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Issues stern warning against politicizing terrorism

CM Bugti vows to curb terrorism activities for maintaining durable peace in Balochistan

Criticizes attempts to spread misleading narratives targeting the youth of Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Wednesday said that incumbent provincial government is committed to curb terrorism activities for maintaining durable peace in the province.

Balochistan CM paid tribute to the sacrifices of security forces and innocent civilians who had foiled nefarious design of anti-peace elements in various place of provincial capital on January 31.

He said this while addressing at the floor of Balochistan Assembly which was chaired by

Speaker Captain Retd Abdul Khaliq Achakzai.

The CM said that measures are being taken to provide opportunities to the youth and continuing the development process saying that the solution to the challenges facing the province lies not in violence or gun politics but in the constitution, political dialogue and collective wisdom.

He said that systematic efforts have been made to create mistrust between the state and the people of Balochistan, however, the fact is that the people of the province stand with

Pakistan.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that as a Baloch, he expressed deep sorrow and grief over the bloodshed of Pakistani police, FC, army and especially innocent civilians and has full sympathy with the affected families.

He said that confusion was created in a systematic manner regarding Balochistan and an attempt was made to distance the people and youth of the state and Balochistan from each other, a narrative was created that has no connection

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with the affected families of terrorist attack on Imam Bargah Khadija-ul-Kubra.

NJPMC orders fast-track disposal of over-3-year UTP cases, adopts AI guidelines

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Justice of Pakistan on Wednesday chaired the 57th meeting of the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NJPMC) at the Supreme Court, attended by chief justices of all high courts and the Secretary, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan.

Reviewing implementation of decisions taken in its 56th meeting, the committee reiterated its resolve to strengthen institutional capacity, improve access to justice, and ensure effective and timely disposal of cases.

The committee was informed that the federal government is developing a structured redressal mechanism to address complaints regarding the non-produc-

tion of arrested persons before a magistrate within 24 hours. The framework is expected to be finalised within two weeks.

The NJPMC stressed strict compliance with legal requirements and directed the Attorney General of Pakistan to provide periodic updates on progress and implementation.

Appreciating the Islamabad High Court for expeditious disposal of high-impact tax cases, the committee expressed satisfaction over overall compliance by high courts with earlier directions. It was decided that each high court would constitute designated benches to hear cases under the Recognition and Enforcement (Arbitration

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DPM Dar discusses regional tensions with Turkey, Iran FM's amid US-Iran strain

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar held separate telephone conversations with the foreign ministers of Turkey and Iran on Wednesday, as tensions simmer over Iran's nuclear programme.

In a call with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the two leaders discussed regional and international developments and matters of mutual interest. They agreed to maintain close coordination on shared priorities.

Dar also spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, emphasising the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in the region. Both officials pledged to continue close engagement and

coordination between their countries.

The calls came a day after US President Donald Trump told Israel's Channel 12 that the United States would have to do "something very tough" if a deal is not reached with Iran.

"Either we reach a deal or we'll have to do something very tough," the broadcaster quoted Trump as saying.

Trump has said he is considering sending a second aircraft carrier to the Middle East, Axios and Channel 12 reported, amid tensions between Washington and Tehran over Iran's nuclear programme and its recent crackdown on pro-

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Security officials call for national unity against terrorism

ISLAMABAD (INP): Security officials have emphasized that the fight against terrorism in Pakistan is not solely the responsibility of the armed forces, police, or Frontier Corps, but needs unity of the entire nation.

In a meeting with media representatives, security officials said that eliminating Fitna-al-Hindustan requires complete national cohesion. They added that success in the fight against terrorism depends on the full implementation of the National Action Plan.

The security officials said India is behind all sponsored terrorism inside Pakistan. They noted that the recent attack on the Imambargah in Tarlai was carried out by terrorist trained in Afghanistan.

Ahsan says: Media literacy should be integrated into curriculum

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal has emphasized that information and media literacy should be integrated into the curriculum to promote responsible social media use among youth.

Addressing the National Curriculum Summit in Islamabad, he said that the enemies of Pakistan are using social media to spread anarchy and disruption in the country.

He stressed that the younger generation must be educated to make responsible and informed choices.

The Minister also noted the growing influence of artificial intelligence across all sectors.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti addressing during Balochistan Assembly session.

President calls for dialogue, warns escalation involving Iran could destabilize region

Zardari felicitates Iran on anniversary of Islamic Revolution

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday welcomed the efforts aimed at easing tension and promoting regional peace, warning that any military escalation involving Iran could destabilise the Gulf region, South Asia and Western Asia.

"Any instability involving Iran, or any attempt to resolve issues through military means, carries grave risks. Such actions could ... undermine global peace, and cause serious harm to the global economy. The stakes are far too high for confrontation," The president said while speaking at a reception hosted by the embassy of Iran to celebrate 47th anniversary of Iran's National Day.

He said Pakistan opposed unilateral sanctions and coercive measures, including against Iran, and believed that peaceful engagement best served regional and global security. "Pakistan welcomes efforts aimed at easing tensions and encourages continued dialogue among relevant parties in a constructive spirit, with the objective of promoting peace and stability in the region," he added.

Earlier, the president requested the participants to observe one minute of silence in memory of the victims of the recent blast in Islamabad, and the tragedy in Iran. "Let's pray that wars never come to us," the president prayed.

Referring to the ongoing conflicts, terrorism, external interference and unresolved regional flashpoints in the region, the president said Pakistan firmly believed that such challenges could not be addressed through force or unilateral actions.

President Zardari emphasized that Pakistan and Iran shared responsibilities as neighbouring countries and remained committed to cooperation on border management, counter-terrorism, and turning the shared frontier into a zone of cooperation.

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ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, chairing the 57th meeting of the NJPMC at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

NA passes resolution pays tribute to armed forces

Khawaja terms opposition leader's remarks on army "highly irresponsible"

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Wednesday paid tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces for their unparalleled sacrifices in the fight against terrorism, honouring all martyrs who laid down their lives for the nation.

The resolution, presented by Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, reaffirmed the House's commitment that the sacrifices of the martyrs would not go in vain and underscored that the nation stands firmly alongside the armed forces in this ongoing struggle.

The resolution lauded the professional capabilities, bravery, and dedication of the military, declaring full support for its continued efforts to safeguard national security, uphold stability, and maintain peace across the country.

Meanwhile, Federal

Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday said that the opposition leader's remarks in the National Assembly the other day regarding the Pakistan Army were "highly irresponsible," as such statements undermined a national institution that has rendered immense sacrifices for the country.

Addressing the Na

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Four terrorists killed, four policemen including SHO martyred in DIK operation

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): At least four terrorists were killed, while four police personnel, including a Station House Officer (SHO), embraced martyrdom and two others, including a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), sustained injuries during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Panyala area of Dera Ismail Khan, police said on Wednesday.

According to a spokesperson for Dera police, the operation was launched on reports about the presence of terrorists in

the area. The operation was led by SP Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), SP Paharpur, DSPs of Paharpur and Panyala, along with respective SHOs and heavy contingents of police.

The spokesperson said that as the police party was returning after the operation, terrorists opened fire from behind the cover of a nearby forest. The police retaliated promptly and effectively, resulting in the killing of four terrorists dur

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Mengal's NA-256 resignation accepted after 17 months

ISLAMABAD (INP): Sardar Akhtar Mengal's resignation from the National Assembly has been officially accepted, over 17 months after he first submitted it.

The decision now clears the way for a by-election in NA-256 Khuzdar.

The National Assembly Secretariat has informed the Election Commission of Pakistan that Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has formally accepted the resignation of BNP chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal.

Sources confirmed that the acceptance applies retroactively from September 3, 2024, the date when Mengal had originally submitted his resignation.

Despite his resignation, Mengal continued to exercise all privileges as a National Assembly member until January 2026, according to sources.

With the acceptance of Mengal's resignation, the NA-256 Khuzdar seat is now officially vacant.

PM visits Imambargah, announces compensation for bereaved families

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Wednesday, expressed his deep grief and condolences with the bereaved families of shuhada who lost their lives in a terrorist attack in Tarlai Imambargah last week.

The prime minister offered Fateha and prayed for the high ranks of those who lost their lives in the incident and for the early recovery of injured.

The prime minister said that there could be no compensation for the precious lives lost in the terrorist incident and announced a sum of Rs 10 million for Shaheed Oun Abbas who resisted the suicide attacker, Rs 5 million for each martyred, Rs 3 million for each severely injured and Rs 1 million for others with minor injuries.

During a visit to Imambargah Khadijatul Kubra in Tarlai Kalan where a terrorist suicide attack occurred last Friday, resulting in the loss of precious human lives, the prime minister met with the members of the bereaved families and those injured in the incident.

Talking to the affected families, he said the entire nation was in a state of grief and saddened over the tragic incident which resulted in the martyrdom of elders, kids and young while scores of others were injured.

Terming it the 'worst kind of barbaric act' he said the more they condemned it, the less it would be.

He said that all religious leaders and ulama had strongly condemned it with unity and praised them for foiling nefarious designs of the enemies with solidarity.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Ambassador of Iran, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam at a reception held to commemorate the 47th Anniversary of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and Iran's National Day.

NEPRA imposes fixed charges on all electricity consumers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has announced the imposition of fixed charges on all electricity consumers in Pakistan, including both protected and non-protected categories.

Previously, fixed charges were applicable only to non-protected consumers using more than 300 units per month.

Under the new structure, protected consumers using up to 100 units per month will now pay Rs 200 as a fixed charge, while those consuming up to 200 units will be charged Rs 300.

For non-protected consumers, fixed charges have been set at Rs 275 per month for usage up to 100 units, Rs 300 for up to 200 units, and Rs 350 for up to 300 units.

Consumers using 301 to 400 units will pay Rs 400, while those consuming 401 to 500 units will be charged Rs 500.

For higher consumption, fixed charges have been adjusted to Rs 675 per month. This includes an increase of Rs 75 for 600 units, a reduction of Rs 125 for up to 700 units, and a decrease of Rs 325 for those consuming more than 700 units.

NEPRA issued this decision following a request from the power division, making the revised fixed charges applicable to all electricity consumers across Pakistan.

The authority emphasized that the new billing structure is designed to streamline electricity tariffs and ensure fairness among all categories of consumers.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in a meeting with John Mark Pommersheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, United States Department of State, and Ms. Natalie A. Baker, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan, at the Finance Division.

BA unanimously flays terror attacks, vows unity against militancy

QUETTA (ANN): The Balochistan Assembly on Tuesday passed a unanimous resolution condemning the terrorist attacks on January 31, 2026, and reaffirming its commitment to defeating militancy and ensuring peace in the province.

The resolution, presented by Provincial Minister Mir Saleem Khosa, acknowledged the bravery of security forces who successfully thwarted the attacks despite the loss of innocent lives.

Lawmakers, including Asim Kurd Gello, Bakht Muhammad Kakar, and Noor Muhammad Dummar, condemned the cowardly assaults on civilians and reiterated their support for security forces.

They emphasized that terrorism would not destabilize Balochistan and vowed to stand united against any attempt to spread unrest.

The resolution condemned the failed attacks by the "Fitna al-Hindustan" group, which targeted various districts of Balochistan, and expressed solidarity with the affected families. Lawmakers paid tribute to the sacrifices of law enforcement agencies, praising their swift action in neutralizing the attackers and preventing further damage. The Assembly also vowed continued cooperation with state institutions to ensure sustainable peace, pledging that Balochistan's people would remain united in their fight against terrorism.



QUETTA: Provincial Ministers Bakht Muhammad Kakar, Haji Noor Muhammad Dummar, Haji Ali Madad Jattak, Mir Asim Kurd Gailu, Advisor to CM Meena Majeed Baloch, Parliamentary Secretary Haji Barkat Ali Rind and MPs Zarak Khan Mandokhel, Engineer Zamrak Khan Achakzai, Haji Mir Zabid Ali Reki, Haji Gulam Dastagir Badini and Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman expressing their views on law and order situation during Balochistan Assembly session.

Pak-Turkiye scientific cooperation delivers tangible results and sets stage for expanded collaboration

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level delegation from the Republic of Türkiye held extensive talks with Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), Shahid Iqbal Baloch, and senior officials to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in science, technology, innovation and applied research, with a focus on translating partnerships into concrete national and industrial outcomes.

The Türkiye side was led by Deputy Minister of Industry and Technology Muhammet Kasim Gönüllü, along with Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Pakistan Irfan Neziroğlu.

The meeting, convened under the framework of scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries, reviewed ongoing initiatives and highlighted Pakistan's progress in converting international collaboration into measurable scientific, industrial and socio-economic gains.

Both sides noted that

the expanding cooperation aligns with the vision of Prime Minister Muhammad Sharif and Federal Minister of Science and Technology Khalid Hussain Magsi to promote innovation-driven growth, industrial modernization and a knowledge-based economy.

The officials underscored that science diplomacy has emerged as a key pillar of the broader Pakistan-Türkiye strategic partnership.

The discussions reviewed progress across several priority sectors, including halal certification frameworks aimed at enhancing Pakistan's global trade competitiveness, cooperation in legal and scientific metrology to strengthen national quality infrastructure, standardization efforts to improve international market access, and joint research programmes connecting leading institutions of both countries.

The particular emphasis

was placed on the Pakistan Science Foundation and TUBITAK partnership, which was described as a flagship example of successful international research cooperation.

