

During the inspection, Executive Engineer Roads, Saryab Division, Habib Ahmed, and other officials briefed the secretary on construction progress, quality, and remaining tasks. Babar Khan directed that the Gahi Khan Flyover be opened to traffic within 15 days to immediately alleviate congestion, while ordering an accelerated pace for the Customs Flyover, including enhancements to side lanes and alternative routes to ensure minimal inconvenience for the public during ongoing construction.

## Gwadar's oldest Business Centre formally opened

GWADAR (INP): The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has been formally reopened Gwadar's oldest commercial and business center, Mulla Fazal Chowk, following a comprehensive overhaul, expansion, and renovation. Gwadar lawmaker Maulana Haidat ur Rehman attended the inauguration ceremony, which marked the completion of the project, Gwadar Pro reported.

Also present were GDA Chief Engineer Haji Saeed Ahmed, Municipal Committee Chairman Majid Johar, GDA Road Engineer Nadir Baloch, Executive Engineer Qasim Baloch, along with senior officials and representatives of civil society.

## District officials visit injured Loralai constable, pledge full support to law enforcement

**Independent Report**  
LORALAI: Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Muhammad Ismail Mengal and Assistant Commissioner Loralai Nadeem Akram visited the residence of Constable Dilawar Khan, who sustained injuries in a recent shooting by unidentified armed assailants at Pathankot. During the visit, officials inquired about the constable's health and extended their best wishes for a swift recovery. They commended his bravery, dedication, and commitment to duty, noting that police personnel regularly put their lives at risk to safeguard citizens and their property.

## Loralai mobilizes against polio as district admin kicks off Door-to-Door vaccination drive

**Independent Report**  
LORALAI: An anti-polio vaccination campaign was officially launched in Loralai, with Deputy Commissioner Miran Baloch inaugurating the drive by administering polio drops to children, marking the start of intensified efforts to protect young lives from the crippling disease.

A ceremony was organized in this connection, which was attended by Deputy District Health Officer Dr Shah Zaman Hamzazai, N-Staff Dr Farhan, Divisional Coordinator Dr Zarak Khan, Focal Person Muhammad Hashim Kakar, Mukhtiar Ahmed Luni, officials of the Health Department, representatives of the Polio Programme, security personnel, and polio workers.

Addressing the par-

ticipants, Deputy Commissioner Miran Baloch described polio as a severe and incurable disease that can leave children permanently disabled, stressing that vaccination remains the only effective means to eliminate it. He appealed to parents to extend full cooperation to vaccination teams and ensure that every child under the age of five receives polio drops during each campaign.

He said that the district administration, health authorities, security forces, and frontline teams are working in close coordination to ensure the success of the campaign, with the objective of reaching every child without exception. He also instructed field teams to carry out their responsibilities diligently and ensure that even remote and hard-to-reach areas are covered.



QUETTA: Chief Coordinator Officer Dr. Dost Muhammad presenting shield to Managing Director Balochistan Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority Hamood-ur-Rehman on the eve of "Countering Violent Extremism" Police Dialogue organized by Home Department.

## Balochistan honors women development secretary for distinguished service

**Independent Report**

QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Livestock Balochistan, Sardar Faisal Khan Jamali, along with Secretary Livestock, Muhammad Tayab Lehri, presented a commemorative shield to Secretary Women Development Department, Saira Atta, recognizing her exceptional contributions to departmental performance, women's welfare, and the promotion of inter-departmental collaboration.

During the ceremony, the provincial minister lauded Saira Atta's dedication and professional excellence, highlighting the pivotal role of the Women Development Department in advancing women's rights and fostering social development throughout the province.

Secretary Livestock Muhammad Tayab Lehri underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation between departments to enhance the effectiveness of welfare initiatives and ensure sustained progress in social development programs.

LORALAI: Deputy Commissioner Loralai Miran Baloch administering polio drops to child to inaugurate anti-polio campaign.

## Administration pledges immediate relief as DC takes direct stock of public grievances

**Independent Report**

USTA MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner Usta Muhammad,

Muhammad Ramzan Palal, reaffirmed that serving the public is the primary obligation of all government officers and called on officials to act with seriousness, honesty, and a strong sense of responsibility in addressing citizens' concerns.

He expressed these views while presiding over an open court (Khuli Kachhri) held at Union Council Head Bagh in Tehsil Gandakha, aimed at directly receiving public complaints and ensuring their swift redressal. The open court was convened to identify pressing public issues, enhance coordination among depart-

ments, and work toward lasting solutions for the problems faced by residents.

Senior district officials were present at the session, including SSP Usta Muhammad Ghulam Hussain Bajoi, Additional Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ismail Lashari, District Education Officer Shah Bakhsh Pindrani, District Health Officer Dr Amir Ali Jamali, Medical Superintendent Dr Abdul Jabbar Soomro, along with officers from the Irrigation, Public Health Engineering, Buildings & Roads, Agriculture, and other relevant departments. A large number of local elders and citizens attended and presented their grievances both verbally and in writing.



USTA MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal addressing during open katchery at Head Bagh.



QUETTA: Members of Balochistan Grand Alliance hold protest for demands on Jinnah Road in Quetta.



# Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Friday January 30, 2026

## Super tax

The Federal Constitutional Court's short order upholding the legality of the contentious super tax on high-earning individuals and businesses signifies an important turn in Pakistan's struggle between fiscal expediency and tax certainty.

The FCC judgement settles more than 2,200 pending cases and secures recovery of an estimated Rs310bn in unpaid tax revenues — no doubt, a big relief for a fiscally strained state. Only the petroleum exploration sector has been granted relief because even a constitutionally valid fiscal step cannot be arbitrarily enforced where it risks breaching contractual obligations and triggering international arbitration.

The ruling reaffirms parliament's exclusive authority to impose taxes, declaring that earlier high court interventions staying super tax recoveries amounted to judicial overreach. A precedent has thus been set that is likely to deter future judicial interference in tax collection.

However, the judgement does not address the question of whether legal certainty on a contentious tax measure can be equated with tax equity and sound economic policy. The super tax's evolution from a temporary levy to a permanent feature of the tax regime shows it cannot. Introduced in 2015 as a one-time levy to fund the rehabilitation of people displaced by the Zarb-i-Azb military operation in KP, the tax was repeatedly extended and expanded from select sectors to virtually the entire corporate landscape, as well as high-income individuals to bolster FBR collections. This gradual institutionalisation of an emergency levy as a permanent revenue spinner signals fiscal compulsions originating from the state's failure to broaden the tax base. The levy confirms the state's inability to effectively bring untaxed or undertaxed segments — notably large parts of retail, real estate and agriculture — into the net.

No wonder successive governments have either turned to a narrow pool of documented taxpayers — extracting more from those already compliant — or relied on more borrowings to finance and sustain their budgets. It is rightly feared by compliant businesses that the FCC decision may embolden the state to continue down this path. In other words, the ruling might have brought legal finality on the impugned levy but it has also exposed deep structural flaws in the taxation framework. A tax system dependent on easy-to-collect withholding taxes, surcharges and super taxes is neither equitable nor sustainable. Without expansion of the tax base, improved enforcement and compliance and a shift away from stop-gap revenue measures, levies like the super tax risk becoming a permanent substitute for tax reform. It may suit the FBR but is costly for economic growth and investment. The FCC has spoken on the constitutionality and legality of the super tax. The answer to the question on how to fix the broken tax system has to come from our political leadership.

### Asif Durrani

The announcement by the Afghan Taliban regime of a new penal code to govern their country's criminal justice system should concern not only the Afghans but anyone who is attentive to the relationship between law, power and social order. What has emerged from Afghanistan through official statements and media reporting is not a coherent legal framework aimed at justice or social stability. Rather, it reflects a deliberate regression towards pre-modern norms that institutionalise inequality, undermine accountability and legitimise coercion under the guise of religious authority.

A penal code is intended to be the backbone of the legal system. As such, it defines crimes and prescribes punishments. But most importantly, it signals who is equal before the law. Against that measure, the proposed framework fails at the foundational level.

A most disturbing feature of the code is the apparent exemption given to religious scholars and the

ruling elites from prosecution, or their insulation from ordinary judicial processes. Not only is this kind of selectivity incompatible with the principles of modern constitutionalism, it also contradicts the very Islamic legal tradition that the Afghan Taliban claim to uphold. Classical Islamic jurisprudence is rooted in the principle that no individual, regardless of his or her status or piety, is above the law. The insistence of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on equality before justice is a well-established axiom across Islamic legal schools.

By putting clerical authorities beyond legal scrutiny, the Taliban are not reviving religious law but are transforming it into an instrument of clerical absolutism. Historically, legal systems that fuse unchecked religious authority with political power have tended towards arbitrariness and abuse. The law is no longer a mechanism of justice; instead, it turns into a means of enforcing obedience.

What is just as troubling is the reported recognition of social categories that resemble 'slaves' or, in other words, permanently

subordinate classes that are subject to differential punishment. This kind of stratification goes against the fundamental principles of justice across legal traditions. While historical Islamic societies grappled with the legacy of slavery, Islamic jurisprudence evolved mechanisms which were aimed at restriction and gradual elimination — and not the creation of new, legally entrenched underclasses.

From a sociological perspective, penal systems that codify inequality generate deep and lasting instability. They erode social cohesion, delegitimise authority, and foster resentment. No society in the modern world has achieved stability by formally declaring that some people are less protected by the law than others.

Perhaps the most alarming element of the Taliban's penal framework is the declaration that nine-year-old girls are legally women eligible for marriage. While child marriage has existed in Afghanistan's past (as it has in many traditional societies) the decision to codify it into a contemporary legal system is not cul-

tural inevitability; it is political choice.

Scholarly discourse in Islam does not equate biological age with moral or legal adulthood. Classical jurists emphasised *rushd* (intellectual maturity), *welfare* (*maslaha*) and consent as essential components of marriage. Contemporary Muslim scholarship has overwhelmingly recognised that child marriage is harmful and not aligned with religious ethics. The Taliban's interpretation represents a selective reading of tradition, stripped of its moral safeguards.