Since the signing of a memorandum of understanding in 2013, four joint research calls have generated 270 collaborative proposals, with 33 high-quality projects funded in areas such as energy, biotechnology, biomedical sciences, advanced materials, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, electric vehicles, food technologies and oceanography.

These initiatives were noted for building research capacity, developing skilled human resources and facilitating knowledge transfer between the two nations.

Federal Secretary, Shahid Iqbal Baloch said MoST is systematically expanding international scientific partnerships that deliver practical results and directly support Pakistan's development priorities.



ISLAMABAD: The Turkish delegation, led by Muhammet Kasım Gönüllü, Deputy Minister of Industry and Technology, met with the Federal Secretary for Science and Technology, Shahid Iqbal Baloch.

West Indies outclass England in T20 World Cup clash

MUMBAI (INP): West Indies defeated England by 30 runs to claim their second victory in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, on Wednesday.

Opting to bat first, the Caribbean side posted an imposing 196-6 in their allotted 20 overs, courtesy of a sensational unbeaten knock by Sherfane Rutherford. The left-hander smashed 76 off 42 deliveries, striking two fours and seven sixes to anchor the innings.

Jason Holder provided late impetus with a fiery 31 off 17 balls, including one four and six maximums, while Roston Chase contributed a steady 34

from 29 deliveries, hitting six boundaries.

Shimon Hetmyer also chipped in with a brisk 23 off 12 balls, laced with two fours and two sixes.

For England, Jamie Overton and Adil Rashid led the bowling attack with two wickets apiece, while Jofra Archer and Sam Curran claimed one each.

In reply, chasing a daunting 197-run target, England were bowled out for 166 in 19 overs.

Phil Salt got the Three Lions off to a rapid start with 30 off 14 balls, including four boundaries and two sixes, before falling to Romario Shepherd.

Jacob Bethell fought back with a composed 33

off 23 deliveries, hitting four fours and six, but was dismissed by Gudakesh Motie.

Captain Jos Buttler scored 21 off 14 balls, while Sam Curran remained unbeaten on 43 off 30 deliveries, striking three fours and two sixes, but ran out of partners as wickets continued to tumble at the other end.

Gudakesh Motie spearheaded the West Indies bowling attack with figures of 3-33 in four overs.

Roston Chase claimed two wickets, while Akeal Hosein, Romario Shepherd and Shamari Joseph picked up one wicket each to seal a comprehensive victory for the Caribbean side.

Naseem fetches Rs86.5m, becomes PSL 11 auction's most expensive player

LAHORE (INP): Pacer Naseem Shah emerged as the most expensive player in the inaugural Pakistan Super League auction, with Rawalpindi securing him for Rs86.5 million ahead of the PSL 11 at Lahore's Expo Centre on Wednesday.

The auction marked the first in the history of the marquee league, replacing draft — a players' selection process — which remained intact for the first 10 editions since its inception in 2016.

PSL 11th edition will see two new teams — Sialkot Stallions and Hyderabad Houstons — added to the roster to make it an eight-team tournament. Among other changes, the PSL has also moved on from the

draft system to adopt an auction model.

Consequently, a total of 879 local and foreign cricketers registered for the historic auction, who have been slotted into five different categories — Platinum, Diamond, Gold, Silver and Emerging — by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

All eight teams were to form their squads by picking players of their choosing from the aforementioned categories, with a maximum purse amount set at \$1.6 million.

However, contrary to the draft system, the auction model does not have a pick order, meaning the franchises could openly engage in a bidding war for a player.



PESHAWAR: Commander 102 Brigade, Mubashir Ahmed Abbasi (Tamgha-e-Basarat), presenting the trophy to the winning Bannu team during the 3rd Chief of Army Staff National Inter-Club Hockey Championship 2026 at Qayum Sports Complex.

Vice Chairman BBotI says: Shrimp Farming Project will play vital role in the economic development of the region

Independent Report

QUETTA: A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Vice Chairman of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBotI), Mr. Bilal Khan Kakar, to review the progress of the Shrimp Farming Project currently underway in Damb, Lasbela.

The meeting was attended by senior officials from the Fisheries Department, Government of Balochistan, members of the project team, local civilian representatives, and the Assistant Commis-

sioner of Winder, Mr. Saif Mughal. During the meeting, a detailed review of the project's overall progress was conducted, challenges being faced were discussed, and emphasis was placed on further strengthening inter-departmental coordination. While addressing the participants, Vice Chairman Mr. Bilal Khan Kakar emphasized that the shrimp farming project is not only an important initiative for promoting investment in Balochistan but will also create new employment opportunities for the local population.

President calls for..

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tion, lawful trade and development.

He said Pakistan valued balanced relations globally and remained ready to play a constructive role in promoting restraint, dialogue and regional peace.

The president extended his warm congratulations to the leadership and people of Iran. "May our partnership continue to grow, and may our region move towards security, stability and shared prosperity," he prayed. He said Pakistan and Iran were not only neighbours; but also civilisational partners. "Our shared border reflects centuries of interaction, coexistence and mutual respect. Our relationship is rooted in faith, history and enduring cultural bonds that continue to shape our region."

He noted that the Farsi language and its great literary tradition had profoundly influenced Pakistan's intellectual life. For hundreds of years, he said Farsi served as the official language of large parts of the regions that now form Pakistan. "Its influence remains deeply embedded in our national consciousness. Pakistan's national anthem itself reflects the deep imprint of the Persian language on our collective identity."

He said long before the time of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, our great Haft Zaban poet, Sachal Sarmast, the renowned 18th-century poet of Sindh, was composing profound poetry in Farsi, reflecting a shared spiritual and philosophical space.

NJPMC orders..

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Agreements and Foreign Arbitral Awards) Act, 2011.

The committee also acknowledged the Federal Board of Revenue's efforts to discourage frivolous litigation, including screening of meritless appeals, and appreciated the development of High Court-wise Litigation Management System dashboards.

The committee commended high courts and the district judiciary for disposing of a substantial number of cases within prescribed timelines between September 1, 2025, and January 15, 2026.

During this period, high courts reported a combined pendency of

1,274,780 cases and disposed of 754,006 cases. The Lahore High Court disposed of 622,831 cases, followed by Peshawar High Court (66,303), Sindh High Court (42,370), Islamabad High Court (12,226) and Balochistan High Court (10,276).

The NJPMC recommended acknowledging best-performing judicial officers through certificates and other incentives. It also appreciated progress in clearing old succession cases, particularly those pending since 2019.

Reviewing the performance of model criminal and civil courts, the committee noted that 13,141 civil and 46,441 criminal cases were decided during the reporting period.

Four terrorists..

Continued from page 1

ing the exchange of fire.

In the gun battle, SHO Panyala Faheem Mumtaz Khan, Constable Taqueer, Constable Irfan and Constable Ghulam Rabbani embraced martyrdom. DSP Paharpur Hafiz Muhammad Adnan and ASI Tariq Khan sustained injuries and were shifted to District Headquarters Hospital for treatment.

Upon receiving information about the incident, the Regional Police Officer (RPO) and District Police Officer (DPO) reached the site to oversee the situation.

Police have cordoned off the area and launched a further search operation. Efforts are underway to locate the bodies of the terrorists in the forested area, the spokesperson added.

Security arrangements were further strengthened across the district, and authorities have initiated a detailed investigation into the incident.

CORRIGENDUM				
The procurement of Police Force Civil Works under Gwadar Safe City Project, published vide AB-NO.802/05-02-2026, wherein changes in the Eligibility Criteria have been amended of the following NITs. The bidders have to download the new NITs/Bidding Documents for their bid process.				
S. No.	Description	Date of Opening	TSE Nos.	Estimated Cost (PKR)
1	CONSTRUCTION OF P.T FOOTBALL GROUND AND BOUNDARY WALL	23-Feb, 2026	TSE-252601962813	43,577,528
2	CONSTRUCTION OF POLICE LINE AND OFFICES	23-Feb, 2026	TSE-252601962833	144,007,931
3	CONSTRUCTION OF RESIDENCES AND EXTERNAL WORK	23-Feb, 2026	TSE-252601962863	84,967,809

AB NO.836/11-02-2026 PROJECT DIRECTOR GWADAR SAFE CITY PROJECT

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TENDER NOTICE

The Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. TSE-252602968482 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. Tender Fee 1,500 PKR

S.No	Class of Object	Bid Security
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1 Environmental Services (Total Item(s) Count: 2) 2%

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules-2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 2 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity Worth PKR. 50,000,000 Million each in Previous 2 Years Accumulated Turn over of at least PKR.50,000,000 Million in 3 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List BRA Registration Certificate The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Audited from Charter Accountant Firm for last 3 Year valid PERFORMANCE FBR Tax Returns 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 27 February, 2026 till 09:00 AM through supplier dashboard. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 10:00 AM on EPPS System Address: Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency Sammangli Road Quetta Phone No: 0819201840 Fax no: 0819201180 Email: ddoepa2022@gmail.com

PRQ No.3730/11-02-2026 www.dprgob.pk @dpr_gob dprgob dpgpbalochistan

Assistant Director Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency

CM Bugti vows to..

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tion with reality. He said that the sympathizers of the elements who kill ordinary citizens, men, women and children, try to link this massacre with depravations, although the problems mentioned are faced by the entire country.

The Chief Minister said that 11 members of the Balochistan Assembly have been elected for the first time, while the other members have been elected for the second or third time.

He said that every Sardar accused of Form 47, but in no country in the world does anyone have the right to take up arms against the state.

The CM said that an agreement was being mentioned in Lahore, however, after the 1973 constitution, no agreement has any status, the constitution is the only document that connects us all. Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that we have to put our hand on our heart and think whether Balochistan could be free from violence? Has anything been achieved from violence except bloodshed? Has any union council been freed from violence?

He said that how many Baloch youth were martyred in this violence and innocent people were targeted in Gwadar.

He said that after the constitution, the National Action Plan is our most important document adding

that the House not once but many times that if they want a solution to the problem, then lead, they are ready for talks, but there would be no talks with those elements who are killing common citizens.

He said that he met the parents of Shaheed Qureshi, whose son was martyred on the Balochistan border.

The Chief Minister said that Rs 66 billion has been spent in Gwadar and this is the first district where no schools closed.

He reminded that this same House passed the 18th Constitutional Amendment and the Balochistan Rights Package. He said that Justice Nawaz Marri was brutally martyred in front of the High Court and the Assembly, while some elements continued to participate in the 2018 elections.

He claimed that people associated with TTP in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and BLA in Balochistan were released from jails. On the recommendation of the Assembly, FC check posts were also abolished and the process of apprehension continued. He said that in 1947, were only Baloch and Pashtuns divided? Aren't Punjab and Sindh divided? International laws have been made a mockery.

He said that it is our responsibility to provide opportunities to the youth and the future of Balochistan is not guns but artificial intelligence.

DPM Dar..

Continued from page 1

testers.

So far, Iran has rejected expanding the scope of its talks with the US beyond the nuclear issue. Washington, however, wants Tehran's ballistic missile programme and its support for regional militant groups included in the negotiations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump are set to meet in Washington today, their sixth meeting in the United States since Trump returned to office a year ago. "On this trip we will discuss a range of issues: Gaza, the region, but of course, first and foremost, the negotiations with Iran," Netanyahu said in a video statement before his departure. "I will present to the president our views regarding the principles for the negotiations."

In an earlier statement, Netanyahu's office said he would highlight Israel's concerns over Iran's missile arsenal, not just its nuclear programme.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson warned that Netanyahu's visit would have a "destructive" influence on diplomacy that is "detrimental to the region". "Our negotiating party is America. It is up to America to decide to act independently of the pressures and destructive influences that are detrimental to the region."

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Directorate General of Sports Balochistan invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following sports items / Provision of Sports / Gym / Swing Items for Various Development Schemes Revenue Cost of PSDP-2025-26 (Frame Work Agreement) Construction of Shohda-e-Mawar Sports Complex District Kohlu. (PSDP No. 5484 Z.2019.1254 Kohlu) Amount of Rs.2.064 Million. (ii) Construction of Football Stadium in Suk Bander. (PSDP No. 5488 Z.2021.2191 Gwadar) Amount of Rs.11.250 Million. (iii) Construction of Squash Court Library and Small Park at Bela. (PSDP No. 5499 Z.2021.1576 Bela) Amount of Rs.10.0 Million (iv) Construction of Abdul Rahman Dastgir Sports Ground University of Turbat Kech. (PSDP No. 5508 Z.2023.5028 Kech) Amount of Rs. 10.0 Million (v) Construction of Youth Hostel 2 Female and 2 Male at Zarat and Gwadar. (PSDP No. 5513 Z.2019.1945 Provincial) Amount of Rs. 1.0 Million (vi) Construction of Squash Court Library and Small Park at Winder. (PSDP No. 5525 Z.2021.1575 Hub) Amount of Rs. 10.0 Million (vii) Construction of Badminton Court and GYM at Aziz Bhatti Road Quetta Cantt. (PSDP No. 5532 Z.2024.2661 Quetta) Amount of Rs.10.0 Million (viii) Construction of Futsal Ground for Shaheed Ayub Buledi Degree College at Buledi, District Kech. (PSDP No. 5534 Z.2024.2668 Kech) Amount of Rs. 10.0 Million (ix) Construction of Shaheed Ayub Buledi Cricket Ground at Kessak, District Kech. (PSDP No. 5553 Z.2024.2670 Kech) Amount of Rs. 15.0 Million (x) Construction of Futsal Stadium At Area of Panjgor PB-30 Nigar Sports Club Shaheed Mahboob Sports Club Shaheed Aftab Club Esal Shaheen Sports Club Duzanpur (PSDP No. 5565 Z.2024.2639 Panjgor) Amount of Rs. 15.780 Million (xi) Construction of Gymnasium for female University of Loralai District Loralai (PSDP No. 5575 Z.2025.0958 Loralai) Amount of Rs. 15.0 Million Tender Fee 1000 and Bid Security 2% Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required.