The economic context matters. In many parts of Afghanistan, the practice of *walwar* (whereby families receive money in exchange for marrying off daughters) has long commodified girls. Afghan reformers, clerics and civil society actors have criticised this practice for decades. Enshrining it in law does not preserve culture; it perpetuates exploitation and poverty while entrenching gender-based violence.

Beyond individual provisions, the broader structure of the penal code reveals a troubling philosophy of governance. Women

and girls are reduced to legal dependents without agency, while male guardians, clerics and enforcers are granted expansive authority. This is not merely a gender issue; it is a systemic one. Societies that deny half their population legal autonomy inevitably suffer economic stagnation, social decay and moral erosion.

Comparative legal research has demonstrated consistently that legal systems which are exclusionary correspond with greater rates of violence, poverty and institutional collapse. Afghanistan has already been devastated by decades of war and isolation, and it cannot absorb the long-term consequences of such regression.

Seen in this context, the penal system appears to be designed less to deliver justice than to discipline society by employing fear and hierarchy. Discretionary power replaces legal protections and judicial independence submits to clerical decree. Accountability flows downward; and not in the opposite direction.

If we compare the situation to that in other coun-

tries, it is clear that even states that incorporate elements of Islamic criminal law do so within a framework that includes procedural safeguards, evidentiary standards and appellate mechanisms. The Taliban's approach is different to this, not because it is 'more Islamic', but because it is less legal.

Just as stark are the international implications. A penal code that basically institutionalises discrimination, child marriage and immunity for the elite will only isolate Afghanistan further, complicating humanitarian engagement and deepening sanctions-related pressures. The highest cost will not be borne by the international community but by ordinary Afghans who are trapped in a system that offers them neither justice nor recourse.

How Afghan society responds is not certain. Some may endure in silence; others may resist quietly or choose pragmatism. History suggests, however, that legal systems that are built on coercion instead of consent rarely endure. Obedience imposed through fear is brittle, and legitimacy without justice is temporary.

## Rebuilding reserves

### Khurram Husain

The State Bank left the interest rate unchanged this week, surprising some observers, but it had good reason to do so. In the narrative it built to support its decision, the State Bank effectively argued that that battle against inflation has been won, but the battle to rebuild the external sector remains a work in progress despite significant strides.

These are the two large battles in the war the country waged against economic volatility since July 2023. I use that date because that is when Pakistan had veered perilously close to the edge of a sovereign default and was rescued by an extraordinary bailout arranged by the IMF, China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Had that bailout not come, the country was going to shut down, perhaps within weeks. We move on too fast and forget too much in this country.

Two tasks were of the utmost urgency starting then. First was to

douse the flames of the inflation that had engulfed the country since early 2021, rising to an unprecedented inferno by May 2023. Never had we seen inflation reach 38 per cent year on year like we did that month. And never had we seen devaluations of the sort that began to hit in 2021. By the time that wave of devaluations peaked a few years later, the dollar had nearly tripled in value against the rupee. Never have we seen a devaluation of this magnitude in such a short period of time.

Two successive IMF programmes have been required to pull back from the brink of this near catastrophic volatility that ran between 2022 and 2023. The first was the Stand-by Arrangement in July 2023, and the second was the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) in September 2024. The latter programme is still running, and going by the numbers it contains, Pakistan is still far from being out of danger.

When the EFF began Pakistan's Net Interna-

tional Reserves (NIR) were negative \$11 billion. If you took all the money Pakistan owed in the short term out of the reported foreign exchange reserves, you were left \$11bn in the hole. That's how dire the situation was. This number had gone negative in 2017 for the first time after a few decades, and had barely managed to reach the zero line a few years later, when it plunged once again when the external sector drains of the PIT's much-vaunted growth rates began.

The Fund programme set a stringent timeline for raising this figure, slowly but surely, back up to the zero line. At the time of signing, the Fund targeted that Pakistan's NIR should break into positive territory by 2028, four years into the future. Based on that timeline, Pakistan is slightly ahead of the curve. By now the NIR were supposed to be aiming for a target of negative \$7.5bn. The data shows that they were at negative \$6.6bn by September of 2025 and

could realistically touch negative \$4.8bn by June of this year, if things keep moving as they are.

This is good news certainly. But notice the figure is still negative, meaning all the dollars and gold and other reserve assets that the country has are still overshadowed by the claims that non-residents have on the country. To put it simply, we owe more than what we have when it comes to foreign exchange, and while that is the case, the country cannot be said to be ready to grow.

A war began in July 2023. A war against catastrophic economic volatility. That volatility was showing up in two areas: inflation and foreign exchange depletion. Each front required a full-fledged battle to put the fire out. Against inflation they won the battle many months ago. But against the depletion of foreign exchange reserves, the battle is still on.

This is probably one of the reasons why the State Bank is so aggressive in 'buying' dollars

from the banks. I put the word buying in quotation marks because banks don't always get to decide the price at which they will sell these dollars, and in some cases they don't even get to decide whether they will sell or not. What is puzzling, however, is the sheer zeal with which this goal is being pursued, to the point where they are over-performing on the targets set by the IMF. In September and October of 2025, for example, they bought up more than a billion dollars each month. This is unusual.

The long hard slog to bring the foreign exchange reserves back into positive territory is going to continue for at least another year to 18 months — despite the over-performance so far. To do this, it is necessary not only to accumulate reserves, but also to retire the liabilities that were built up during the period of the great volatility of 2022 and 2023. The improvement is happening but it is far from over. And the last thing the economy can afford at

this time is a resurgence of the trade deficit to act as a drain on the reserves.

This is what the State Bank pointed to in its monetary policy announcement. It pointed out that "economic activity continues to gain momentum faster than anticipated" and that "the trade deficit has widened in the wake of a substantial increase in imports". These trends are expected to gather more momentum, it says, upgrading its growth forecast slightly to the 3.75-4.75 range, with the possibility that "[t]his economic momentum is likely to strengthen further in FY27".

The economy has started showing signs of an incipient revival with the result that the current account immediately registered a deficit of \$1.2bn in from July to December. This is manageable. But the wheels can come off very fast if this trend picks up. So the State Bank has done the right thing to not juice the trajectory further. The battle to rebuild reserves is still on.

## Towering hubris

### F.S. Aijazuddin

The First World has Davos, the Middle World has United Nations conferences, and the Third World has lifests. Davos, UN moots and lifests serve as a speaker's corner where academics, intellectuals, politicians (serving and retired), movers and shakers collect to ventilate their opinions. Much carbon dioxide is emitted, much 'sound and fury' released, but all too often they signify nothing.

This year, the World Economic Forum at Davos was hijacked by President Donald Trump. Around 80 years ago, in February 1945, a triumvirate consisting of US president Franklin D. Roosevelt, British prime minister Winston Churchill and USSR general secretary Joseph Stalin met to delineate the contours of post-war Europe. Together, they midwifed the UN. Trump, by announcing his Board of Peace (BoP) at Davos, effectively trashed Yalta and in a side-swipe also emasculated the UN.

The UN has only itself to blame. Last November, it passed UNSC Resolution 2803, which granted the BoP a two-year mandate. Trump converted that into an open-ended licence to reorder the world according to his own design. His BoP is a flimsy, fragile facsimile of the UN. It has him as its omnipotent 'Security Council' and the fount of all its intended authority.

About 60 UN member countries have been invited to join. At least 25 countries (including a cash-strapped Pakistan) have accepted. At least nine have refused. Canada's invitation has been rescinded after Prime Minister Mark Carney's explosive speech at Davos. The rest have yet

to respond.

Trump's BoP is a 'pay to play' sport. Some nations want to play without paying its \$1 billion entrance fee. They are wary, as the comedian Groucho Marx once quipped, of joining any club that was prepared to accept him as a member.

Trump's design for the BoP's logo is a shameless imitation of the UN logo, but with a gilt Western hemisphere (not the world) as its epicentre. Its message is clear. Trump is the self-made King Midas whose touch will make everything glisten, even if it does not convert into gold. Interestingly, on that truncated map, Trump's globe has no place for Gaza, Russia, China, Africa, the Commonwealth or the EU.

Why has Pakistan joined the BoP? How will it pay the \$1bn entrance fee when it owes more than it owns? Pakistan's lenders in the first resort — the UAE and Saudi Arabia — have become founding members of the BoP. Will Pakistan have to borrow from an Arab Peter to pay a BoP Paul? The alacrity with which our prime minister at Davos signed up suggests that Pakistan may think of contributing not in cash but in kind — green berets in the place of UN's blue helmets.

Those with a feeling for history wonder how long will this era of institutionalised hubris last. Will Trump find his comeuppance at the hands of reinvigorated Democrats in the US midterms next year? Will the EU, after being dumped by the US, revert to its Eurocentric policy of neighbourly interdependence? It has begun scrambling for new friends. The recently signed 'landmark' trade deal with India is one knee-jerk reaction.

Will an emboldened Israel now expand its frontiers into adjacent Lebanon and Syria? Will it be tempted to act as America's satrap again and join in another attack on a weakening Iran? Will Iran relapse into a monarchy which will then sacrifice its nuclear ambitions to appease a US-led nuclear club? And will that concession be enough to lift the onerous burden of sanctions?

Will the smug Arab leadership which towers over its poorer fellow religionists heed the warnings contained in the Holy Quran against pharaonic pretensions? Surah Ghafir (36-37) contains this caution: "O Pharaoh, construct for me a tower that I might reach the ways — The ways into the heavens — so that I may look at the deity of Moses." The Saudi Jeddah Tower under construction will soar to about 1,000 metres, higher than the UAE's Burj Khalifa's 828m. They are all too vulnerable.

These were some of the questions that were discussed at the ninth ThinkFest held at Lahore on Jan 23-25. In a rush before Ramadan — the holy month of abstinence

Lahore will gorge on another two feasts: the 14<sup>th</sup> Lahore LitFest (Feb 6-8), and after that the 10<sup>th</sup> Faiz Festival (Feb 13-15). The range of informed scholarship that is drawn to them as speakers and discussants is evidence of their significance in cities like Lahore. The increasing attendance is a measure of their popularity as a social safety valve. These LitFests may never mature into another Davos. Unless President Trump were to receive an invitation from the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

## Masterstroke

### Syed Saadat

Unlike some in the country, parliamentarians do not have the kind of power that lets individuals get off scot-free even after amassing enormous ill-gotten wealth that assures a comfortable retired life abroad. But like most Pakistanis they also have such dreams and to make them a reality, the parliamentarians recently played a masterstroke.

Since politicians these days are hand in glove with the pragmatic ruling elite, they decided to have their piece of the pie as well when the National Assembly passed an amendment to Elections Act, 2017, which grants parliamentarians a legal path to withhold their asset details from the public. As per the newly introduced confidentiality clause, lawmakers may request that their own or their family's assets be kept secret from being released to the public. The exemption is to be granted if public disclosure is deemed a 'credible threat' to the safety of life of the member or their family. The approving authority for such exemption would be the Speaker of the National Assembly or the Senate chairman, depending on the membership of the lawmaker seeking exemption. Once approved, the Election Commission of Pakistan is legally bound to keep the information confidential — game, set and match for all those with ill-gotten wealth. The audacity with which those in power come up with regulations to benefit themselves is truly mind-boggling.

Our parliamentarians are hardly public servants. They believe that they are above the law, or more precisely, are themselves the law. The best way to avoid audit and

scrutiny in Pakistan is to create the illusion of a security threat around the thing one wants to keep under wraps. If any individual or organisation with enough power deems it appropriate to block a road, or occupy a piece of land, they declare the action as necessary to mitigate the 'imminent security threat'; the rest, as they say, is history. The amendment to the Election Act via the confidentiality clause is one such encroachment.

The idea is simple: as long as a piece of information stays with a few individuals it is easy to manipulate them (through bribes or pressure) to look the other way, but when something gets into the public domain it becomes difficult to manipulate the outcome. There are always some conscientious voices, some crazy heads who despite the threat of hardship keep asking questions. The likes of lawyers such as Imaan Mazari-Hazir and her husband are a perfect example of such individuals.

Our lawmakers feel threatened by the very public that is their constituency. Another fad these days among these highly privileged individuals is to sermonise on the ills of elite capture while addressing conferences and in their social media posts.

Civil servants lie at the next tier of this food chain where public servants amass wealth through embezzlement. To discourage corruption, the Civil Servants (Amendment) Act, 2025, was passed in mid-2025; this law requires officers in Grade 17 to 22 to digitally file and publicly disclose domestic and foreign assets. The government has committed to the IMF that these asset declarations by bureaucrats will be available

online by the end of 2026. Unlike the previous system, these declarations will undergo risk-based verification and anti-money laundering checks by banks. All of this looks fantastic on paper, but in a democracy, the parliamentarians are the ones responsible for making sure the laws are followed in letter and spirit. Parliament is to act as the watchdog but when parliamentarians seek exemptions from making their assets public on flimsy grounds, then it is just a matter of time before civil servants or anyone who is somebody in this country will seek similar exemptions. Also, passing such self-serving laws leaves parliament with hardly any moral authority to demand scrutiny from civil servants.

Perhaps international lenders see that every condition they come up with to introduce transparency is twisted in a manner that it no longer stays relevant. Transparency-related laws in Pakistan are meant only for what the proverbial Urdu phrase 'File ka paat bherna' (stuffing the file) describes. Truth be told, the IMF with all its economic experts and financial wizards — masters of turnaround who claim to know everything — seems to know nothing or they themselves are bureaucrats who are more interested in the continuity of their jobs than genuine reform. Lastly, the kind of laws that are passed these days and the way the public still refuses to take to the streets reminds me of the following couplet by Afzal Khan: "Tu bhi saada hai kabhi chaal badalta hi nahi/ Hum bhi saada hai isi chaal mei aa jatay hain" ("You keep it simple, making the same move again/ We are naïve to fall for it over and over again.")



## KP govt takes historic steps to preserve cultural heritage

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Khan Afridi has taken historic and forward-looking steps during the first 100 days of his government to protect, restore, and promote the province's rich cultural heritage.

To preserve the shared cultural legacy of the sub-continent, the provincial government has approved Rs. 200 million for the restoration of the Derajat Museum in Dera Ismail Khan, while the long-standing archaeological cooperation mission between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Italy, spanning over seven decades, continues.

Further strengthening conservation efforts, 50 heritage professionals have been trained through the British Heritage Foundation to enhance local expertise in heritage management. The province has recently witnessed the arrival of more than 15,000 international tourists, reflecting growing global confidence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's peace, culture, and natural beauty.

To promote the province globally, a comprehensive international outreach campaign has been

launched through podcasts, documentaries, and digital media platforms. Under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated Tourism Enhancement (KITE) Project, over 200 informational signboards have been installed across the province to guide tourists to historical and cultural sites. The KITE Project has also been showcased at the World Bank headquarters in the United States as a best-practice tourism initiative.

Moreover, Rs. 20 million has been utilized for the restoration of the central temple at Kafir Kot, while Rs. 50 million has been allocated for the rehabilitation of Peshawar's historic Mohafiz Khana. These initiatives underline the provincial government's strong commitment to safeguarding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's cultural heritage and positioning the province as a prominent global destination for heritage and tourism.

Addressing a ceremony for the distribution of laptops under the scheme in Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University (PMAS-AAUR) on Thursday, the minister said that the current leadership takes pride in tangible achievements over mere slogans. He highlighted that the laptop scheme was origi-

nally initiated when Shehbaz Sharif served as Chief Minister of Punjab and has now been reinitiated at the federal level under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "Its core objective is to equip the youth with modern tools and align them with contemporary demands", he added. Abbasi stressed that merit prevails in all aspects of the scheme, ensuring laptops go to qualified and high-achieving students who are honored for their efforts. Highlighting the achievements in Pakistan Railways, the minister said that Pakistan Railways recorded Rs10.0 billion in revenue in December 2025,



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah meets with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Global President Dr. Christopher Elias in Karachi.

## Laptop Scheme reflects PM's vision of meritocracy: Hanif

RAWALPINDI (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has described the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme as a clear symbol of merit and performance, and emphasized that it rewards deserving and qualified students for their hard work.

Addressing a ceremony for the distribution of laptops under the scheme in Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University (PMAS-AAUR) on Thursday, the minister said that the current leadership takes pride in tangible achievements over mere slogans. He highlighted that the laptop scheme was origi-

nally initiated when Shehbaz Sharif served as Chief Minister of Punjab and has now been reinitiated at the federal level under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

"Its core objective is to equip the youth with modern tools and align them with contemporary demands", he added. Abbasi stressed that merit prevails in all aspects of the scheme, ensuring laptops go to qualified and high-achieving students who are honored for their efforts.

Highlighting the achievements in Pakistan Railways, the minister said that Pakistan Railways recorded Rs10.0 billion in revenue in December 2025,

which he said remained a historic milestone driven by improved services, passenger confidence and better facilities. He informed the audience that 70 railway stations have been digitized, with Wi-Fi now available at stations and on premier trains.

"Additionally, around 7.0 million people are utilizing POS, internet services in trains and stations, and all trains are expected to be equipped with Wi-Fi by June 30", he said.

He went on to inform that cleanliness and upgrades have been prioritized, with Rawalpindi Railway Station already modernized as a "smart station."

## Sindh got announces judicial commission to investigate the deadly Gul Plaza fire

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh government has announced a judicial commission to investigate the deadly Gul Plaza fire that claimed 79 lives, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said on Thursday.

The provincial administration will write a formal letter to the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court (SHC) requesting a probe into the incident.

Speaking at a press conference, Sharjeel Memon stated that the tragic fire at Gul Plaza resulted in significant loss of human life. Following the incident, the Sindh Cabinet formed a committee to examine the circumstances surrounding the fire. At the time of the blaze, between 2,000 and 2,500 people were reportedly inside the building. Notably, Gul Plaza had undergone safety audits twice before the incident.

Memon revealed that the Director of Civil Defence and the Additional Control Officer of Civil Defence, South District, have been immediately suspended. Departmental proceedings under relevant laws have been initiated against them. Delays in water supply reportedly hampered the efforts of firefighters.



LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Health and Population Khawaja Imran Nazeer in a group photo with Hufaz children during Dastar Bandi and prize distribution ceremony held at Iqra Roza tul Iftaal Shalimar Branch.

## Modern one-window service centre planned for Gilgit: Abbas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information Technology Gilgit-Baltistan Ghulam Abbas on Thursday said a proposal to establish a modern one-window public service centre in Gilgit was under consideration, following a review of a similar facility in Islamabad.

The minister made the remarks after visiting the Asaan Khidmat Centre in the federal capital, which brings multiple public services under one roof through integrated digital systems. He said the federal government was keen to replicate the model in Gilgit-Baltistan to improve access to public services. He said the proposed Asaan Khidmat Markaz in Gilgit would operate as a one-window facility, allowing citizens to obtain services from various provincial and federal departments through dedicated service counters supported by secure IT connectivity.

He said the planned system would include a management information system integrated with a queue management system to monitor service delivery. The system would generate real-time data on service requests, processing timelines, counter performance and peak hours, while digital dashboards would support oversight and planning.

The minister said, co-ordination would be undertaken with Gilgit-Baltistan departments that already provide online services to enable their operations at the proposed centre. Federal institutions, including Nadra, the National Bank of Pakistan and the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports, would also be approached to set up service counters. Ghulam Abbas said the Gilgit-Baltistan Information Technology Department would be responsible for system deployment.



Relatives hold protest for recovery of missing persons' bodies after Gul Plaza market fire in Karachi.

## One dead, another injured in Darra Adam Khel shooting

KOHAT (INP): One person was killed while another sustained serious injuries in a firing incident in the Tor Chapar area of Darra Adam Khel on Thursday.

According to a spokesperson for Rescue 1122 Kohat, emergency teams rushed to the scene soon after receiving reports of gunfire. On arrival, rescue personnel found one individual dead at the spot, while another was critically injured and shifted to a nearby hospital for immediate medical treatment.