S.#	Name of Items	Bid Security
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1 Provision of Sports / Gym / Swing Items for Various Development Schemes Revenue Cost of PSDP-2025-26 (Frame Work Agreement) 2,201,520 PKR

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Eligibility Criteria in Bidding Document Can Be Seen. Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Call Deposit 2 % amount of specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents fee (1000) through Green Challan. If Others please specify (The NIT & Bidding Document can also be downloaded from www.bppra.gov.pk TSE-252602968691. Incomplete documents not conforming to the tender documents shall be liable to rejection. Last Date of bid submission: The tenders must be submitted latest by 26th February 2026 till 09:00 AM at the office of the under-signed. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 10:00 AM at the office of the under-signed at 10:00 AM. Address: Directorate General of Sports Balochistan, Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali Road Quetta Phone No. 0819201822 Fax no. 081-9201822 Email: Directorategeneralsports100@gmail.com

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DIRECTOR GENERAL SPORTS BALOCHISTAN

Balochistan CM kicks off ambitious 2026 green campaign across Province

Tree care crucial for sustainable greenery: Imran Gichki

Independent Report
QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has inaugurated the province-wide Tree Plantation Campaign 2026, initiating the drive by planting the first sapling at the Chief Minister Secretariat in Quetta. The campaign marks the beginning of an extensive spring afforestation initiative across Balochistan.

The launch ceremony saw participation from provincial ministers, members of the Balochistan Assembly, and Secretary Forests, Imran Gichki. The initiative is designed to enhance the province's greenery, strengthen environmental health, and promote

ecological sustainability, while also raising public awareness about the importance of tree plantation and conservation.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti urged both citizens and government officials to engage actively in the campaign, highlighting the role of collective effort in creating a greener and more sustainable future for Balochistan.

Meanwhile, Secretary Forests and Wildlife Balochistan, Imran Gichki, has highlighted that while tree planting is important, ensuring their proper care, protection, and growth is even more critical for achieving lasting environmental sustainability. "Planting trees is just

the first step. Nurturing saplings, providing adequate water, safeguarding them from damage, and supporting their healthy development is a shared responsibility. A thriving green environment secures a better future for generations to come," he said.

Following directives from Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti and Provincial Minister for Forests Sardar Masood Luni, the secretary issued instructions to departmental officers to not only execute a comprehensive tree plantation campaign across the province but also to implement stringent post-plantation care measures.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti inaugurating tree plantation campaign 2026 in province by planting a tree at CM's Secretariat Quetta.

Sibi Commissioner urges unified action to eliminate polio, warns of strict oversight

Independent Report
SIBI, February 11, 2026: Commissioner Sibi Division, Asadullah Faiz, has emphasized that coordinated and robust measures are crucial for the complete eradication of polio, noting that only two countries worldwide continue to report poliovirus cases.

Faiz made these remarks while chairing a meeting of the Divisional Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) Task Force. The session was attended by Deputy Commissioner Sibi Major @ Ilyas Kabzai, Divisional Director Health Dr. Abdul Khaliq, AC WHO Dr. Ehsanullah, NPO WHO Dr. Rahat, and other officials, while deputy commission-

ers from other districts and heads of EPI and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) joined via video link.

During the meeting, the Commissioner received a detailed briefing on the division's EPI performance from October to December 2025. The overview included vaccination coverage, dropout rates, key performance indicators, surveillance mechanisms, NEIR data, and the engagement of partner organizations. Attendance of vaccinators and issues regarding unregistered personnel in the NEIR system were also reviewed.

Commending the work of the EOC, Faiz described the establishment of a divisional-level EPI

forum as a significant step forward, noting that this was its inaugural meeting. He directed deputy commissioners to allocate BSDI funds to improve sewerage systems and cover open drains, stressing that enhanced sanitation would support better outcomes in environmental polio surveillance.

District Health Officers were instructed to integrate maternal and child health awareness into the training of polio teams, ensuring that parents are well-informed during immunization campaigns. Faiz warned that any discrepancies in vaccination data would result in immediate action against responsible vaccinators or officials.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister Hai Ali Madad Jattak expressing his views during Balochistan Assembly session.

Basant festival in Quetta from February 13-15

QUETTA (NP): After the vibrant celebrations of Basant in Lahore, the festival is now set to reach Quetta, as the Balochistan capital prepares to host a three-day Basant festival from February 13 to 15 (Friday to Sunday). The official announcement has sparked excitement among residents, with a wave of enthusiasm sweeping across the city.

Preparations are in full swing, and markets are bustling with activity. Shops are stocked with colorful kites, strings, yellow outfits, and other traditional Basant items. Major commercial areas including Gard Singh Road, Prince Road, Alamdar Road, Kasi Road, Sarab Road, Jaan Muhammad Road, Sabzal Road, Nawa Killi, Brewery Road, Jail Road, Liaquat

Bazaar, and surrounding neighborhoods are witnessing heavy footfall as citizens shop for newly designed kites and festival accessories.

The skies over Quetta are expected to soon be filled with vibrant kites, while various neighborhoods are organizing cultural programs, music performances, and traditional festivities to mark the occasion. Residents said that the festival will help address the lack of recreational opportunities in the city.

Speaking to the media, local resident Msbah Advocate said that in a city like Quetta, where daily life presents numerous challenges, a festival like Basant would not only bring joy but also promote social harmony and a positive image of the city.



ZIARAT: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qudus Achakzai inspecting the Matric Exam at Govt Degree College Ziarat.

Sibi district sets benchmark for transparent BSDI Phase-II dev. tenders

Independent Report
SIBI: The Sibi district administration has reinforced its dedication to accountable governance by conducting fully transparent and merit-based tenders for development projects under BSDI Phase-II.

Tender proceedings were held in the presence of government officials, security personnel, and registered contractors from the Public Health Engineering, Local Government, and C&W (B&R) departments. Technical proposals were carefully evaluated before financial bids were reviewed, ensuring that con-

tracts were awarded strictly to the lowest eligible and registered government contractors. This process underscored the administration's commitment to fairness, efficiency, and optimal use of public resources.

Authorities stressed that no favoritism, external influence, or unauthorized interference will be tolerated in the awarding of development projects. Officials reaffirmed their dedication to completing public welfare initiatives on merit, maintaining transparency throughout all stages of project allocation.

DC Chaman provides wheelchairs to special students

Independent Report
CHAMAN: Deputy Commissioner Chaman, Habib Ahmed Bangulzai, distributed wheelchairs to special students in a ceremony aimed at enhancing their mobility and access to educational institutions.

Addressing the event, DC Bangulzai highlighted that the initiative would help students overcome physical barriers, allowing them to continue their education independently and with dignity. He stressed that promoting inclusive education and ensuring equal opportunities for all students remains a priority for the district administration. The ceremony was attended by ADC Chaman Fida Baloch, District Education Officer Abdul Qudus Achakzai, Accounts Officer Haji Zahir Durrani, and other officials.

ANF seizes 1.2 tonnes of hashish in Gwadar, arrests two

GWADAR (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has seized 1.2 tonnes of hashish and arrested two suspected smugglers in a major operation against an international drug trafficking network in the Gwadar region, an ANF spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Acting on intelligence, the ANF intercepted a truck on the Panjgur-Turbat section of the M-8 highway and recovered the drugs from concealed compartments.

The hashish is estimated to be worth about 66.15 million dollars in the international market.

The spokesperson said the network, allegedly operated by a notorious trafficker identified as Ishaq Baloch, was involved in moving drugs from Panjgur to Gwadar and Pasni via Turbat, before smuggling them by sea to Gulf countries, Yemen and Tanzania using high-speed fishing boats.

Quetta Commissioner says Balochistan's mineral industry poised to drive economic growth

Independent Report

QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division, Shahzaib Khan Kakar, has highlighted the critical role of the minerals sector in shaping Balochistan's economic future, stressing that the province will fully leverage its resources to foster sustainable growth in this industry.

Kakar made these remarks while chairing a meeting focused on land allocation for the creation of a Chamber of Mines in Quetta. The session was attended by Deputy Commissioner Quetta

Mehrullah Badini, Additional Commissioner Quetta Division Agha Samiullah, Assistant Commissioner (Political) Syed Kaleemullah, and officials

from relevant departments.

Officials presented detailed proposals for identifying and allocating a suitable plot of land for the Chamber, indicating that at least 25,000 square feet would be needed in a location within the city that is easily accessible to industry stakeholders. Departments were tasked with locating potential sites to accelerate the land allocation process and ensure the timely establishment of the facility.

Commissioner Shahzaib Khan Kakar described the minerals sector as the backbone of the provincial economy, emphasizing that its development would generate substantial employment opportunities.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti talking to women performing security duties in Balochistan Assembly.

DC Ziarat orders rigorous exam oversight

Independent Report

ZIARAT: Deputy Commissioner Ziarat, Abdul Qudus Achakzai, has reaffirmed the district administration's unwavering commitment to advancing education, warning that negligence in this critical sector will not be tolerated.

Speaking at a meeting of the District Education Group, Achakzai reviewed reports from all DDOs, including District Education Officer Latifullah Gharshin, District Officer Education Abdul Malik, District Officer Education (Female)

Maimoona, DDO (Female) Farzana Arbab, DDO Nageebullah Kakar, and ADDO Sanjavi Muhammad Zaman Dumar, who briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the current educational landscape across the district.

During the session, DC Achakzai instructed field officers to conduct daily inspections of examination centers hosting 9th and 10th annual matriculation exams, stressing strict vigilance to prevent cheating and maintain full transparency.

Naseerabad extends doctors' and medical staff tenures to maintain healthcare continuity

Independent Report

NASEERABAD: Commissioner Naseerabad Division, Saladin Noorzai, has announced a one-year extension for doctors and other medical personnel across the division to guarantee uninterrupted delivery of healthcare services to residents.

The decision was finalized during a meeting of the Divisional Health Committee, chaired by Commissioner Noorzai in alignment with the vision of Chief Minister Balochistan and directives from the Chief Secretary. The session was attended by Divisional Director

Health Dr. Abdul Manan Lakhti, along with Deputy Commissioners and District Health Officers from all four districts, connected via video conference.

A total of 29 positions received approval for tenure extension, including 12 Medical Officers, 6 Lady Medical Officers, 5 Dental Surgeons, and 6 Nursing Staff. Commissioner Noorzai underscored that the Divisional Health Committee will strictly adhere to the Government of Balochistan's directives, reaffirming the administration's commitment to sustaining high-quality healthcare services for the public.



CHAMAN: Deputy Commissioner Chaman Habib Ahmed Bangulzai distributing wheel chairs amongst the special persons.

GDA launches spring tree plantation drive in Gwadar

QUETTA (APP): The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has officially launched its spring tree plantation campaign, reaffirming its commitment to transforming Gwadar into an environmentally friendly and green city.

The initiative was inaugurated by Director General Moin ur Rehman Khan with a tree-planting ceremony on Syed Hashmi Road, where he planted a sapling to mark the beginning of the drive, said a news release.

The event was attended by Chief Engineer Haji Syed Muhammad, Director Environment Rasool Bakhsh Baloch, Assistant Director Environment Javed Sameen, Environment Officer Hamal Dashti,

and other officials and staff members.

Speaking at the ceremony, Khan emphasized that the GDA is prioritizing measures to make Gwadar eco-friendly, lush, and aesthetically appealing. He announced that thousands of trees will be planted across the city under a comprehensive plan designed to improve environmental conditions and enhance Gwadar's beauty.

"The development of Gwadar as a modern and progressive city must go hand in hand with environmental sustainability," Khan stated, highlighting the importance of urban greenery in combating climate challenges and improving residents' quality of life.



RAKHNI: Provincial Minister for PHE Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran listening to the problems of the people during open katchery in Rakhni.

Al-Hamd Islamic University organized tea party in honor of newly elected body of BUJ

QUETTA (APP): A tea party was organized by Al-Hamd Islamic University (AHIU) on Wednesday in honor of the newly elected cabinet of the Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ), in which BUJ President Manzoor Ahmed Rind and other newly elected cabinet members participated.

The promotion of journalism and educational cooperation was also discussed during the tea party.

On this occasion, Al-Hamd Islamic University President Prof Dr Shakeel Ahmed Roshan congratulated the newly elected cabinet. He said that journalism in Balochistan is raising its voice for truth and public interest despite difficult circumstances.

He said that the new

cabinet is expected to further strengthen journalistic values, impartiality and responsible reporting.

Dr Shakeel said that the role of journalists has become very important in the current security and social situation and many journalists have sacrificed their lives in the performance of their professional duties, which will always be remembered.