## 10 rooftops of schools allotted for celebration of Basant Festival

LAHORE (INP): The authorities have allotted 10 rooftops of schools in the interior city of Lahore for celebration of traditional Basant Festival.

The Education Authority Lahore has forwarded the report about selected 10 schools to the School Education Department.

The schools that have named for Basant festivities included Government High Schools of Bhati Gate, Delhi Gate, Syed Miha Bazaar, Shah Alam Gate, Government Victoria Girls High School, Takia Sadhwan, Kabuli Mill and Choonia Mandi.

## Punjab Governor says: CPEC is game-changer project for development, prosperity of Pakistan

**Independent Report**

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a game-changer project for the development and prosperity of Pakistan. President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari played a key role in CPEC. He expressed these views during a meeting with Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren, who paid him a farewell call at Governor House Lahore. The Governor Punjab appreciated the services of the outgoing Chinese Consul General. The Chinese Consul General also presented the honorary shield of Pak-China Friendship to the Governor Punjab.

Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that Pak-China friendship is higher than the Himalayas. He said that Pakistan and China have

supported each other in every difficult time. The Punjab Governor said that Pak-China friendship corner stone of Pakistan's foreign policy in which the PPP has played an important role. He said that from 2008 to 2013, President Asif Ali Zardari played an important role in advancing Pak-China relations and made 14 official visits to China. He thanked the Chinese Consul General for the role he played in establishing a dispensary in a remote area like Attock. The Punjab Governor said that with the cooperation of China and the Red Crescent, a dispensary for the poor is in the final stages and will be inaugurated soon.

On this occasion, outgoing Consul General Zhao Shiren said that he was grateful to the people of Pakistan and Punjab for the warmth and hospitality.



KARACHI: Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Karachi, Yang Yundong addressing the Chinese New Year Media Reception ceremony at the Consulate General of China.

## Station Commander says: No sealing without time driven prior notice

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Station Commander Rawalpindi Cantonment, Brigadier Ali Anjum has assured traders and businessmen that no shops would be sealed in the Cantonment area in the future without the prior notice to be served by the concerned authority, clearly stating the reasons for the action, and sufficient time will be given to ensure compliance.

While addressing an awareness session on Digital Banking and Payments, Raast and Digital QR, organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and

Industry (RCCI), the Station Commander emphasized that joint efforts are required to create a business-friendly environment.

"Every individual and institution must play its role, and financial literacy must be promoted widely", he said. RCCI President Usman Shaukat said that providing a business-friendly environment must be given top priority to achieve economic growth. He added that the chamber will continue to organize such awareness sessions on digital systems on a regular basis.

## PMYP and Al Wafa chiefs met Saudi envoy to forge job, skills alliance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan and Al-Wafa Foundation Pakistan Chairman Chaudhry Kashif Nawaz Rindhawa met Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki here on Thursday to push for stronger bilateral cooperation in trade, youth education, skill training and employment opportunities, pledging joint efforts to empower Pakistani youth through Riyadh's job market and university linkages.

The discussions at the Prime Minister's Office Youth Affairs Wing highlighted the youth as the ummah's "precious asset",

with Rana Mashhood stressing the urgent need for character-building, quality education and skills to secure dignified jobs.

He noted that robust Pakistan-Saudi fraternalities are key to unlocking new prospects, while rising trade activities promise prosperity and expanded employment for young Pakistanis. Chief PMYP declared the trade surge a "guarantee of prosperity" for both nations' peoples, spurring business and job growth. Al-Wafa Foundation chief Chaudhry Rindhawa said his organisation is advancing youth-focused education and training initiatives in partnership with the government to foster empowerment.



Anti-Encroachment drive supervised by town municipal corporation removes illegal structures on Nazimabad Nawab Siddique Ali Khan Road in Karachi.

## 12-point safety code for Basant issued

LAHORE (INP): On the directions of the Punjab Chief Minister, comprehensive safety arrangements have been finalised for the Basant kite-flying festival, with the Deputy Commissioner Lahore issuing a strict 12-point code of conduct for the event scheduled from February 6 to 8.

The district administration has directed the police and all relevant departments to ensure strict implementation of the safety guidelines across Lahore.

The code of conduct will apply to all locations in the city, including buildings and rooftops.

District officers and police officials have been authorised to inspect rooftops and kite-flying venues, while strict legal action will be taken against violations of the Kite Flying Act and prescribed safety rules.

According to the code of conduct, a zero-tolerance policy will be enforced against the use of hazardous kite strings and aerial firing.



LAHORE: Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren meeting with Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan.

## Punjab govt ensuring provision of basic civic facilities to people: Salman

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that the provincial government is ensuring the provision of basic civic facilities to the people in accordance with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting on Thursday to review the progress of ongoing development projects in constituency PP-153. During the meeting, the provincial minister reviewed various development schemes underway in PP-153. The projects include the Harbanspora to Phatak Sadar Cantt trunk sewerage project at a cost of Rs 4.5 billion and development works in UC-148 costing Rs 1.1 billion. Other initiatives include installation of tube wells, street repairs, sewerage improvements and provision of clean drinking water in Amna Park.

Concerned officers briefed the meeting and in-

formed that work on multiple development schemes in PP-153 is progressing rapidly. Upon completion, these projects will significantly improve civic facilities and quality of life for residents of the area.

Khawaja Salman Rafique emphasized that resolving public issues is the top priority of the government and that transparent monitoring of development projects is being ensured.

He said that, in line with the vision of the Chief Minister, the journey of development and public prosperity will continue uninterrupted.

The minister added that the PML-N government has always served the people after coming to power. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan is moving forward on the path of progress, Alhamdulillah.



Members of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Khyber district protest evacuation of families from Tirahin Khyber District at Peshawar Press Club.

## Insaf doctors' delegation calls on KP health minister

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of Executive Council of Insaf Doctors Forum (IDF).

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa led by its President Dr Nabi Jan Afridi called on Provincial Health Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khaliq ur Rehman to discuss key challenges facing the provincial health sector and issues related to the healthcare workforce.

The meeting was attended by Central President of Insaf Doctors Forum Assistant Professor Dr Mudir Khan Wazir, members of the central and provincial leadership, paramedics, physiotherapists and representatives of the students' wing.

During the meeting, the delegation demanded the immediate approval of a summary pending with the finance department for the past five months regarding an increase in stipends for House Officers and Trainee Medical Officers.

The delegation also proposed the creation of 500 new HO and 500 TMO positions to accommodate the growing number of medical graduates and to further improve service delivery in hospitals.

The meeting also discussed a proposal to include at least a 50 percent increase in salaries for healthcare providers in the upcoming provincial budget to ensure workforce retention, boost morale and enable the provision of quality healthcare services to the public.

The delegation further demanded the early finalization and formal notification of the Shaheeds' Package for Shaheed Dr Wardah Mushtaq.

Additionally, a proposal was presented for a one-time special relaxation through the KP Public Service Commission (KPPSC) to fill management cadre positions in order to address administrative gaps in health institutions.

## Five students crushed to death by trailer in Kot Addu

KOT ADDU (INP): Five school-going students including a girl died when a rashly-driven trailer crushed two motorcycles in District Kot Addu on Thursday morning.

The horrific accident took place at Chowk Sarwar Shaheed on Layyah Road during early morning rush hour when the two motorcycles were brutally over-run by the trailer. All the five students died on the spot.

The deceased included two brothers seven-year-old Abdur Rahman and five-year-old Abdullah. Another brother and sister duo were 17-year-old Abdul Basit and Dua Fatima. The fifth victim was 16-year-old Muhammad Adil.

Police personnel rushed to the accident site and shifted the dead bodies to the tehsil headquarters hospital.

All the children were residents of Chak Number 560 of Chowk Sarwar Shaheed Tehsil.

## 3 thieves die trying to steal PTCL cables

MANDI BAHAUDDIN (INP): Dead bodies of three thieves were recovered from a PTCL manhole in Mandi Bahauddin who went in to steal the cables laid underground.

According to police, six suspects had allegedly entered the underground hole to steal PTCL cables. Three of them died of suffocation due to the manhole lid closing while three suspects were taken into custody. The police reached the spot and started investigation.

## Govt notifies district women committees in 26 districts

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the effective and visionary leadership of Charperson Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCS-W) Dr Sumera Shams, notifications have been issued for the establishment of District Committees on the Status of Women in 26 districts of the province, marking a historic step towards women's leadership and representation.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Sumera Shams said that these initiatives are being implemented in line with the vision of PTI Chairman Imran Khan, aimed at empowering women, ensuring the protection of their rights, and enabling them to play an active role in the national development process.



## Rwandan Trade Minister says: Rwanda opens for business, investment for Pakistani entrepreneurs

**Rwanda Coffee Festival 2026 to open new chapter  
in Pakistan-Rwanda trade ties: Jam Kamal**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rwanda has declared itself fully open for business and investment for the Pakistani business community, inviting stronger engagement between entrepreneurs, business chambers of commerce, and investors of both countries.

Minister of Trade and Industry of the Republic of Rwanda, Prudence Sebahizi, stated this while addressing the Rwanda Coffee Festival 2026 in Pakistan held at a local hotel on Thursday.

The minister emphasized that Rwanda offers a highly business-friendly environment and serves as a strategic hub for regional trade in Africa.

The Rwandan Trade Minister highlighted that Rwanda's central location provides access to a vast African market of nearly 1.5 billion consumers.

He noted that goods

produced in Rwanda can be exported across African markets without hindrance, making the country an ideal gateway for Pakistani businesses seeking to enter Africa.

Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, on Thursday said that the "Rwanda Coffee Festival 2026 in Pakistan" will give a new dimension to cultural and trade partnership between Pakistan and Rwanda, reflecting a growing commitment to strengthening bilateral economic ties.

Speaking in his keynote address at the Rwanda Coffee Festival, the Minister emphasized Pakistan's keen interest in expanding trade relations with Rwanda, particularly through increased imports of coffee and tea.

He noted that such ini-

tiatives would help foster closer business and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Calling for enhanced cooperation, Sebahizi said Rwanda is keen to import high-quality Pakistani rice, textiles, and pharmaceutical products, sectors where Pakistan holds strong competitive advantages.