He added that Al-Hamd Islamic University is playing a role in the functioning of educational institutions in Dasht and Kolpur, in addition to Quetta. Speaking at the ceremony, BUJ President Manzoor Ahmed Rind thanked the university administration and said that professional training and awareness of modern tech-

nology have become indispensable to deal with the challenges being faced by journalism.

He said that the BUJ would take practical steps for the welfare, protection and enhancement of professional skills of journalists.

He added that cooperation between educational institutions and journalistic organizations would not only provide better opportunities to the youth but could also promote responsible and informed journalism.

On this occasion, on the proposal of BUJ President Manzoor Ahmed, Al-Hamd Islamic University also announced to organize training sessions on modern digital journalism for the journalist community and youth.

DC Ziarat makes surprise inspection of Matric exam center

Independent Report
ZIARAT: Deputy Commissioner Ziarat, Abdul Qudus Achakzai, conducted an unannounced visit to the examination center at Government Degree College Ziarat amid the ongoing annual matriculation exams, reviewing arrangements to ensure full transparency, discipline, and student welfare.

He was accompanied by District Education Officer Latifullah Gharshin and Tehsildar Ziarat Noor Ahmed Panerai. During the inspection, DC Achakzai checked candidates' exam slips and assessed the availability of essential facilities, including clean drinking water, security measures, and general amenities.

Meeting with the examination center in-charge and staff, he stressed the need to maintain a completely fair, peaceful, and cheat-free environment. He warned that any negligence or malpractice would be met with strict legal action.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed the Education Department to provide all necessary facilities to ensure a comfortable and stress-free experience for students. Officers were directed to monitor the centers daily, address complaints immediately, and guarantee proper heating and adequate furniture for examinations.



SIBI: Commissioner Sibi Division Asadullah Faiz chairs Divisional EPI Task Force.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Thursday February 12, 2026

Past follies

In the aftermath of last Friday's brutal bombing targeting an Islamabad imambargah, ways to address the menace of terrorism are being discussed in both houses of parliament. While there has been plenty of mudslinging between the treasury and the opposition on the issue, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif attempted to go back in history during Monday's National Assembly session to trace the roots of the problem. According to him, today's terrorism is the "blowback" of "mistakes committed by dictators in the past", referring to the respective involvement of generals Zia and Musharraf in Afghanistan. The minister also observed that we deny our history and fail to realise our mistakes, while also highlighting the issue of sectarianism in society. Meanwhile in the Senate, there were calls to summon senior ex-military men to ascertain how TTP militants were able to re-enter the country.

The defence minister's prognosis is not wrong, but the fact is that nearly all governments, from the Zia era onwards, are to blame for our predicament. Some actively encouraged non-state armed actors, while others did not do enough to rein them in until it was too late. Ziaul Haq gladly entered the American war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, with the result that the experience with the Mujahideen created the groundwork for the relationship between the administration and armed non-state actors. Post-Afghan jihad, certain militant groups were promoted in the hopes of securing regional 'strategic depth'. Later a number of them were banned during Gen Musharraf's rule following the Sept 11 attacks, while many outfits went rogue and turned their guns on the state. In fact, some of those that joined the banned TTP had once fought for jihadi groups that had a working relationship with the state. The monster of sectarianism was similarly unleashed during Gen Zia's watch, influenced by events in the Middle East. We are still unable to completely neutralise these groups, particularly their political and ideological backers. The results are in front of us in the shape of the Islamabad atrocity.

In light of these facts, there is a need for an open discussion on past mistakes. And the politicians alone should not be blamed for these policy misadventures. All pillars of the state were on board and as the defence minister himself said, two military rulers were overseeing state policy where the Afghan file was concerned. But the purpose of such an exercise must not merely be political revenge. It should be to learn lessons, and apply these to the current situation in order to defeat the terrorist threat. For the PML-N to blame the PTI for the resurgence of terrorism, and vice versa, is not a constructive exercise, and takes the focus away from the national counterterrorism effort.

Zahid Hussain

More than three million files related to disgraced financier and convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein have recently been released by the US Department of Justice. The files shed light on the intersection of sex, power and money primarily in the politics of the US and some Western countries. The list of Epstein's contacts pertaining to the US includes two presidents, politicians, business tycoons and intellectuals of all ideological shades.

Although some of the names were already known, the latest files provide new details about Epstein's shady network that extended to many countries, involving top politicians and even members of royal families. The exchange of lurid messages between Epstein and his high-profile and politically influential contacts exposes the moral and financial corruption entrenched in the political system and among the influential elite of the West. Some of the files detailing the 'wild parties' at Epstein's various mansions read like passages from the novels of Harold

Robbins, featuring wealth, power, and sex. The framed photos displayed at Epstein's Manhattan mansion and those found in files show his relationships with presidents, kings and even a Nobel Prize-winning scientist. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman also figures in one of the pictures, and reportedly Fidel Castro and Pope John Paul II do so as well, indicating Epstein's wide circle of contacts among powerful people across the world.

A most shocking disclosure was his apparently close friendship with renowned left-wing thinker and author Noam Chomsky, as detailed in the recently released files. There may be no evidence of personal familiarity beyond social gatherings, yet several questions remain. The files show that Epstein once sought advice from Chomsky over what he called the "putrid" media coverage of sex trafficking allegations against him.

A convicted sex offender, Jeffrey Epstein, who died by suicide in a New York prison in 2019 while awaiting trial for sex trafficking charges, reportedly had a close association

with President Donald Trump and former president Bill Clinton. The documents suggest that both received favours from the disgraced financier.

Epstein, who was accused of sexually exploiting underage girls, had boasted about having a close relationship with Trump, who frequented his wild parties. In a 2002 interview with New York Magazine, Trump said he had known Epstein for 15 years, since the 1980s. There are several photos and videos of Trump and Epstein at various events in the early 1990s. While Trump maintained he had cut ties with Epstein long ago, his name reportedly appears hundreds of times in the latest files. The sex offender had also maintained ties with Trump's inner circle, including Steve Bannon, the White House's right-wing chief strategist during Trump's first presidency, indicating Epstein's access to the power centre of the world's most powerful nation.

Bannon later fell out with Trump. Perhaps Trump's close ties with Epstein may have been the reason for his administration's reluctance

to release the entire file. The Justice Department finally released the explosive files under pressure from Congress. Epstein's apparently close association with Bill Clinton began in the early 1990s. During Clinton's presidency, Epstein made multiple visits to the White House and maintained ties with the president's associates. After leaving office, Clinton reportedly travelled on Epstein's private jet on several occasions for charitable trips.

Epstein's own life story, from modest origins to extreme wealth, speaks volumes about his remarkable ability to connect with those in powerful positions. A university dropout who was sacked from his first job as a private school teacher primarily due to "poor job performance", he became a top financier and a billionaire within a few years. His connection, through one of his students, with a partner at Bear Stearns gave him a stepping stone to fortune. He established his own company and managed the investment portfolios of some of America's wealthiest business tycoons. He himself acquired properties across

the world, including a ranch in New Mexico, a mansion in Palm Beach and a 40-room mansion in Manhattan where he entertained celebrities, politicians, business tycoons and royalty.

The new set of messages released recently reveals the staggering range of his social network and the web of sexual abusers he had built. Even widespread allegations of sexually abusing underage girls and his conviction on charges of solicitation of prostitution with a minor in 2008 didn't affect his connections with influential figures across the US and outside. He was awarded just a 13-month jail sentence in 2008. He was later arrested in 2019 on charges of sex trafficking. The latest files have shaken British royalty and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government. The documents provide extensive details about Epstein's close association with Prince Andrew. Some of the emails exchanged between the two go back to 2011, after Epstein's 2008 conviction. There are some pictures of Andrew in a compromising setting, presumably at one of Epstein's mansions. Perhaps the most damning revelation

pertains to Peter Mandelson, a former cabinet minister who also served as Britain's ambassador to Washington. He was sacked a few months ago due to his friendship with Epstein, who reportedly paid a huge sum of money to him in return for information regarding the fiscal decisions of the British government. He resigned from the Labour Party over his association with Epstein. Epstein's links with Israel's intelligence agencies are also clearer from the recently released files. The documents have revealed details of Epstein's interactions with former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak and his funding of Israeli groups, including Friends of the Israeli Defence Forces, as well as his ties to members of Israel's overseas intelligence services. The entire Epstein episode exposes the hypocrisy of those in the West who espouse the high moral ground yet maintain connections with a depraved sex criminal. He may be dead but the impact of the documents revealing his vast web of connections continues to jolt America and other countries.

Exiting IMF: change incentives

Nadeem ul Haque | Shahid Kardar

In our article of Jan 28, 2026, we had highlighted the importance of fixing energy and the tax regime, both major constraints on our growth potential, for Pakistan to break its dependence on the IMF. Now we turn to other parts of the economy obstructing progress on the same goal.

A structural issue responsible for perpetuating Pakistan's dependence on the IMF is its failure to control expenditure. Spending routinely outpaces revenues not because the state invests productively but because it lacks discipline over what it creates and consumes. At both federal and provincial levels, expenditures have spiralled via salary increases far exceeding inflation for the civil, judicial and military bureaucracies alongside expanding vehicle fleets, luxury housing, plush offices, overseas junkets and discretionary budgets, often without mandates, sunset clauses or performance tests.

The federal and provincial governments are huge employment bureaus.

Even after the 18th Amendment, Islamabad has retained over 40 divisions and 400 attached departments, with a combined employee strength of 1.2 million. Moreover, creating new departments, authorities and special units, with full secretariats and perks, has become too easy; trimming by almost two-thirds is needed, alongside an immediate hiring freeze. Bureaucratic and political resistance preserve positions of authority.

SOEs are another fiscal sinkhole. Accumulated losses have crossed Rs6 trillion, growing by nearly a trillion annually, despite repeated bailouts through grants and equity injections. Most can't be privatised, either because the purpose for their establishment has become redundant or they're not commercially viable. They must be liquidated. Continuing to prop them up is a direct subsidy to irrelevancy and inefficiency financed through debt.

PSDP compounds the problem. Projects are rushed for political visibility, cost-benefit analysis is perfunctory, feasibility is weak and future operating costs ignored. The result is

half-finished projects, mounting liabilities and financial gaps filled through debt or inflation. We must impose a hard brake on new PSDP starts, complete only high-return projects, write off sunk costs on low priority projects and redirect spending towards the economy's 'software', i.e., education, basic health, courts, regulation, enforcement and trade facilitation.

Trade policy is the silent enabler of the crisis, and sustains IMF dependence. Pakistan remains poorly integrated into global value chains; it's viewed as a peripheral supplier rather than a reliable, scalable partner. We safeguard and sustain inefficient constituencies of incumbents and entrenched special interests behind tariff and non-tariff barriers.

— SROs, subsidised inputs, guaranteed returns, discretionary walks and bailouts. Exporters bear this cost through expensive inputs, an overvalued exchange rate, delayed refunds and policy uncertainty, leading to a narrow export base and chronic foreign exchange shortages. This anti-export bias functions as a subsidy to rent-seekers financed through IMF borrowing.

Export-led growth does not emerge by declaration. It requires simplified tariffs, elimination of discretion, competitive exchange rate and a genuine zero-rated regime with automatic refunds. Competition must replace lobbying. Exiting IMF dependence also requires forsaking the comfort of a closed, managed economy and creating opportunities for growth by embracing open, competitive markets. Protection and controls, which also facilitate cartel formation, have not produced national champions. They have cemented inefficiency, rewarded lobbying, made businesses habituated to the pursuit of protection rather than developing their capacity to compete, resulting in the misallocation of capital.

It is competition and not protection that is the only reliable disciplining device for firms, regulators and policymakers. Productivity growth is undermined by insulating inefficient producers while imposing heavy taxes on technology-enabling inputs. In contrast, open markets and low taxation of technological instruments enhance productivity, efficiency, facilitate scale and mitigate the

structural distortions that trigger balance-of-payments crises.

A central lesson is that the government must exit price-setting altogether. Fixing prices administratively replaces information with discretion, resulting in shortages, misallocations and rent-seeking. Prices are signals. Suppressing them simply delays costs, which reappear as inflation, debt or IMF programmes. If entry remains blocked, even these reforms will fail. Pakistan's most powerful growth killer is the gatekeeper state. Licences, NOCs, inspections and permissions administered by over 100 regulatory agencies create a toll economy where access matters more than productivity.

A genuine regulatory guillotine is one of the fastest, lowest-cost ways to reduce cost of doing business and raise growth. Pakistan doesn't lack entrepreneurs; it lacks firms that are allowed to become large, productive, and export-oriented. The central aim of economic policy must, therefore, be to promote acceleration of investment and enable firms to grow, list and integrate with glo-

bal markets. Listed companies matter. They bring transparency, governance, long-term capital and productivity spillovers that informal or protected firms cannot. Growth driven by scale, formality, and contract certainty is the only durable path to stability. This is why judicial reform is macroeconomic reform. Contracts that take decades to enforce repel investment regardless of vision statements. Predictable, time-bound commercial justice is indispensable to investment.

The perks system lies at the heart of our dysfunction. Incentives shift from performance to rent extraction when compensation is delivered through houses, plots, cars and protocol rather than transparent pay. Bureaucrats stop optimising the system and start optimising access to these privileges. Capital gets locked in prime land and elite enclaves instead of circulating through markets.

Finally, credibility requires rules. Pakistan's stop-go cycles stem from discretion masquerading as flexibility as seen in defend-the-rupee episodes, off-budget guarantees and abrupt reversals.

Not a drop to search

Shahzad Sharjeel

Life keeps getting more complex and guilt-ridden by the day. As if the carbon footprint calculation was not enough to turn one into an off-grid hermit, now we have the water footprint to feel guilty about. I hereby declare you 'guilty', dear reader, of all the charges I am framing against all of us in this piece.

Ask me how much water I consume in a day, and I will start with the few glasses I drink, then quickly move on to the litres used for washing and bathing. Push a bit more, and I will confess to being an obsessive car washer. Some of us would mention the 'green patch' in the house that must be watered year-round. Push harder still, and we will grudgingly divide the 3,000 to 7,000 litres of water needed to produce each pair of denim by the period we own them to arrive at a daily average. Since I am terrible at mental math, I will do all these calculations on my smartphone to determine how much water each listed activity costs. In doing so, data centres globally will consume 0.26 millilitres, about five drops of water, for each search. Mind you, this data on water consumption pertains to regular web searches; AI searches consume more water.

It took a media outlet to take the Oregon city government to court to obtain data on the water used to cool the Google data centre. In 2021, the search giant used about 12.4 billion litres of water in the US alone. In 2023, it used 23bn litres worldwide. WHO guidelines recommend 50 to 100 litres of water per person to meet drinking, cooking, and hygiene needs under normal circumstances. However, in

a post-disaster or humanitarian crisis, 15 litres per person is the minimum required to meet basic needs.

To fully grasp how much we are all contributing to water stress, particularly owing to our web wanderlust, let us consider that Google is not the only search engine in the world. Microsoft's internal projections estimate that, in 2030, the water required to cool its 100 data centres will be 28bn litres. To make things even more complex, the data centres use water both physically and virtually. While the usage in the physical sense, ie, water used to cool the data-processing centres at these facilities, is one measure, virtual usage pertains to the water used by their electricity providers to cool their production plants.

Before we jump to condemn the tech billionaires for destroying the world's ecology in their quest for private gain, let's consider the fact that we are as much part of the problem as we are beneficiaries of these technological developments. It is amusing to watch developed countries lay all the blame for global warming at the doorstep of the developed North.

The argument goes something like this: 'It is the North that burned all the coal and oil in its pursuit of capitalist greed; we, the South, are not even industrialised yet.' To buy into this simplistic logic, one would have to discount all the benefits of advancements we have derived since the Industrial Revolution. While developing countries may not have released greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, they have benefited from everything that resulted from the North's 'greed', from jet engines to search engines to diagnosis and

treatment of all manner of diseases.

The next time you are told to work smarter and put AI to use to complete one inane task or another, think hard if you can put your natural intelligence to use before resorting to AI.

On July 14 this year, Pakistan signed an MoU with SC Financial Technologies, a crypto-based financial platform affiliated with the Trump family's World Liberty, to integrate its bitcoin into a regulated digital payments structure, allowing it to operate alongside Pakistan's own digital currency mechanism. As Pakistan integrates crypto-currency and bitcoin payments into its economy, it should be noted that a single bitcoin transaction can use as much as 16,000 litres of water, enough to fill a backyard swimming pool. The largest bitcoin mining centres are currently located in the US and Kazakhstan; China banned bitcoin mining in 2021. According to estimates, the bitcoin industry's water consumption in 2021 was equivalent to that of 660,000 Olympic-sized pools. The 2023 annual water footprint of the bitcoin industry was estimated at 2.2bn cubic metres.

We have all heard the folklore about a king dying of thirst in a desert; when asked about the value of his kingdom, he is said to have replied, "A glass of water." In today's context, it would come down to a few internet searches.

It's a good thing I chose to do this piece in the winter, as the search engines deployed to gather data must have used up my shower quota for a couple of days. No compromise on the car wash, though.

The Epstein effect

Mahir Ali

At a stretch, the ructions roiling Britain's ruling Labour Party could partially be attributed to a dead butterfly miraculously flapping its wings halfway across the planet. After all, the departure of Keir Starmer's chief of staff Morgan McSweeney is the consequence of McSweeney's close relations with Peter Mandelson.

The latter left his post as ambassador to the US last year after details in documents related to the influential American paedophile Jeffrey Epstein made Mandelson's position untenable. More revelations have led him to resign from the House of Lords and the Labour Party, whose fortunes he was determined to guide in an increasingly reactionary direction. He was reluctantly sacked twice from Tony Blair's cabinet, but re-employed by Gordon Brown.

After Jeremy Corbyn unexpectedly was elected Labour leader by an overwhelming majority of the party's membership, Mandelson dedicated himself to undermining the lately neoliberal organisation's relapse into social democracy. He redoubled his efforts after Labour's vote in the 2017 poll shot up to 40 per cent, denying the Tories a majority. The ludicrous moral panic over 'antisemitism' was redoubled, amid efforts to undermine the Labour leadership's relatively progressive agenda.

The efforts, backed by a Blairite majority in the parliamentary party, paid off. Yet, in the humiliating defeat Labour purportedly suffered in 2019, it received substantially more support than in the Starmer 'landslide' of 2024, based on less than 34pc of the popular vote. The incumbent prime minister's record unpopularity is then not surpris-

ing, but he has exacerbated it by pursuing socioeconomic policies far removed from the neo-Corbynite agenda he laid out when seeking the leadership.

This duplicity, too, can be traced to McSweeney, who was following the directions of Mandelson. McSweeney is often erroneously described as Starmer's consigliere. In fact, it was McSweeney who, presumably under Mandelson's guidance, picked Starmer as the ideal candidate to ingratiate himself with Corbyn and his allies, then pretend he would continue to pursue the social-democratic agenda, and eventually betray every ideal he purportedly stood for, while banishing from the party as many outspoken opponents of Israel's genocidal tendencies as possible. The victims included not only Corbyn but also many anti-Zionist Jews.

Had Epstein been alive, he would no doubt have applauded. His links with Israel, Mossad and Ehud Barak in particular have been widely publicised. His network of contacts (or customers) ranged from the UAE, Saudi Arabia and India to various European countries. Norway's crown princess is under scrutiny, and former French minister Jack Lang has been humiliated. Yet neither Lang nor Indian tycoon Anil Ambani, and perhaps not even Emirati DP World CEO Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem appear to have formed the kind of relationship with Epstein that Mandelson did.

Given he was an American, Epstein's closest contacts were in the US, ranging from Donald Trump to other politicians, CEOs and a bunch of academics that included Larry Summers and, less expectedly, Noam Chomsky. The latter's extended engagement with a convicted paedophile is particularly depressing,

and his wife's apologia comes across as just another cover-up. Chomsky's reputation as a polemicist has thrived on lending a sceptical ear to official pronouncements at home and abroad. For someone with a sharply questioning mind to be taken in by a convicted criminal, no matter how well-connected or rich, suggests idiocy rather than naiveté. Knowing what they stood for, why on earth was Chomsky so eager to establish contacts with Barak or Steve Bannon?

In Britain, the Mandelson affair is arguably secondary to Epstein's disturbing relationship with Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor and his wife, with King Charles declaring he would cooperate fully with the police, and his heir singing from a similar hymn book. Yet the likelihood of the former prince Andrew being imprisoned for statutory rape remains dim.

That reflects the impunity that all too many of Epstein's admiring associates continue to count upon. His victims — mostly in their teens, and some even younger — tend to get short shrift. Most of the predators with whom he shared his passion for underage 'discoveries' remains undiminished, despite the emerging evidence. It remains to be seen how swiftly Starmer might follow some of his closest colleagues, even though much of the UK media considers it only a matter of time. Even if he goes, though, there's no guarantee his replacement will be any better.

Furthermore, the fact that impunity might be limited in the UK does not necessarily imply that Epstein's tentacles will hinder the continued pursuit of power and pelf anywhere else in a world increasingly unhinged from empathy and reality.

High level meeting reviews Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's overall security situation

PESHAWAR (INP): A high-level meeting was held at Corps Headquarters Peshawar to review the overall security situation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The meeting was attended by the Federal Minister for Interior, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the National Security Adviser, the Corps Commander Peshawar, as well as senior civil and military officials.

According to sources, the political and military leadership agreed to move in one unified direction in the fight against terrorism.

Chief Minister Sohail Afridi's meeting with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and other stakeholders was cordial. The chief minister and cabinet members also had lunch at the Corps Headquarters.

During the meeting on law and order, tributes

were paid to civilians and security personnel who were martyred in incidents of terrorism.

It was decided in the meeting that PSL (Pakistan Super League) matches scheduled for this year will be held in Peshawar.

The meeting decided that the provincial government's administrative system will be immediately implemented as a model in the Malakand Division under the supervision of the provincial police and other provincial institutions. Subsequently, this successful model will be implemented in phases in the affected districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly Khyber, Orakzai, and Kurram. It was decided to form a special sub-committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister to ensure effective monitoring of all development projects

launched in these districts and to review any military operations. The committee will hold review meetings on a monthly basis.

This special sub-committee, headed by the Chief Minister, will include elected public representatives, the Corps Commander Peshawar, the Chief Secretary, the Inspector General of Police, provincial officials, as well as representatives of federal institutions.

The meeting decided that, in addition to monitoring governance and development projects in these districts, the special sub-committee will create opportunities for alternative employment to ensure sustainable income for the local population. It will also make effective arrangements to address the issues of temporarily displaced persons.



Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif opens Khelta Punjab Pink Games 2026 at Punjab Stadium in Lahore.

Murad applauds success of Feb polio drive, overall admin coverage stood at 100 per cent

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has expressed satisfaction over the high coverage achieved during the first National Immunisation Days (NIDs) of 2026, noting that overall administrative coverage stood at 100 per cent, while house-to-house coverage remained strong at 99 per cent across the province.

The Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) presented a detailed report on the provincial anti-polio campaign conducted from February 2 to 8, 2026, at the Chief Minister's House on Wednesday.

Despite these encouraging figures, the report identified approximately 237,216 "still-missed" children

(2.6 per cent), primarily in the Karachi and Hyderabad divisions. In response, the Chief Minister issued fresh directives to ensure that no child is left vulnerable to the virus.

"Eradicating polio requires a joint effort by parents, society, the media, and the government. If we all work together, we can save our children from paralysis and secure a healthier future for Pakistan," the chief minister said. He added that elimination of polio was our national duty, and the Sindh government is taking all necessary measures to achieve this goal.

The CM said, "The data clearly show that polio is under control, but the virus is still present, and complacency can reverse

these gains." He added that it was a cause of shame for us that there were only two countries in the world where this disease could be found - Afghanistan and Pakistan. Vaccination is the only way to get rid of it.

Murad Shah directed health departments to intensify outreach in urban centres like Karachi and Hyderabad to reach the remaining missed children. He instructed the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) to prioritise follow-up activities for "zero-dose" children to strengthen their immunity. Deputy Commissioners were told to maintain active monitoring at the union council level to address any localised gaps in coverage.

PA Speaker stresses unity, constitutional supremacy

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan has stressed that unity, discipline and supremacy of the Constitution are imperative for stability and progress. Addressing the 18th Annual Nazria-e-Pakistan Conference, here on Wednesday, he said that the thoughts and principles of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah continue to provide guidance in the prevailing political and national challenges.

The speaker said that despite political differences, Quaid-e-Azam always prioritized national unity and considered state discipline the foundation of a stable polity. He strongly condemned the recent terrorist incident in Islamabad, observing that in the wake of such acts, national cohesion and the writ of the state become indispensable. The speaker said political stability in the country hinges on adherence to the Constitution, rule of law and democratic values. Referring to the vision of Quaid-e-Azam, he maintained that extremism and violence could only be countered through strong state institutions and effective governance.

Criticising economic mismanagement, the Shura described corruption, interest-based financial practices, wasteful expenditure, and misuse of public resources as "cancer" for the national economy. It urged a shift toward a self-reliant, corruption-free, and interest-free economic system in line with Islamic principles, with the support of the Federal Shariat Court.

The Shura strongly condemned alleged electoral engineering during the 2024 general elections, describing the manipulation of results through Form-47 as a dangerous precedent that undermines public trust and national stability. It called for transparent, impartial elections and a fully empowered Election Commission.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, addressing the closing ceremony of the three-day Leadership Excellence Workshop organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE).

CM announces Punjab's first Sports City in 2027, expands Pink Games to tehsil level

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday announced the launch of the province's first Sports City in 2027 and declared that the Khelta Punjab Pink Games would be expanded to the tehsil level across the province to promote women's participation in sports.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Khelta Punjab Pink Games 2026 at Punjab Stadium, Nishtar Park Sports Complex, she also announced Rs20 million in prize money for participating athletes and directed authorities to ensure proper arrangements for accommodation, meals and care of women players.

Terming female ath-

letes the "Super Daughters of Super Punjab," the chief minister appreciated Provincial Minister for Sports Faisal Khokhar, the secretary, DG Sports and the team for successfully organizing the event. She said women were capable of leading a country, province and ministries, adding that merit and talent had no gender. "A woman can fight a war, fly an aircraft and serve as chief minister, and can give men tough competition," she remarked.

Encouraging young girls, she said, "The land is yours, the sky is yours, move forward and prove yourselves," noting that women were excelling in boxing, cricket, football, swimming and athletics while fulfilling responsibilities

at home. More than 3,000 athletes from across Punjab participated in the Pink Games after qualifying at the tehsil level. The chief minister announced that the games would further be expanded to the union council level in future.