He added that in Rwanda, Pakistani rice, particularly 'Basmati' is widely recognized for its superior quality.

The Minister described the Rwanda Coffee Festival as a symbol of resilience, hard work, and cultural pride, reflecting the strong potential for promoting both business and cultural ties between Pakistan and Rwanda.

"Each cup of Rwandan coffee tells a story of resilience, hard work, and dedication of our farmers," he remarked.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Rwanda's Minister of Trade and Industry Prudence Sebahizi jointly cut the ribbon to inaugurate the Rwanda Coffee Festival in Islamabad, marking a new chapter in Pakistan-Rwanda trade and economic cooperation.

## SAPM Haroon, Sri Lankan Ministers reaffirm commitment to explore new opportunities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Sri Lanka on Thursday reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations and exploring new opportunities for cooperation to benefit the peoples of Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The affirmation was expressed during a meeting between Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Haroon Akhtar Khan and a high-level ministerial delegation from Sri Lanka to discuss avenues for strengthening bilateral cooperation across key economic sectors, said a news release.

The Sri Lankan delegation comprised Minister of Trade Wasantha Samarasinghe, Minister of Industry Sunil Handunnetti, and Deputy Minister of Health

Muditha Hasanka, said a news release.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on enhancing cooperation in industry and trade, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), business and investment, as well as technology and innovation. The discussions reflected a shared commitment to expanding mutually beneficial economic engagement.

SAPM Haroon Akhtar Khan stated that, in line with the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the government is actively promoting regional economic cooperation to ensure sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

He emphasized that Pakistan and Sri Lanka enjoy historic and brotherly relations rooted in mutual respect and trust.



Central Anjuman-e-Tajran Balochistan President Abdul Rahim Kakar inaugurates Dada Brand Fashion Center in Quetta.

## Pakistan's salt exports to China rise 20% in 2025

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan's salt exports to China rose by about 20% in 2025, according to data released by the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, reflecting continued growth in bilateral agricultural and mineral trade.

Pakistan exported salt worth \$7.18 million to China in 2025, up from \$5.98 million in 2024, driven by increased demand from multiple Chinese provinces and improved supply-chain linkages.

Customs data showed that industrial and other salt (HS 25010019) accounted for the majority of shipments under ordinary trade. Hebei Province was the largest destination, importing about 37.8 million kilograms valued at \$3.81 million. Zhejiang Province followed with imports of more

than 452,000 kilograms worth \$645,050, while Anhui Province imported 830,500 kilograms valued at \$557,023.

Other major destinations included Fujian Province (340,483 kilograms; \$537,693), Guangdong Province (716,881 kilograms; \$453,210), and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, which imported more than 2.66 million kilograms.

Additional shipments were recorded to Shandong, Liaoning, Jiangsu, Tianjin, Shanghai, Hubei, Beijing, and Hunan.

Pakistan also exported edible salt (HS 25010011) to China, with shipments sent to Anhui Province, Guangdong Province through bonded trade channels, as well as Heilongjiang and Hebei Provinces, according to the data.

## Gold prices surge Rs.21,200 to all-time high of Rs572,862

ISLAMABAD (APP): Gold prices surged to an all-time high in the local market on Thursday as the price of 24-karat gold per tola jumped by Rs21,200 to settle at Rs572,862.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also jumped by Rs18,175 to Rs491,136, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs16,661 to Rs450,224, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Silver prices also witnessed an upward trend, with the price of 24-karat silver per tola increasing by Rs264 to Rs12,175, whereas the price of 10 grams of silver went up by Rs227 to Rs10,438.

## Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves rise to \$21.3 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan increased to US\$ 21,293.3 million as of January 23, 2026 while the reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan rose to \$16,101.1 million.

"During the week ended on 23-Jan-2026, SBP's FX reserves increased by US\$ 13 million to US\$ 16,101.1 million," the central bank reported on Thursday in its weekly statement on the position of liquid foreign reserves.

Meanwhile, the net foreign reserves held by the commercial banks also increased by \$21.7 million to \$5,192.2 million during the week, as shown in the break up of forex reserves for the period under review.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country in the previous week ended on January 16, 2026 were 21,258.2 million. Among them the central bank held foreign exchange reserves of \$16,087.7 million.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, held a meeting with a delegation of Silkway Impex Pvt. Ltd. and a high-level Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) delegation.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry talking to a delegation of AD Ports Group that called on him.

## Global investors signal strong conviction in Pakistan's investment story: Khurram

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad on Thursday said that the virtual investor roadshow arranged by Standard Chartered Bank in collaboration with the Debt Management Office of the Ministry of Finance and Revenue, marked a historic and unprecedented level of engagement with Pakistan's investment narrative.

With 225 investors participating, this was among the largest, most diverse, and most institutionally-weighted investor interactions Pakistan has seen in recent years, and the first time such a broad set of real-money global investors en-

gaged together in a single, curated forum at this scale, he posted on X. The roadshow was led by Minister of Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, alongside his team, who presented Pakistan's emerging investment story anchored in macro-economic stability, structural reforms, external validation and a clearly improving outlook, while providing clear forward guidance on external market funding plans through forthcoming RFPs, he added.

He said that participation was dominated by foreign institutional investors, global asset managers, pension funds, insurers, sover-

eign-linked entities, corporates, HNWI, and multilateral institutions, reflecting not speculative interest, but serious long-horizon capital evaluating Pakistan's renewed macro and reform trajectory. Foreign investors joined from all major capital regions including North America, Europe, Middle East and Asia-Pacific signaling broad global interest, he said adding that the participation by the World's Largest Asset Managers Importantly, the attendee list included some of the largest and most influential asset managers in the world, collectively representing over \$35+ trillion in assets under management (AUMs).

## Energy security vital for economic stability: Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik on Thursday said energy security was fundamental to Pakistan's economic stability, industrial growth and national resilience, and assured that the government would take every possible step to protect the interests of investors in the oil and gas sector. Addressing an annual technical conference here, the minister said the government had taken difficult but necessary decisions to ensure macroeconomic stability amid challenging economic conditions.

He emphasized the

need for clear, decisive, investor-friendly and forward-looking policies in view of rapid technological shifts, rising energy demand and volatility in global markets. He also called for long-term, integrated planning to address the challenges, warning that sustainability could not be achieved without structural reforms.

Ali Pervaiz Malik said cooperation in the energy and infrastructure sectors was indispensable for long-term economic development, noting that several Pak-China cooperation projects were underway across multiple sectors.

## Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.80 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.81. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.70 and Rs 282.35, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs0.37 to close at Rs 335.23 from the previous day's close of Rs 335.60, according to the State Bank.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary (Tax Education/Facilitation), Muhammad Muti-ur-Rehman Mumtaz, addresses a session with women at the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry at FPCCI as part of FBR's Tax Awareness Initiative.

## Semiconductors now core to modern digital architecture: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Thursday said that semiconductors were no longer a standalone technological vertical but the foundational layer underpinning modern digital architectures, including artificial intelligence, 5G and emerging 6G technologies. Addressing an event at the Islamic International University Islamabad (IIUI), she said rapid global technological shifts had made indigenous semiconductor capabilities critical for economic resilience and national security.

Keeping practical constraints in view, Pakistan had adopted a phased and pragmatic approach under the National Semiconductor Policy issued last year, prioritizing chip design, education and OSAT development before moving toward capital-intensive fabrication.

Shaza Fatima said the

policy aimed to provide regulatory clarity, IP protection and a predictable framework with plans to establish a single-window facility under the Ministry of IT. She said the government was procuring advanced EDA tools, including Cadence, for shared use across nine university-based Semiconductor Education and Research Clusters nationwide. She added that Pakistan would train around 7,200 young engineers in semiconductor design and verification, while working with friendly countries, including Saudi Arabia, to create international employment pathways.

Highlighting global shortages of chip designers and the industry's projected growth beyond one trillion dollars by 2030, she said Pakistan's focus on public-private partnerships aligned with the Prime Minister's Digital Nation Pakistan vision and broader national security imperatives.

## PSX plunges, sheds over 6,042 points to close at 182,338 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday witnessed bearish trend and closed sharply lower, shedding 6,042.27 points, a decline of 3.21 percent, to close at 182,338.12 points compared to 188,380.39 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 933.099 million shares with a traded value of Rs 66,413 billion, against 953.917 million shares valuing Rs 48,878 billion in the previous session.

Market capitalization declined to Rs 20,618 trillion from Rs 21,186 trillion a day earlier.

Out of 487 active companies in the ready market, 83 advanced, 364 declined, while 40 remained unchanged.

## Gilani calls for locally manufactured Pakistani- brand vehicle

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Thursday stressed the need to introduce locally manufactured made-in-Pakistan vehicle under a Pakistani brand, as well as economic electric bikes aimed at promoting affordable mobility and strengthening domestic manufacturing.

He was talking to Chief Executive Officer of the Engineering Development Board (EDB), Hamad Ali Mansoor who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Hamad Ali Mansoor briefed Mr. Gilani on the role and mandate of the Engineering Development Board, an apex body under the Ministry of Industries and Production, established in 1995 to strengthen Pakistan's engineering sector.

He outlined EDB's key initiatives to promote industrial growth, enhance

exports, support research and development, improve technical skills and align the sector with international standards.

The CEO also apprised the acting president of ongoing policy measures, including long-term strategic planning, tariff rationalisation, industrial development frameworks, automobile and electric vehicle policies, as well as efforts to foster innovation, technology adoption and human resource development in the engineering industry.

Mr. Gilani appreciated the proactive role of the Engineering Development Board in advancing Pakistan's engineering sector.

He emphasised the importance of transitioning to electric vehicles in view of environmental concerns and the need to support sustainable economic growth.



ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani talking to Chief Executive Officer of the Engineering Development Board, Hamad Ali Mansoor, Ministry of Industries at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Pak-China mineral cooperation to transform Pakistan's mineral sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan has invited China to invest in copper, gold, rare earth elements, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro, quoting Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal.

Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong said Pakistan is "rich in mineral resources" and stressed the importance of enterprise-led cooperation for sustainable development.