She said the government was taking practical steps to revive sports grounds and promote healthy activities among youth, shifting children from mobile screens to playing fields. Construction work on the Sports City would begin this year, she added. Declaring 2026 as the "Year of Youth," Maryam Nawaz Sharif said providing opportunities for progress and happiness to the people of Punjab was her responsibility.

Governor KP, Opposition leader discuss law & order, political stability in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday held a meeting with Opposition Leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Dr Ibadullah Khan, at the Governor's House.

During the meeting, they discussed the overall law and order situation in the province, issues of

good governance and the prevailing political scenario.

Both leaders agreed to enhance contacts to promote stability and political harmony in the province.

They also exchanged views on the current economic and social challenges being faced by the province and emphasized the need for coordinated efforts to address them effectively.

Interior Minister inquires health of injured soldiers

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the headquarters of the Federal Constabulary (FC) and inquired after injured soldiers Adnan and Imtiaz, who are under treatment at the FC hospital.

Soldiers Adnan and Imtiaz were injured while foiling an attack by Fitna al-Khawarij.



Peoples Party Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro addresses media at Peoples Secretariat in Hyderabad.

Govt committed to empowering youth through jobs, skills development: Mashhood

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister's Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan on Wednesday said the government was taking comprehensive measures to provide dignified employment to the young and enable them to become self-reliant.

He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held in Gulshan-e-Ravi for the distribution of relief goods among deserving people with the support of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Rana Mashhood said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the Youth Programme was being further strengthened to equip young people with world-class education and modern skills. He said serving the people of his constituency remained his top priority. He added that Pakistan was observing its first-ever AI Week, which would open new avenues for the youth

in the field of emerging technologies.

Despite economic challenges, he said, the country's situation was improving day by day, and the government was expanding partnerships with friendly countries to create more opportunities for education, training and employment for youth. He said that under the prudent leadership of prime minister, Pakistan was achieving diplomatic successes, the economy was moving in the right direction and the international community respected Pakistan with respect. He said the era of darkness had ended and the country was moving towards progress and prosperity. Owing to the good governance of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, Lahore was witnessing a new phase of development and prosperity after two decades, while the province was advancing rapidly on the path of growth.

Governor Kundi condemns attack on police convoy in DI Khan

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday expressed deep sorrow and strong condemnation over the attack on a police convoy in Pahari, district Dera Ismail Khan. The Governor sought a detailed report on the incident and termed the attack on DSP Hafiz Adnan and other police officers as highly tragic and condemnable.

He expressed grief over the martyrdom of SHO Panyala Faheem Mumtaz and other personnel, saying the brave sons of Dera Police embraced martyrdom while protecting the country and its people. Governor Kundi directed the authorities concerned to ensure the best possible medical treatment for the injured DSP Hafiz Adnan and other wounded officials. He also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured officers and reaffirmed that the sacrifices of police personnel would not go in vain.

Governor Kundi distributes Pakistan National Awards to 40 distinguished individuals

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi distributed Pakistan National Awards among 40 distinguished individuals in recognition of their outstanding services in various fields at a ceremony held at Governor House here on Wednesday.

The "Pakistan National Awards Show" was organized by the Federal Youth Parliament and attended by Leader of the Opposition in the KP Assembly Dr. Ibadullah, U.S. Consul General Thomas Eckert, women members of the provincial assembly, President of Federal Youth Parliament Salahuddin, Chairman Abrar Khalji, General Secretary Saqib Ali, members of the Youth Parliament from across the country, social figures, youth leaders, and representatives from different walks of life.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi appreciated the Federal Youth Parliament for honoring personalities who have rendered valuable services to the country. He lauded the organization's efforts in promoting positive activities among youth and strengthening the message of peace.

Dr. Ibadullah lauded the organizers for successfully hosting the Pakistan National Awards Show at the Governor House.

He appreciated the Federal Youth Parliament for recognizing the services of outstanding individuals from across the country.

He said such initiatives encourage merit, dedication, and a spirit of service among the youth. He also commended the leadership of the Youth Parliament for promoting positive engagement and national harmony.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi in a meeting with Opposition Leader Dr. Ibadullah Khan at Governor House.

Over 10,000 children receive free heart surgeries under CM's program: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that the Chief Minister's Children's Heart Surgery Program has emerged as a landmark initiative to save the precious lives of innocent children suffering from congenital heart diseases.

He stated that more than 10,000 children have so far undergone completely free heart surgeries under the program, with the Punjab government spending billions of rupees to ensure life-saving treatment for deserving families.

The minister was chairing a meeting at the Punjab Health Initiative Management Company (PHIMC) on Wednesday to review progress on the Chief Minister's Children's Heart Surgery Program.

During the meeting, officials gave a detailed briefing on the program's performance, facilities being provided to patients, monitoring mechanisms, service delivery standards, and future targets.

Khawaja Salman Rafique said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has laid special emphasis on maintaining transparency, improving service quality, and strengthening monitoring systems to ensure maximum convenience for patients and their families. He directed the concerned departments and empaneled hospitals to further enhance the quality of treatment, minimize waiting lists, and provide comprehensive guidance to parents.

KP CM inaugurates Bara Bypass Road

PESHAWAR (INP): Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohaib Afridi, on Wednesday inaugurated the Bara Bypass Road, marking a significant step toward resolving long-standing traffic congestion issues in the area.

According to an official briefing, the Bara Bypass Road is 7 kilometers long and includes a 152-meter-long bridge.

The total cost of the project is Rs 1.32 billion, out of which Rs 1.21 billion has already been spent.

The project has been completed to improve regional connectivity and facilitate smoother transportation.

Speaking on the occa-

sion, the CM said the bypass road would significantly reduce traffic pressure in Bara Bazaar and nearby residential areas.

He added that the project would also promote local trade and boost economic activities by improving access and mobility.

Earlier, the CM also inaugurated a special nutrition facility for mothers and children at the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Khyber district.

During the inauguration ceremony in Jamrud, Sohaib Afridi stated that the facility would provide screening, diagnosis, and treatment services for malnourished women and children.



HYDERABAD: Information Commissioner Noor Muhammad Dayo addressing workshop on "Right to Information Act-Reporting Tool" organized by Hyderabad Union of Journalists at Press Club.

Resolution of public issues PML-N govt's top priority: Ch Tanveer

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senior Pakistan Muslim League-N leader Chaudhry Tanveer Khan on Wednesday said resolution of public issues was the PML-N government's foremost priority and it was taking concrete steps to ensure timely completion of development projects aimed at public welfare.

He said a wide range of development schemes were being implemented at local and national levels to provide basic facilities at the

doorsteps of citizens.

He expressed these views while speaking to a delegation from Chaklala Scheme-III that called on him. The delegation included Patron of Qadir Bakhsh Rajput Welfare Association Muhammad Shafiq, General Secretary Raja Nadeem Iqbal and Chaudhry Muhammad Akbar, among others.

The delegation apprised him of various civic problems being faced by residents of the area.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Health and Chairman Cabinet Committee for Law and order Khawaja Salman Rafique presides over the meeting to review law and order situation.

Pakistan, Cambodia vow to deepen cooperation at 2nd JTC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Cambodia, at the Second Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting here on Wednesday, reviewed progress since their inaugural session held in Phnom Penh and agreed to deepen cooperation across trade, investment and multiple priority sectors while exploring a preferential trade framework and enhanced business-to-business engagement.

Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan co-chaired the second meeting of the committee with Minister of Commerce of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Cham Nimul.

The meeting formally adopted its agenda, reviewed the outcomes of the senior officials' meeting, and concluded with the signing of the Joint Statement and the witnessing of an agreement between the Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) of the two countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Jam Kamal Khan emphasized that the JTC serves as a structured and effective platform to review progress, address chal-

lenges, and identify new avenues for cooperation.

He noted encouraging growth in bilateral trade while highlighting significant untapped potential in market access, investment, and sectoral collaboration. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to advancing discussions toward a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to enhance market access and diversify trade baskets.

The meeting reviewed progress since the first JTC held in Phnom Penh on January 21, 2025, where both sides had agreed to institutionalize trade dialogue and explore a PTA framework.

Building on that foundation, the Second JTC focused on enhancing cooperation in priority sectors.

Pakistan highlighted export potential in rice, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and agricultural products, while Cambodia identified opportunities in cassava, cashew nuts, footwear, and rubber products. Both sides agreed to facilitate direct engagement between their business communities to translate these

complementarities into concrete trade flows.

On investment, Pakistan's Board of Investment presented opportunities in energy, IT, tourism, and infrastructure, positioning Pakistan as a gateway to Central Asia. Cambodia outlined the advantages under its new Investment Law and Special Economic Zones (SEZs), proposing Cambodia as a strategic production base for Pakistani enterprises seeking access to ASEAN and RCEP markets.

The two sides agreed on advancing cooperation across multiple sectors, including agriculture through the establishment of a technical working group; aviation through nomination of focal persons toward an Air Services Agreement; double taxation avoidance through proposed MoUs; standards and conformity assessment; non-bank financial sector collaboration; ICT cooperation in digital transformation, AI and cyber security; and labor and vocational training exchanges.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with a delegation of Gobi Partners led by Thomas Tsao, Chairman, at the Finance Division.

FinMin highlights venture capital support, innovation priorities in meeting with Gobi Partners

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday underscored the government's commitment to strengthening Pakistan's venture capital and innovation landscape as part of a broader strategy to promote private sector-led growth, deepen financial markets and support technology-driven economic diversification.

The minister held a meeting with a delegation of Gobi Partners led by Chairman Thomas Tsao, long with Managing Partner

Naeel Ikram and Investment Associate Abraziz Abdullah, said a news release.

Welcoming the delegation, the minister appreciated Gobi Partners' interest in Pakistan's venture capital ecosystem and acknowledged the firm's presence across Asia.

He underscored the government's commitment to strengthening Pakistan's venture capital and innovation landscape as part of its broader strategy to promote private sector-led growth, deepen financial markets, and support tech-

nology-driven economic diversification.

He emphasized that access to risk capital is critical for the scaling startup entrepreneurial landscape, fostering innovation, and generating sustainable employment opportunities.

The delegation briefed the minister on Gobi's regional footprint and its investments in Pakistan through Techxila Fund I, launched in 2020, which has supported startups across fintech, e-commerce, and digital infrastructure.

FPCCI president urges extension of tax exemptions for FATA/PATA industry

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh, has stated that the issues facing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), particularly the merged tribal districts, are critical and require immediate intervention alongside the imple-

mentation of "Good Governance." He made these remarks while presiding over a high-level meeting at the FPCCI President's Secretariat in Islamabad. The meeting was attended by a high-profile delegation of parliamentarians and industrialists, including:



Haji Ghulam Ali, Former Governor KP, Senator Hidayatullah and Chamber, Noor Alam Badshah President, Lower Dir Chamber, Iftikhar Khan Chief Executive, Taj Group.

During the session, traders and industrialists from the tribal regions briefed the President on the severe economic crisis, business closures, and the challenges posed by various taxes and the Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar.

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Net metering reform shields 1.3% vulnerable consumers from added costs, Rana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal on Wednesday said the revised solar net metering policy is aimed at preventing additional costs from being passed on to the remaining 1.3% of consumers, particularly low-income households, while maintaining a reasonable three-year payback period for solar investors.

While speaking to a local media channel, Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal explained that the revised solar net metering policy was designed to balance supply and demand, a principle followed by energy regulators globally.

He emphasized that the policy ensures long-term stability of the power system while promoting renewable energy growth.

Responding to a query about consumers' concerns, he highlighted that the reforms protect around 1.3% of vulnerable consumers from additional costs, particularly low-income households.

He also noted that solar investors would continue to benefit from a reasonable three-year payback period, which the government considers fair and sustainable.

Addressing questions about DISCOs, Rana Ehsan Afzal said that work is underway and significant changes are expected within the next couple of months.

He added that three privatization initiatives are on the way, underlining the government's commitment to improving efficiency, transparency and service delivery in the power sector.

Farmers in Punjab turn to broccoli cultivation as demand rises

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sensing a lucrative opportunity, progressive farmers in Punjab are increasingly turning to broccoli cultivation, as the demand for the vegetable rises among upper-income consumers.

Although broccoli remains a niche crop compared to traditional vegetables such as cauliflower and cabbage, it is now widely available at major supermarkets, specialized vegetable outlets, and online platforms.

Currently, broccoli is being cultivated on the outskirts of major cities, particularly Lahore, as well as in Sheikhupura, Kasur, Sahiwal, and Pakpattan districts.

"This is a profitable crop. There is a strong demand for broccoli in Lahore,"

Islamabad, and Karachi," said Pir Mehmoond Chishti, a broccoli grower from village Tibba Sherkot in Pakpattan district.

Talking to Wealth Pakistan, Chishti noted that despite attractive prices, growers face uncertainty due to an underdeveloped marketing network for the exotic vegetable.

"The retail price of broccoli ranges between Rs400 and Rs700 per 500 grams, which is significantly higher than cauliflower or cabbage," he said.

However, he added that imported seed remains the highest cost in broccoli cultivation. Marketing also poses a major challenge for growers. Because broccoli is unfamiliar to the general public, its market is limited, Chishti explained.



HYDERABAD: A farmer manually spreads fertilizer in a field at Tando Jam area.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Cham Nimul, Minister of Commerce of the Kingdom of Cambodia, exchange signed copies of the Joint Statement following the 2nd Pakistan-Cambodia Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting, reaffirming their commitment to enhanced bilateral trade and institutional cooperation.

SBP Governor says: Pakistan's economy to grow as 4.75pc in current fiscal year

KARACHI (INP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor expects the country's economy to grow as much as 4.75pc in the current fiscal year, signaling a broader recovery than the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecast.

In written comments to Reuters, the governor emphasized that the economic rebound is more widespread and durable than export figures alone suggest.

The SBP raised its FY26 growth projection to 3.75-4.75%, up 0.5 percentage points from its previous range, despite a contraction in exports during the first half of the year and a widening trade deficit.

He said differences in projections are common, often reflecting timing is-

sues, including the IMF's consideration of flood-related impacts in its latest assessment. "All indicators, along with Q1 FY26 data, point to a broad-based recovery across all three sectors of the economy," he added, noting that agriculture has remained resilient and even exceeded targets despite last year's floods.

The governor highlighted that financial conditions have eased significantly after a cumulative 1,150-basis-point reduction in the policy rate since June 2024.

The SBP last month held the benchmark rate at 10.5%, despite expectations of a cut. This accommodative policy is supporting growth while maintaining price and economic stability.

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.66 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs279.67.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.55 and Rs 282.2, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 0.20 to close at Rs 333.23 from the previous day's close of Rs 333.02, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen went up by 03 paisa and closed at Rs 1.82, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 10.11 and closed at Rs 382.42 compared to the previous day's Rs 382.31. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 paisa each to close at Rs 76.13 and Rs 74.56, respectively.

SSCI holds ceremony

SIALKOT (APP): President Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) Dr Mariam Siddiqui along with other members, attended an honorary dinner hosted by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

The event was organized to pay tribute to leading businessmen who received the prestigious Top Exporter Award from the prime minister.

The ceremony recognized prominent exporters for their exceptional contributions to strengthening Pakistan's export sector and promoting the country's economy at the global level.



A joint delegation of the Economic-Pakistan American Council and the United Muslim American Association meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar in Islamabad.

Minister assures Saudi investors of Pakistan's full support

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Wednesday assured the Saudi delegation that the BOI would extend full facilitation and support, including arranging meetings with the wider business community and organizing visits to Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

He was talking to a delegation from Kyan, Saudi Arabia, which visited Pakistan to participate in the "Indus AI Week" organized by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication

(MoITT), said a news release.

Welcoming the delegation, the minister highlighted the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and emphasized the importance of further strengthening economic and investment cooperation between the two countries.

The Kyan delegation expressed keen interest in exploring investment opportunities in Pakistan, particularly in the sectors of energy, mining, information technology, agriculture, and livestock.

The delegation shared proposals for various potential projects with an estimated minimum investment of USD 200 million for each project and also conveyed their interest in bringing additional Saudi investors to Pakistan.

Qaiser Sheikh said that he fully understands investors' perspectives and requirements. He emphasized that Pakistan offers immense opportunities for joint ventures and strategic partnerships. With a population of over 250 million, Pakistan represents a large and dynamic market.

China, Pakistan to advance livestock tech transfer and joint R&D

BEIJING (APP): Recently, substantive cooperation outcomes have been achieved between Jinan Animal Husbandry Industry Craftsman College and Pakistani counterparts after a visit to Pakistan from January 19 to 24, held in conjunction with the 2026 China-Pakistan Agriculture Investment Conference. The collaboration injects new impetus into bilateral livestock industry development, aligning with the advancement of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2.0.

During the visit, two key cooperation documents were signed to solidify consensus, the College revealed. It inked a Framework Agreement on Industrial and Tech-

nological Cooperation and Talent Training with Pak-China Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCJCCI), to jointly establish the China-Pakistan Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Industry Technology Cooperation Center, which will undertake technological R&D, standard-setting and customized talent training.

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed with GO DAIRY Private Limited, focusing on the transfer of sheep in vitro fertilization and dairy cow breeding technologies, alongside tailored solutions and on-site expert guidance to address the enterprise's breeding bottlenecks, CEN reported.

PSX stays bullish, gains 896 points to close at 183,049 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday witnessed a bullish trend, gaining 896.25 points, a positive change of 0.49 percent, to close at 183,049.81 points compared to 182,153.55 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 734.671 million shares with a traded value of Rs 35.393 billion, against 1,062.309 million shares valuing Rs 37.883 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization increased to Rs 20.710 trillion from Rs 20.634 trillion a day earlier.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI), Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, meets with a KYAN delegation from Saudi Arabia.

10 killed in Canada mass shooting that targeted school, residence

TORONTO (AFP/APP): A shooter killed ten people and injured dozens more at a secondary school and residence in a remote part of western Canada on Tuesday, before the suspect took their own life.

The killings occurred in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, a picturesque mountain valley town in the foothills of the Rockies.

A total of 27 people were wounded, including two with serious injuries and 25 who suffered non-life-threatening injuries, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said in a statement.

Canadian media have reported that the shooter was female, but the RCMP declined to provide any details on the suspect's identity in a press conference on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Mark Carney said he was "dev-

astated" by the "horrific acts of violence" and announced he was suspending plans to travel to the Munich Security Conference on Wednesday, where he had been set to hold talks with allies on transatlantic defence readiness.

Police said an alert was issued about an active shooter at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School on Tuesday afternoon.

As police searched the school, they found six people shot dead. A seventh person with a gunshot wound died en route to hospital. Separately, police found two more bodies at a residence in Tumbler Ridge.

The residence is "believed to be connected to the incident," police said.

At the school, "an individual believed to be the shooter was also found deceased with what appears

to be a self-inflicted injury," police said.

In a statement, the municipality of Tumbler Ridge said: "There are no words sufficient for the heartbreak our community is experiencing tonight."

Tumbler Ridge student Darian Quist told the public broadcaster CBC that he was in his mechanics class when there was an announcement that the school was in lockdown.

He said that initially he "didn't think anything was going on," but started receiving "disturbing" photos about the carnage at the school. "It set in what was happening," Quist said.

He said he stayed in lockdown for more than two hours until police stormed in, ordering everyone to put their hands up before escorting them out of the school.



Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas address the press after a meeting in Oslo.

Macron urges Europe to start acting like global power

Monitoring Desk

PARIS: Europe should brace for more moments of US hostility, French President Emmanuel Macron has warned, and should treat what he called the "Greenland moment" as a wake-up call to push through long-delayed reforms to strengthen the bloc's global power. In an interview with several European newspapers, the French leader said the European Union should not mistake a lull in tensions with Washington for a lasting shift despite a pause in US threats over Greenland, trade and technology.

Macron urged EU leaders to use a summit in a Belgian castle this week to inject fresh energy into economic reforms to bolster the bloc's competitiveness and strengthen its ability to stand up to China and the

United States on the world stage. When there's a clear act of aggression, I think what we should do isn't bow down or try to reach a settlement," Macron told Le Monde, the Financial Times and other newspapers in comments published on Tuesday.

"We've tried that strategy for months. It's not working. In an interview with several European newspapers, the French leader said the European Union should not mistake a lull in tensions with Washington for a lasting shift despite a pause in US threats over Greenland, trade and technology. "The US will, in the coming months that's certain attack us over digital regulation," Macron added, warning of potential US import tariffs from US President Donald Trump should the EU use its Digital Services Act to control tech companies.

Iran's president apologizes over crackdown as nation marks 1979 Islamic Revolution anniversary

Monitoring Desk

DUBAI: Iran's president apologized on Wednesday to "all those affected" by the nationwide protest and bloody crackdown that followed it. President Masoud Pezeshkian also denounced unspecified "Western propaganda" surrounding the protests.

Pezeshkian said he knew the "great sorrow" felt by people in the protests and crackdown, without directly acknowledging the hand Iranian security forces had in the bloodshed.

"We are ashamed before the people, and we are obligated to assist all those who were harmed in these incidents," Pezeshkian said.

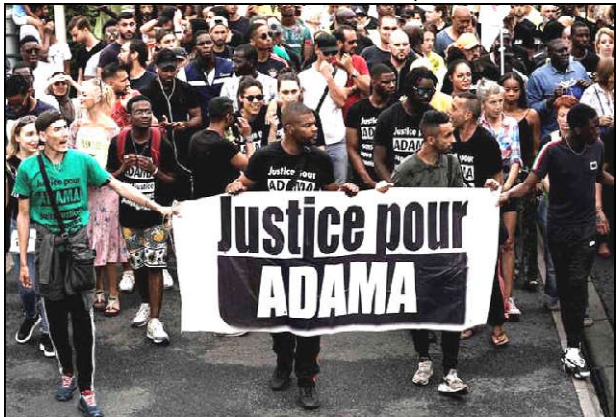
Russian strike on Ukraine kills four, including toddlers: official

KYIV (AFP/APP): A Russian drone strike on the Ukrainian city of

Bogodukhiv killed three children and their father, an official said on Wednesday. Two one-year-old boys and a two-year-old girl died as a result of an enemy strike on a "private residential house" in the eastern city that sits close to Russia's border, the regional prosecutor's office said on Wednesday.

A 34-year-old man, identified by prosecutors as the children's father, who was also in the house died from his wounds.

"As a result of the strike, the house was completely destroyed and caught fire, and the family was trapped under the rubble," prosecutors said in a statement posted on Telegram. A woman, identified by prosecutors as the children's mother who is eight months pregnant.



Participants walk behind a banner as they take part in a march in Beaumont-sur-Oise, north-east of Paris.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has insisted that his nation is 'not seeking nuclear weapons' during a speech commemorating the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Tehran.

UNICEF says more than 200 mln children need humanitarian aid in 2026

HAMILTON (AA/APP): The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said more than 200 million children in over 130 countries will require humanitarian assistance in 2026 — one of the most severe global crises facing children.

Speaking at the first regular session of the UNICEF executive board, the agency's chief, Catherine Russell, said the scale and complexity of challenges confronting children worldwide are intensifying as conflicts, climate shocks, economic instability and inequality continue to deepen.

"The humanitarian situation facing children today is among the most severe we have ever seen," Russell said, adding that "more than 200 million children across over 130 countries need humanitarian assistance in 2026." Russell said the global environment for children has become increasingly difficult, with pressures mounting on families and communities as needs grow and resources shrink. "To say that we are meeting at a moment of significant transition, for the world, for the multilateral

system, and for UNICEF is quite an understatement," she said. "In the last year, we have seen challenges to the future of the multilateral system, to the value and effectiveness of international aid, and ultimately to the world's collective responsibility to care for those most in need, especially children." Warning that decades of progress in child survival are now at risk of being reversed, she noted that "2025 could be the first year this century where child deaths will have increased, reversing generations of progress."

Trump now says 10 aircraft shot down during Pak-India conflict

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has now raised the tally of aircraft shot down during the May 2025 conflict between Pakistan and India to 10.

The latest remarks by the US president came during an interview with Fox Business, which was aired on Wednesday.

The host was praising Trump's "reciprocity policy" in trade and using tariffs for that when the US president chimed in: "And that's being very nice and gentle. Look, I settled eight wars. Out of the eight wars, at least six were settled because of tariffs."

Trump then explained: "In other words, I said, 'if you don't settle this war, I'm gonna charge you tariffs because I don't wanna see people getting killed.' And they said, 'no, what does this have to do with it?' I said, 'you're gonna be charged.'"

"Like India and Pakistan would've been a nuclear war in my opinion. They were really going at it. Ten planes were shot down. They were going at it," he added.

Over the past 10 months, the US president has stated numerous times that aircraft were shot down during the conflict — albeit without specifying whose.

Germany criticizes Israel's West Bank plan as step to 'de facto annexation'

Monitoring Desk

BERLIN: Germany on Wednesday criticized Israeli plans to tighten control over the occupied West Bank as "a further step toward de facto annexation," as international anger mounts over the move.

"Israel remains an occupying power in the West Bank, and as an occupying power it is a violation of international law to build settlements, including transferring certain administrative functions to civilian Israeli authorities," a German foreign ministry spokesman said in Berlin.



HEBRON: Armed Israeli settlers walk near the settlement of Abraham Avino in this Israeli-occupied West Bank city.

Ramaphosa, Putin discuss return of South African fighters from Ukraine

Monitoring Desk

JOHANNESBURG / NAIROBI: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa held talks on Tuesday with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on returning South African fighters alongside Russian forces in Ukraine, the president's office said in a statement.

"In this regard, teams from both sides will continue their engagements towards the finalisation of this process," it said.

Ukraine's foreign minister said more than 1,400 citizens from 36 African countries had been identified among the Russian ranks.

Spanish PM vows justice, defends rail safety after deadly accidents

MADRID (AFP/APP): Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez vowed

Wednesday that justice would be done following two train accidents that claimed 47 lives last month, and insisted the country's rail system "is safe".

The back-to-back disasters in January shocked the country and raised doubts about the safety of train travel in Spain, which boasts the world's second-largest high-speed network after China.

"The entire state is doing — and will continue to do — everything possible to support the injured and the victims' families, clarify the causes of the accident, and, if necessary, ensure justice is done," Sanchez told parliament.

Spain's rail system "is not perfect, but it is safe," the Socialist premier added, vowing to take all necessary measures to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

Shock hit the rail sector after a collision between two high-speed trains in the southern region of Andalusia on January 18 resulted in the death of 46 people — one of Europe's deadliest such disasters this century.