Referring to the new phase of CPEC 2.0, he encouraged Chinese companies to take a leading role in bilateral projects while helping strengthen local technical capacity.

Citing the Saindak project as an example, he noted that more than 5,200 Pakistani professionals have been trained, gaining valuable technical and managerial skills, reflecting China's commitment to human resource development alongside mineral cooperation.

With the slogan "Our Shared Prosperity Empowered by Minerals," the Pak-China Mineral Cooperation Forum was officially launched here at Jinnah

Convention Center, in the presence of senior government officials and leading companies from both countries, marking a new chapter in bilateral collaboration in Pakistan's mineral sector.

"It is a great honour and privileged for me to launch Pak-China mineral cooperation forum," said the Minister who was chief guest of the occasion.

"Pakistan invites China to invest in copper, gold, rare earth elements and other critical minerals so that our mineral wealth can be transformed into industrial strength, export competitiveness and shared prosperity," Iqbal said.

"The mineral sector holds a central place in Uraan Pakistan for achieving our export targets. Pakistan's mineral resources are valued at nearly six to seven trillion dollars, yet our current mineral exports stand at only about two billion dollars annually," he said.

It was time to take Pak-China mineral cooperation beyond extraction towards value addition, processing, smelting and refining.



LARKANA: Students display handmade traditional outfits during the Regional Level STEAM Competition organized by the Directorate of Primary Schools Education at Sachal Banquet.

## CLDPUS visits SECP, discusses cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation from the US Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDPUS) visited the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Thursday and discussed cooperation on strengthening early and out-of-court corporate dispute resolution mechanisms to improve the business environment and boost investor confidence.

SECP officials briefed the delegation on the Commission's mandate, regulatory framework, and supervisory role across Pakistan's financial sector, according to press release issued by SECP.

The CLDPUS delegation was led by Zmarak Khan, Deputy Chief Counsel, and included Ms. Alexa Black, International Program Specialist; Ms. Aleena Nasir, Attorney Advisor (International); Ms. Emily Rife, Expert and Senior Partner, CLDPUS; and Dave Moora,

Senior Partner, Impact Associates.

Both sides discussed the establishment of a dedicated Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Centre in Pakistan, drawing on international best practices.

These included the Financial Industry Disputes Resolution Centre (FIDREC) model of Singapore, an independent and impartial institution that resolves consumer financial disputes through structured mediation and adjudication mechanisms.

Muzaffar Ahmed Mirza, Commissioner (Law), SECP, briefed the delegation on SECP's ongoing and earlier initiatives to promote alternative dispute resolution.

He highlighted existing mechanisms, including the Small Dispute Resolution Committee in the insurance sector. Mirza also outlined SECP's vision for expanding ADR frameworks to ensure timely.



## EU top diplomat urges 'more European' NATO as Trump upends ties

BRUSSELS (AFP/APP): Europe must step up efforts on defence and play a bigger role in NATO as US President Donald Trump has "shaken the transatlantic relationship to its foundation", EU top diplomat Kaja Kallas said Wednesday. "Let me be clear: we want strong transatlantic ties. The US will remain Europe's partner and ally. But Europe needs to adapt to the new realities. Europe is no longer Washington's primary centre of gravity," Kallas told a defence conference in Brussels.

"This shift has been ongoing for a while. It is structural, not temporary. It means that Europe must step up—no great power in history has outsourced its survival and security."

Trump rocked European allies this month by threatening to seize Greenland from NATO and EU member Denmark—before eventually backing off.

The crisis—the latest to buffet ties since his return to power a year ago—has reinforced calls for the continent to cut its decades-long reliance on NATO's dominant military superpower for protection.

Kallas remained clear-eyed that NATO remains the bedrock of European security.

She said EU efforts should "remain complementary" to those of the alliance, but insisted Europe needed to play a bigger role. "Especially now, as the US is setting its sights beyond Europe, NATO needs to become more European to maintain its strength," she said. "For this, Europe must act."

European countries have already ramped up defence budgets since Russia invaded Ukraine four years ago, and agreed last year to massively hike NATO's spending target under pressure from Trump.

The EU last year also launched a raft of initiatives that it says could see its members plough an additional 800 billion euros into defence.

Washington meanwhile has said it wants European allies to take over more responsibility for the conventional defence of the continent as US focus switches to other threats like China.

"The risk of a full-blown return to coercive power politics, spheres of influence and a world where might makes right, is very real," Kallas said.

She insisted Europe "must acknowledge that this tectonic shift is here to stay. And to act with urgency."

Kallas' comments come after NATO chief Mark Rutte told EU lawmakers to "keep on dreaming" if they thought Europe could defend itself without the United States.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer shakes hands with National People's Congress Chairman Zhao Leji at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China.

## Starmer, Xi stress need for stronger UK-China ties to face global headwinds

BEIJING (AFP/APP): Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Chinese leader Xi Jinping stressed the need for closer relations between their countries in order to face geopolitical headwinds, as the two met in Beijing on Thursday.

Starmer's visit to China is the first by a British prime minister since 2018 and follows a slew of Western leaders seeking a rapprochement with Beijing recently, pivoting from an increasingly unpredictable United States.

The leaders met at the

opulent Great Hall of the People, with Starmer telling Xi during their meeting that China is a "vital player on the global stage."

"It's vital to build a more sophisticated relationship where we identify opportunities to collaborate, but also allow a meaningful dialogue on areas where we disagree," Starmer told Xi.

Xi also stressed the need for stronger ties with a "long-term view" in the context of what he called a "complex" international situation.

"China and the UK

need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation, whether it is to maintain world peace and stability or promote the economies and livelihoods of both countries," Xi told Starmer.

Xi also noted they would need to overcome difficulties in order to move forward but that cooperation would unlock a "new chapter" in their relations.

"Good things often come with difficulties... Leaders will not shy away from difficulties and will forge ahead bravely," he said.

## Fifteen dead, including lawmaker, in Colombia plane crash

BOGOTÁ (AFP/APP): An airplane carrying 15 people, including a lawmaker, crashed near Colombia's border with Venezuela on Wednesday, killing all passengers and crew, Colombia's civil aviation authority said.

The plane, which was operated by state airline Satena, took off from the border city of Cucuta and lost contact with control towers shortly before it was due to land in nearby Ocana around noon (1700GMT).

"There are no sur-

vivors," an official from the aviation authority told AFP.

There were 13 passengers and two crew members aboard.

The Cucuta area is mountainous with highly changeable weather and swaths are controlled by Colombia's largest guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army, better known by its Spanish acronym ELN.

The government deployed the Air Force to search for the plane and recover the bodies.

## Ukraine says has received 1,000 bodies from Russia

KYIV (AFP/APP): Kyiv said on Thursday that it had received from Russia 1,000 remains of people that Moscow said were Ukrainian soldiers killed fighting the Kremlin's army.

The exchange of prisoners of war and remains of killed soldiers is one of the few remaining areas of cooperation between Kyiv and Moscow, which invaded Ukraine in February 2022. "Today, repatriation measures took place, under which 1,000 bodies of the deceased, which the Russian side claims belong to Ukrainian defenders, were returned to Ukraine," Kyiv's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War.



Residents stand next to burned cars near an apartment building damaged during Russian missile strikes in Zaporizhzhia.

## Greenland's elite dogsled unit patrols desolate, icy Arctic

COPENHAGEN (AFP/APP): Donald Trump has ridiculed Denmark's defence of Greenland as amounting to "two dogsleds", but the Sirius Dogsled Patrol is no joke: the elite navy unit works in extreme conditions where only the toughest survive.

Denmark has allocated billions to beef up security of its vast Arctic island, but when it comes to policing the frozen wilderness of northern and eastern Greenland in winter, it relies on six low-tech two-man teams with a dozen dogs each. Between January and June, when the sun begins to reappear after falling below the horizon for two months, the dogsled patrols set off for four to five months, in temperatures that can drop to -40C (-40F) and where they may

not encounter another soul. They skialongside the dogs, covering around 30 kilometres (19 miles) a day.

The dogs pull a 500-kilo (1,100-pound) sled packed with tents specially designed for the harsh weather, food supplies, fuel and other provisions to last them to the nearest of the 50 or so supply depots dotted around the region, typically located 7-10 days' journey apart.

The patrol monitors an area measuring 160,000 square kilometres (60,000 square miles)—the size of France and Spain.

"The reason we use a dog sled, rather than a snowmobile, is that the sled and dogs are durable. We can operate for a very, very long time over enormous distances in extremely isolated environments."

## Heavy security near Niger capital's airport after gunfire, blasts

NIAMEY (AFP/APP): Security forces were deployed around the international airport in Niger's capital on Thursday after heavy gunfire and explosions erupted overnight in what several observers said bore the hallmarks of a militant attack. Niger, a Sahelian country regularly hit by militant violence, has been led for more than two years by Abdourhamane Tiani, the head of a junta that overthrew the elected civilian president in 2023. The shooting began shortly after midnight, according to residents of a neighbourhood near the airport in Niamey. Calm returned two hours later, they told AFP.

Videos filmed by local people showed streaks of light in the sky with the sound of loud explosions, while other images showed flames several metres high and charred cars.

The capital's Diiori

Hamani International Airport houses an air force base and is located about 10 kilometres (six miles) from the presidential palace.

A heavy security deployment was seen early Thursday in the area of the airport, where police and soldiers controlled access, especially to the military base, and an armoured vehicle was stationed, an AFP journalist saw. It was not immediately clear what had caused the gunfire and whether there were any casualties.

Residents recounted their nighttime "fear" including from "roofs that were shaking", as people in the capital went about their normal business early on Thursday. The country's largest international airport is the headquarters of a joint force created by Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali to combat militant groups waging deadly violence in the region.

## Ecuador says US ICE agent tried to enter its consulate in Minneapolis

QUITO (AFP/APP): Ecuador on Tuesday denounced what it said was an attempted incursion by US immigration agents into the South American country's consulate in the flashpoint city of Minneapolis.

The government of Daniel Noboa, one of Washington's closest allies in Latin America, sent a letter of protest to the US embassy in Quito regarding the incident, the foreign ministry said in a statement. According to the note, a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent tried to enter the consulate but was kept out by staffers to protect Ecuadorians who were inside the diplomatic mission. Minneapolis, in the northern state of Minnesota, has emerged as the tense ground zero of the national clash.