Two days later, a commuter train in the Barcelona region ploughed into the rubble of a collapsed wall, killing the driver and injuring dozens.

Iran says it will not negotiate over its missile capabilities

Monitoring Desk

TEHRAN: Iran's missile capabilities are its red line and are not a subject to be negotiated, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader said on Wednesday, as Tehran and Washington eye a new round of talks to avert conflict.

US and Iranian diplomats held indirect talks last week in Oman, amid a regional naval buildup by the US threatening Iran.

"The Islamic republic's missile capabilities are non-negotiable," Ali Shamkhani said, according to state media, while appearing in a march commemorating the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. Washington has long sought to extend

talks on Iran's nuclear capabilities to cover its missile programme as well.

Iran has said it is prepared to discuss curbs on its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of sanctions, but has repeatedly ruled out linking the issue to other questions, including missiles.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to use a meeting with Trump in Washington on Wednesday to push for any US-Iran deal to include limitations on Tehran's missiles.

On Sunday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said Tehran's missile programme had never been part of the talks' agenda.

Russia thinks it can outsmart the US during Ukraine peace talks, a European intelligence chief says

Monitoring Desk

LONDON: Russian officials have no desire to halt Russia's almost 4-year-old invasion of neighboring Ukraine and think they can "outsmart" the United States during talks with Washington about how to end the war, a senior European intelligence official told The Associated Press.

Kaupo Rosin, the head of Estonia's foreign intelligence service, said Moscow is playing for time in the talks with Washington and "there is absolutely no discussion about how to really cooperate with the US in a meaningful way."

Rosin, who spoke at an online briefing with reporters ahead of the publication of Estonia's annual security report on Tuesday, said the findings were based on intelligence his country gathered from "Russian internal discussions." He did not elaborate on how the information was obtained.

Russian officials have publicly insisted they want a negotiated deal, but they show little willingness to compromise and remain adamant their demands

must be met.

US-brokered talks between envoys from Russia and Ukraine in recent weeks have been described by officials from both sides as constructive and positive, but there has been no sign of any progress on key issues in the discussions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, "in his head, still thinks that he can actually militarily win (in Ukraine) at some point," Rosin said.

A White House official responded to the Estonian intelligence chief's comments and said the president's negotiators had made "tremendous progress" on the talks to end the war in Ukraine. Although prisoner exchanges have happened sporadically since May, they pointed in particular to a recent agreement in Abu Dhabi among the US, Ukraine and Russia to release more than 300 prisoners.

That agreement has evidence that efforts to end the war are advancing, said the official, who was granted anonymity because they did not have permission to speak publicly.

Allies rebuke Israel over West Bank 'capture'

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: A day after the eight-member Muslim bloc condemned illegal Israeli measures to annex the West Bank, several Western nations — including staunch ally the United States — have come out against Tel Aviv's move to tighten its grip over the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Israeli security cabinet had voted on Monday to allow Jewish settlers to buy West Bank land directly, and to extend greater control over areas where the Palestinian Authority exercises power.

"As the president has clearly stated, he does not support Israel annexing the West Bank," a Trump administration official said.

"A stable West Bank keeps Israel secure and is in line with this administration's goal to achieve peace," the official said, when asked about the Israeli actions.

UN Secretary-General

António Guterres warned that this decision was eroding the prospect for a two-state solution.

He reiterated that all Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and their associated regime and infrastructure, have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law, including relevant UN resolutions.

Such actions, including Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory, are not only destabilising but also unlawful as recalled by the International Court of Justice, a statement issued by the UN chief said.

France also condemned the Israeli security cabinet's decisions aimed at expanding Israel's control over the West Bank, calling the move "contrary to international law and represent[ing] a dangerous challenge to the Oslo Accords and the Hebron Protocol".

Thailand's progressive party moves backwards in polls

BANGKOK (AFP/APP): Thailand's progressive

People's Party came first in the last election and was leading opinion surveys before this weekend's vote, but took a beating at the ballot box, raising questions over the popularity of its reform agenda.

Expectations were high ahead of Sunday's poll but the party ended up a distant second, according to preliminary results, which show it losing nearly five million votes in the party list ballot compared with 2023.

The conservative Bhumjaithai party of incumbent Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul came first this time.

Analysts say Bhumjaithai's nationalist tub-thumping won over voters in the wake of a border conflict with

Cambodia last year, it was more effective on the ground and also built better local alliances.

But more fundamentally, the progressives' electoral failure has disappointed backers hungry for change in the conservative kingdom.

"I was hoping the People's Party would win more votes," respondent supporter Naruedon Srikaew, 29, said at party headquarters on election night.

"I'm still hopeful the country can reform itself," he added, "but I think the majority may feel they are not ready yet".

Rounds of fighting with Cambodia in July and December killed scores of people on both sides and displaced more than a million.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting with a high-level international investors delegation comprising representatives of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), British International Investment (BII), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Baltoro Capital at the Finance Division.

Balochistan govt to launch health insurance policy for public sector employees

Reviews health insurance progress policy for govt employees, rehabilitation of Civil & BMCH

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister (CM) Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review the progress of the proposed health insurance policy for government employees, and the measures related to the rehabilitation of Civil and Bolan Medical Complex Hospital (BMCH) Quetta.

The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan and other concerned officials.

The CM was briefed on the implementation of the proposed health insurance policy for the treatment of government em-

ployees. Addressing the meeting, the CM said that the health insurance policy is a great gift from the Balochistan government to its government employees.

He mentioned that the government employees who are engaged in the flow of government affairs and those who are on the roads with the best healthcare facilities.

The CM directed that all necessary steps should be finalized for the regular launch of the health insurance policy for government employees on March 7, 2026. "Under the policy, every government employee will be provided with treatment facilities up

to Rs 1 million in the best hospitals of the country", he said.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti stated that all necessary matters should be expedited for the revival of Civil Hospital Quetta and Bolan Medical Complex.

He said that this policy would provide timely treatment facilities to government employees, adding that all the employees from grades one to 15 and above are very close to our hearts. He maintained that the policy would reduce the pressure on the health system as a whole and also praised the Health Department and the Finance Department for formulating the best policy.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, addressing during 2-day "National Curriculum Summit 2026" at AIQU.

Maqbool stresses education reforms focus on nurturing critical thinking, ethical grounding & creativity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education & Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, highlighted the urgent need to transform Pakistan's curriculum in light of contemporary challenges.

The Minister emphasized implementation fidelity, coordination with provinces, and the importance of preparing learners for emerging global realities while remaining rooted in Pakistan's cultural and ideological foundations.

Earlier, the proceedings of the summit were commenced with the National Anthem and recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by a welcome address by Mr. Nadeem Mahbub, Secretary, MoFE&PT.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Akamatsu Shuichi and, Kazuko Ishigaki, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UN-Habitat exchange sign documents during a signing ceremony.

Over 38,000 Pakistanis deported from Gulf countries during 2025, NA informed

ISLAMABAD (INP): More than 38,000 Pakistanis were deported from Gulf countries during 2025, the National Assembly was informed in a detailed report highlighting overseas violations and legal breaches. According to the figures presented, a total of 38,000-plus Pakistanis were sent back to the country for various offences, bringing the issue into the spotlight.

The report revealed that 780 Pakistanis were deported specifically for begging. Of these, 767 were ex-

pelled from Saudi Arabia, 10 from the UAE, two from Qatar and one from Oman. Authorities described professional begging as a growing concern damaging the country's image abroad.

In addition, 1,025 Pakistanis were deported over involvement in drug-related offences, while 109 individuals were expelled on charges of theft. Officials told lawmakers that strict action is being taken to curb illegal migration and unlawful activities overseas. They stressed that such incidents not only land individuals in hot water but also cast a shadow on the country's reputation. The matter sparked concern among members of the assembly, who called for stronger screening mechanisms before departure and better awareness campaigns to prevent citizens.

Zardari flays terrorist attack on police in DI Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday strongly condemned terrorist attack on Police personnel in Dera Ismail Khan and paid tribute to SHO Faheem Mumtaz and other police personnel who embraced martyrdom in the attack.

In a message, the president prayed for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks in Jannah and for strength and patience for the bereaved families to bear the loss.

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Pakistan urges South Sudan parties to recommit to 2018 peace accord to end escalating violence

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Amid political deadlock among signatories to the 2018 South Sudan peace agreement and a dangerous escalation in armed confrontations, Pakistan has called on all stakeholders to recommit to the agreement in good faith and to address differences through inclusive dialogue.

"It is time for renewal of national consensus," Ambassador Asim Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council

which on Tuesday debated the deteriorating situation in South Sudan, an African country that gained independence from the Republic of Sudan in 2011.

At this critical juncture, he stressed the need to prevent another descent into violence, warning, "The cost of failure would be borne first and foremost by the South Sudanese people, and would also have profound regional consequences. "It is time for more deeper engagement, not distancing or abandonment," the Pakistani envoy added.

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Aurangzeb meets int'l investors delegation to advance private sector-led growth, reform agenda

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday met with a high-level international investors delegation to strengthen private sector-led growth, mobilize investment, and deepen collaboration in support of Pakistan's reform agenda.

The delegation comprised representatives from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), British International Investment (BII), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Baltoro Capital, said a news release.

The minister acknowledged IFC, ADB and BII as long-standing development partners and welcomed their enhanced engagement, particularly in private sector financing and local currency initiatives.

Discussions emphasized the importance of protecting and expanding private sector exposure, re-

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ducing sovereign risk, and increasing private sector participation through innovative local currency financing mechanisms.

Aurangzeb highlighted that Pakistan has made significant progress in restoring macroeconomic stability over the past 18 months. He noted improvements in currency stability and foreign exchange reserves, which are projected to cover approximately three months of imports by year-end.

He underscored the government's efforts to reduce the investment deficit and create a more stable and predictable economic environment.

The minister briefed the delegation on Pakistan's ongoing trade liberalization program, including tariff rationalization aimed at enhancing competitiveness and removing long-standing protectionist barriers. He said that this reform path

seeks to position Pakistan on a trajectory similar to successful Southeast Asian economies.

He noted the strong performance of the services sector, with exports expected to continue their upward trend.

Discussions also covered energy sector reforms, tax policy improvements, and efforts to enhance tax administration efficiency.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to broadening the tax base, improving collection mechanisms, and aligning tax policy with growth objectives.

On the financial front, he informed the delegation that the government is making all its repayments smoothly while exploring access to international debt markets through approved programs, including the inaugural Panda Bond and Global Medium-Term Note (GMTN) framework.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairing a review meeting on progress regarding proposed insurance policy for treatment of government employees, measures related to rehabilitation of Civil & Bolan Medical Complex Hospitals.

Muqam says: Laptops under PM program distributed on merit among students across Pakistan

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, said here

Wednesday that the world has accepted Pakistan as a champion ruling the skies. "To take the country forward, we must adopt merit. Laptops under PM scheme are being distributed purely on merit, and the youth are Pakistan's bright future," he said while addressing, as the chief guest at Khyber Medical Univer-

sity under the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme for the distribution of laptops among students.

In his address, Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam said that the Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University, Hilal-e-Imtiaz Professor Dr. Zia-ul-Haq, present at the ceremony, is a source of pride for us, and he was pleased to be among the students.

He reiterated that the youth are Pakistan's bright future and that laptops are being distributed on the basis of merit.

The Federal Minister said that the laptop scheme was first launched in 2011 by then Chief Minister of Punjab, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

When Muhammad Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister of Pakistan in 2013, the scheme was expanded across Pakistan and continued successfully.

Unfortunately, it was discontinued in 2018, but after remaining suspended for four years during PTI rule, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif restarted this landmark program in 2022.

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Special benches decide tax cases worth Rs.506bn in last year: Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Special Benches of Islamabad High Court (IHC) had decided 788 tax cases worth Rs 506 billion, which benefited the national exchequer during last year.

As per the annual report of IHC, the consequential administrative reforms were also introduced on the instructions of the National Judicial Policy Making Committee.

The report said that From April 1, 2025 to Feb-

ruary 4, 2026, Special Tax Benches decided 788 cases worth a total of Rs 506 billion 137 million 37 thousand 494.

Justice Babar Sattar and Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan decided 306 cases, it said, adding that Justice Babar Sattar and Justice Saman Rifat Imtiaz disposed of 304 cases.

Justice Muhammad Azam Khan and Justice Inam Amin Minhas decided 178 cases.

Japan, UN-Habitat & JICA join hands for disaster resilience of schools in KPK

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Japan, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have signed an Exchange of Notes and a Grant Agreement to strengthen disaster resilience of schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The signing ceremony for a project titled "Strengthen the disaster resilience of educational infrastructure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province" was held here on Wednesday.

The initiative is supported through a grant of JPY 427 million, equivalent to approximately USD 2.7 million, from the Government of Japan.

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flash floods damaged 437 schools, severely disrupting education services especially in Swat and Buner among the hardest-hit districts. The grant will support the rehabilitation and retrofitting of schools damaged by the 2025 floods in Swat and Buner districts.

The project aims to restore safe, resilient and functional learning environments by strengthening school structures and improving ventilation and lighting. It will also reinstate gender-sensitive WASH facilities, ensuring dignity, privacy and accessibility for girls and children with disabilities. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi appreciated the collaborative partnership and reaffirmed Japan's continued support to Pakistan's resilience agenda.

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