## Syria and Turkey explore strengthening financial cooperation

DAMASCUS (SANA/APP): Finance Minister Mohamed Yisr Bamieh met with Turkey's Ambassador to Damascus, Nuh Yilmaz, to discuss ways of enhancing economic and financial cooperation between the two countries.

The Ministry of Finance stated via its Telegram channel on Wednesday that the two sides discussed prospects for cooperation in the financial sector, encouraging Turkish financial institutions to operate in Syria, and strengthening banking relations between Syrian and Turkish banks to support trade and investment between the two nations. The meeting also addressed the possibility of benefiting from Turkey's experience in the real estate financing sector, reforming the pension.



US President Donald Trump wants to create conditions for 'regime change' after a crackdown crushed a nationwide protest movement earlier this month. Above, anti-US rhetoric on a billboard in Tehran.

## US judge blocks Trump admin from detaining refugees in Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS (AFP/APP): A US federal judge temporarily blocked the Trump administration on Wednesday from detaining refugees in Minnesota awaiting permanent resident status and ordered the release of those in detention. President Donald Trump has sent thousands of federal immigration agents to the Democratic state as part of a sweeping crackdown that has sparked outrage over the deaths of two US citizens at the hands of officers.

Immigration authorities launched a program this month to re-examine the legal status of the ap-

proximately 5,600 refugees in Minnesota who have not yet been given green cards. In his order Wednesday, US District Judge John Tunheim said that the Trump administration could continue to enforce immigration laws and review refugees' status, but that it must do so "without arresting and detaining refugees." "Refugees have a legal right to be in the United States, a right to work, a right to live peacefully—and importantly, a right not to be subjected to the terror of being arrested and detained without warrants."

## Ghana moves to rewrite mining laws for bigger share of gold revenues

ACCRA (AFP/APP): Ghana is preparing to overhaul its mining laws to increase its share of the revenues generated by the surge in the precious metal's price, sparking concern among foreign mining companies in Africa's top gold producer.

By revising its mining code, which currently offers foreign mining firms favourable tax and royalty terms, leaving the state with a limited stake, Ghana is following in the footsteps of other African countries. They are looking to tighten control over natural

resources as global demand for gold and critical minerals such as cobalt soars.

Among those that have recently introduced new mining laws are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and Tanzania.

Gold prices have skyrocketed recently, jumping more than 65 percent in 2025, climbing to fresh records above \$5,100 on Monday. "What we have since 2014 is a policy that has not been reviewed," Isaac Andrews Tandoh, acting chief executive officer of the Minerals Commission, told AFP.

## Russia's sanctioned oil firm Lukoil to sell foreign assets to Carlyle

MOSCOW (AFP/APP): Russia's oil giant Lukoil, sanctioned by Washington over the Ukraine war, said Thursday that it would sell its foreign assets to the US investment firm The Carlyle Group.

At the end of October 2025, in order to put pressure on Russia's state finances, the United States added Moscow's two largest oil producers, Lukoil and Rosneft, to its blacklist of sanctioned entities.

Companies working with the Russian giants risk secondary sanctions that would deny them access to US banks, traders, transporters, and insurers—the backbone of the commodities market.

Lukoil "informs that it signed an agreement with US investment company Carlyle on the sale of LUKOIL International GmbH," Russia's second-biggest oil producer said, without disclosing the deal's value.

The deal excluded assets in Kazakhstan and still requires US Treasury approval, Lukoil said, adding that it was still negotiating with other investors.

The US had initially given the company one month to sell the holdings but then gradually extended it as negotiations dragged on.

Lukoil shares rose 3.5 percent on the news, according to the Moscow stock exchange.

## UN says Gaza crisis remains dire, children hardest hit

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Despite a modest increase in humanitarian assistance, the situation in Gaza remains "dire", with children among the hardest hit by shortages of shelter, basic services and education, according to the United Nations.

Briefing reporters in New York, UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric described the situation as still "dire" for hundreds of thousands of families across the Strip who remain in urgent need.

UN health partners have expanded basic services in recent days. As part of a catch-up vaccination campaign launched last week, more than 6,000 children under three have now received shots to safeguard

against preventable diseases.

On food security, the UN and its partners are providing daily bread rations to at least 43 per cent of the population, either free or at a heavily subsidized price of less than \$1 for a two-kilogramme bundle. This assistance is complemented by monthly household distributions of wheat flour, which reached 1.2 million people this month.

Shelter and winter support have also increased. Over the past week, humanitarian partners delivered tents, tarpaulins, sealing-off kits, mattresses and blankets to more than 7,500 families—while 1,400 children received winter clothing.

## Russian strikes push Ukraine towards catastrophe, says EU

BRUSSELS (AFP/APP): EU top diplomat Kaja Kallas warned Thursday that Ukraine was facing a "humanitarian catastrophe" as Russian strikes cut power in frigid winter conditions. Kallas said that despite US-led talks in Abu Dhabi to end the war, Russia was "bombing Ukrainians, trying to bomb and freeze them to surrender".

"It's a very hard winter and Ukrainians are really suffering. There is a humanitarian catastrophe coming there," she said at the start of an EU meeting in Brussels. Russia has stepped up its strikes against Ukraine's power and heating infrastructure, plunging residents into darkness and cold as temperatures have dropped as low as -20C.

The EU is looking to step up support for Ukraine's power grid and is preparing a new round of sanctions on Moscow for the fourth anniversary of its invasion next month.

The European Com-

mission said it was mobilising some 200 million euros (\$240 million) for emergency humanitarian aid and energy funding to help the country.

Sweden's foreign minister Maria Stenengard called for "a full services maritime ban on all Russian vessels that transport energy" to further curb Moscow's revenues.

She also urged a ban on fertiliser imports from Russia and a prohibition on exporting luxury goods from the EU to the country. "We need to put more pressure on Russia. That is the only way to stop the killing," she said. The EU has already imposed 19 rounds of sanctions on Russia since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine and Kallas said Thursday the EU would also add Russia to the bloc's money-laundering blacklist. In a separate initiative, Estonia's foreign minister called for EU countries to impose a coordinated Schengen visa ban on Russians.

## Thai foreign minister hopes Myanmar polls 'start of transition' to peace

CEBU (AFP/APP): Thailand's foreign minister said on Thursday that he hoped Myanmar's recent election would be the "start of a transition" that could lead to sustainable peace in the civil war-torn country.

Myanmar's pro-military party declared victory Monday in junta-run elections widely labelled a "sham" by rights groups.

Critics say the poll was stacked with army allies to prolong its grip on power after a 2021 coup that saw massively popular democratic figurehead Aung San Suu Kyi detained and her party dissolved.

Speaking on the sidelines of an ASEAN retreat in the central Philippines, Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow said he hoped the polls might pave the way to peace.

"It's not a perfect election, but we hope that it will be the start of the transition," he told reporters, with the end goal of a "sustainable solution".

Phuangketkeow later told AFP that Thailand had proposed what it termed "calibrated engagement", saying the country needed to be proactive given its status as Myanmar's next-door neighbour.

"It's not engagement that is meant to accord immediate legitimacy to the new government that will come to power after the election," he said in an interview, conceding the recent polls did not meet expectations "for many of us".

"But we hope that by way of engagement and by way of their positive response... we can bring about positive changes."

## China plans space based AI data centres, challenging Musk's SpaceX ambitions

BAKU (AZERTAC/APP): China plans to launch space based artificial intelligence data centres over the next five years, state media reported on Thursday, a challenge to Elon Musk's plan to deploy SpaceX data centres to the heavens, according to Reuters.

China's main space contractor, China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), vowed to "construct gigawatt-class space digital-intelligence infrastructure," according to a five-year development plan that was cited by state broadcaster CCTV.

The new space data centres will "integrate cloud, edge and terminal (device) capabilities" and achieve the "deep integration of computing power, storage capacity and transmission bandwidth," enabling data from Earth to be processed in space, the report said.

US firm SpaceX expects to use funds from its planned \$25 billion blockbuster IPO this year to develop orbital AI data centres in response to terrestrial energy constraints.

SpaceX plans to launch solar powered AI data center satellites

within the next two to three years, Musk said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last week.

"It's a no-brainer building solar-power data centers in space... the lowest-cost place to put AI will be space and that will be true within two years, three at the latest," Musk said.

He said solar generation in orbit can produce five times more power than panels on the ground.

China also plans to shift the energy-intensive burden of AI processing into orbit, utilising "gigawatt-class" solar-powered hubs to create an industrial-scale "Space Cloud" by 2030, according to a December CASC policy document.

The document identifies the integration of space-based solar power with AI computing as a core pillar of the upcoming 15th Five Year Plan, China's economic development roadmap.

The CASC plan also vowed to "achieve the flight operation of suborbital space tourism and gradually develop orbital space tourism" in the next five years, CCTV reported.



Storm Kristin had 'caused significant damage across several parts of the country.'



# Ahsan chairs mid-year review meeting of Annual Plan 2025-26

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday chair the mid-year review meeting of the Annual Plan 2025-26, setting a new tradition to strengthen planning, monitoring, and implementation mechanisms.

"Traditionally, this process was conducted on an annual basis; however, to make it more effective and results-oriented, it has now been decided that the Annual Development Plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure timely achievement of national objectives," he said while addressing the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Secretaries of all Ministries and Divisions, senior officials, members of the Planning Commission, and relevant stakeholders including Provincial government representatives.

The minister emphasized that governance was not merely about performance delivery, but about building institutional capacity to not only achieve defined targets but also to continuously improve future goals.

He said the Annual Development Plan served as a guiding framework for the entire economy and provides a clear pathway to ward achieving the country's five-year development objectives.

Highlighting the government's long-term vision, Ahsan Iqbal stated that under the "URAAN Pakistan" initiative, the national target has been set to transform Pakistan into a 'one

trillion-dollar economy by 2035.

He added that regular review meetings would be held to monitor progress on these goals and ensure effective implementation.

The minister further noted that following the 18th Constitutional Amendment, most social and economic sectors fall under provincial jurisdiction; therefore, close coordination between the federation and provinces is essential for achieving national economic targets.

He identified agriculture, services, Information Technology and particularly the social sector as key drivers of economic performance, stressing that sustainable economic growth is not possible without improving productivity in these sectors.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, chairing the Mid-Year Review Meeting of the Annual Plan 2025-26.

## Dialogue opt always available but PTI politicizing threatens KP: Aqeel

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik Thursday reiterated that the dialogue option remains on the table but warned that PTI's negative political narrative risks destabilizing governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

While speaking to a local media channel, he strongly criticized the statements made by the Chief Minister of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, stating that such remarks were unnecessarily politicized and lacked a constructive approach toward governance.

He emphasized that turning administrative matters into political controversies undermines institutional stability and warned that such practices could create serious challenges for effective governance in the province.

## President departs for Pakistan after concluding UAE visit

DUBAI (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday departed for Pakistan after completing a four-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and economic cooperation.

At Dubai Airport, the president was seen off by UAE Minister of State Abdul Rahman bin Mohammed Al Owais, Pakistan's Ambassador to the UAE, the UAE's Ambassador to Pakistan, and the Consul General of Pakistan in Dubai, a Presidency's news release said.

During the visit, President Zardari held important meetings with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral relations, expanding economic partnership, and exploring avenues for deeper cooperation. The two sides also exchanged views on progress in defence and security cooperation, as well as strengthening people-to-people contacts, reflecting the longstanding fraternal ties between Pakistan and the UAE.

## Pakistan, Egypt strengthen bilateral ties with focus on health sector cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Pakistan called on the Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, to discuss matters of mutual interest with a particular focus on cooperation in the health sector.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on strengthening bilateral collaboration, including enhanced cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector and capacity building. The

progress made so far in these areas was reviewed, and avenues for further expanding collaboration were explored.

The Federal Minister underscored that Pakistan and Egypt share strong, longstanding, and brotherly relations, rooted in mutual respect and shared values.

He noted that cooperation in the health sector has emerged as a key pillar of bilateral relations between the two countries.



QUETTA: Provincial Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar inspecting the various departments during his visit to Mir Abdul Ghafoor Teaching Hospital.

## Quetta's chaotic growth under scrutiny as Commissioner orders swift finalization of master plan

Independent Report  
QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division, Shahzaib Khan Kakar, has instructed concerned authorities to promptly complete the Quetta Master Plan and ensure its strict execution to control haphazard urban growth and improve the delivery of basic civic services to the city's residents.

He issued these directives while chairing a meeting of the Urban Planning and Designing Committee, which was attended by Administrator Metropolitan Corporation Quetta Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Qambrani, SSP Traffic Quetta Mirza Bilal Hassan, Deputy Project Director QDP Abid Mehmood, Director QDA Asif Ali, DSP Traffic Saifullah Durrani, SP City Quetta Noman Zafar, Chief Architect

Abdul Aziz Zehri, and officials from QDA, BPA, and other relevant departments.

The meeting conducted an in-depth review of the formulation and execution framework of the Quetta Master Plan. Participants examined key urban challenges, including enforcement of building regulations, drainage infrastructure, parking arrangements, and both ongoing and proposed development schemes across the city.

Emphasizing the need for discipline in urban construction, the commissioner directed that building codes must be enforced without exception and that all future constructions should mandatorily include sufficient parking facilities. He further ordered that comprehensive drainage solutions be integrated into the master plan to permanently address Quetta's persistent waterlogging problems and safeguard the city against urban flooding.

Decisions were also taken to strengthen institutional oversight, with the Administrator Metropolitan Corporation included in the ACS Standing Committee, while the SSP Traffic and Chief Architect were inducted into the Technical Committee. The move aims to ensure that all development projects remain aligned with traffic management needs, civic requirements, and established technical standards, thereby supporting sustainable urban growth.

Shahzaib Khan Kakar also directed all concerned departments to improve coordination among themselves and maintain transparency at every stage of planning.



QUETTA: Director General Public Relations Balochistan Askar Khan presides over the Introductory meeting of DPR Officers.



Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, addresses troops at Bahawalpur Garrison.

## Pak backs US-led Board of Peace's UNSC-mandate to chart path to Palestinian self-determination

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan told UN Security Council Wednesday that it has joined the US-led Board of Peace (BoP) in support of its mandate under the 15-member body's resolution 2803 that reaffirms its commitment to efforts aimed at achieving a lasting peace based on Palestinian self-determination and statehood in accordance with international law. "The international community, particularly this Council, bears the responsibility to translate renewed engagement into measurable change on the ground for the betterment of the Palestinian people," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to

the UN, said during a debate on the situation in the Middle East, including The Palestinian Question, which coincided with the announcement of the 26-member Board.

He said the unresolved Palestinian question remains at the core of instability in the Middle East, stressing that decades of Israeli occupation have resulted in dispossession, repression and the denial of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Noting that the commencement of the second phase of the Peace Plan — including the establishment of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), and the es-

tablishment of the BoP and Executive Committees — were "important steps", the Pakistani envoy said, these measures should now help consolidate the ceasefire, secure a permanent cessation of hostilities, facilitate transitional arrangements, enable recovery and reconstruction, ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance at scale, and prepare the ground for a sustainable and credible political process toward Palestinian self-determination and statehood. At the same time, Ambassador Asim Ahmad voiced deep concern over the fragile situation in Gaza, with ceasefire violations continuing unabated and civilian lives remaining at risk.

## Ameer Muqam vows implementation of JAAC agreement in Azad Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON Engr Amir Muqam on Thursday chaired a meeting to review implementation status of the agreement with Joint Awami Action Committee, AJK.

The Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam expressed satisfaction over the progress achieved to date and directed all concerned departments to further speed up the implementation work, said a press release here on Thursday.

He said that Azad Jammu and Kashmir is a top priority of the Prime Minister and providing relief to the people is a joint responsibility of the federal and AJK governments.

Engineer Amir

Muqam assured that, in line with the Prime Minister's instructions, full and effective implementation of the agreement with the Joint Action Committee would be ensured.

Coordinator to Prime Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON Shabir Ahmad Usmani, Secretary Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON Zafar Hasan, Chief Secretary Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Khushhal Khan and Additional Secretary Kamran Rehman Khan also attended the meeting. Officials from relevant ministries and departments briefed the meeting on the steps taken so far, while the Chief Secretary AJK shared a detailed update on the implementation process.

## Religious ministry announces to issue unified calendar for Azan, prayer timings

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs, along with eminent scholars representing all schools of thought, clerics and members of the business community on Thursday agreed to issue a unified calendar for Azan and prayer timings. The decision was taken at a consultative meeting on the standardization of Azan and prayer times for Rawalpindi and Islamabad, chaired by Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf. Addressing the meeting, the minister recalled that uniform prayer and Azan timings had been implemented during a previous government but were later discontinued following a change in administrations.

## EU Ambassador calls on PM Shehbaz, assures effort to strengthen bilateral ties

GSP+ in spotlight as PM affirms commitment to EU cooperation on trade ventures

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the European Union, Raimundas Karoblis Thursday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here at the Prime Minister's House and assured his efforts to strengthen Pakistan-European Union relations on all spheres.

The prime minister was assisted by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Advisor to the Prime Min-

ister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah, SAPM Tariq Fatemi and Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

Welcoming the EU Ambassador, who recently assumed his responsibilities in Pakistan, the prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthen cooperation with the EU in all areas of mutual interest, particularly trade, investment, development, security, migration and climate change.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Raimundas Karoblis, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## NHA to connect Kartarpur, Nankana Sahib with motorways

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan has announced a landmark decision to link the holy sites of Kartarpur and Nankana Sahib with the national motorway network.

Presiding over a high-level meeting, Federal Minister directed the National Highway Authority

(NHA) to commence construction on the Sialkot-Kartarpur Motorway which will be named the "Guru Nanak Expressway," said a press release issued on Thursday.

Abdul Aleem Khan highlighted that 3-star, 4-star, and 5-star hotels will be developed along the Highway to facilitate pilgrims.

## Pak Navy takes over command of Combined Task Force-150

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Navy took over the command of Combined Task Force-150 (CTF-150) for the 14th time during a change of command ceremony held at the Headquarters of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Bahrain.

Commander Muhammad Yasir Tahir of Pakistan Navy assumed command from Commodore Fahad S. Al Joaid of

prestigious responsibility and contribute towards maritime security and stability across the region.

Commander Muhammad Yasir Tahir also reaffirmed Pakistan Navy's resolve to counter illicit maritime activities while ensuring the safety and security of vital sea lines of communication, it further said.

CTF-150 is one of the five task forces oper-



the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF), said a press release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy).

While addressing the audience, the incoming Commander CTF-150 assured that his team is fully prepared to shoulder this

ating under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). Its mission is to deter and disrupt non-state actors engaged in the trafficking of weapons, narcotics, and other illicit goods across the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and the Gulf of Oman.

## JI Emir urges opposition to oppose govt move to send troops to Gaza

Independent Report  
LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman has called on opposition parties to openly oppose the government's decision to send troops to Gaza, saying such a move is unacceptable and damaging to Pakistan's dignity and sovereignty.

Addressing participants of a central training camp at Mansoorah on Thursday, Rehman strongly criticized the government's blind reliance on US President Donald Trump, calling it equivalent to submission before unjust global powers. He said the prime minister's move to nominate a US president, whom he said was destroying global peace, for the Nobel Peace Prize had seriously damaged national honour. The JI chief con-

demned a proposed bill in the Punjab Assembly seeking to establish "red zones" in districts to restrict protests, calling it yet another undemocratic spectacle. Questioning the legitimacy of Form-47 imposed rules, he asked who they were to snatch the public's constitutional right to protest. He criticized provisions in the bill that would empower intelligence committees under deputy commissioners to grant or deny permission for protests, asking whether elected representatives would now be required to seek approval from bureaucrats. He said the colonial-era bureaucratic system had been imposed on the country for seven decades, while political parties were dominated by family monopolies, resulting in the worst form of governance.