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Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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Sharif credits Trump for regional peace PM Shehbaz calls for establishment of sovereign, contiguous state of Palestine



WASHINGTON (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said the international community must work together towards a credible pathway

to Palestinian self-determination through the establishment of an independent, sovereign, and contiguous state of Palestine in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the Peace of Board here, he expressed hope that under the visionary and dynamic leadership of US President Donald Trump, the international community will ensure a just and lasting resolution to the issue of Palestine.

He said the timely and very effective intervention by President Trump to achieve ceasefire between India and Pakistan potentially averted loss of tens of millions of people.

"You have truly proved to be a man of peace. And let me say, Mr.

President, you are truly saviour of South Asia," he remarked.

Highlighting the efforts of President Trump for global peace, he said, "It's a great honour, Mr. President, to attend this inaugural Board of Peace meeting in this holy month of Ramadan and may God reward you and make you successful in your efforts to bring lasting peace in Gaza."

"Mr. President, we deeply appreciate your unique initiative and your

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US President Donald Trump stands with world leaders participating in the inaugural Board of Peace meeting at the US Institute of Peace in Washington DC.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti presides over the meeting of comprehensive expansion of the "KUMAK Support Fund," shifting the government's approach for persons with disabilities from traditional aid to a full-scale empowerment model.

Pakistan summons Afghan diplomat over deadly Bajaur security check post attack

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Foreign Office summoned the Afghan Deputy Head of Mission and delivered a strong demarche to the Afghan Taliban regime on the terrorist attack in Bajaur on February 16, 2026 in which 11 Pakistani soldiers were martyred.

According to a statement issued by the Foreign Office spokesperson in Islamabad on Thursday, Pakistan condemned in the

strongest possible terms the vehicle-borne suicide terrorist attack followed by a fire raid on Pakistan Military and Law Enforcement Agencies' post in Bajaur carried out by Fitna al-Khwarji/TTP.

The ministry conveyed serious concern that FAK/TTP, whose entire leadership is based in Afghanistan, operates with

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Security forces kill four Indian-backed militants in Lakki Marwat

PM commends security forces for eliminating four terrorists in Lakki Marwat

RAWALPINDI (INP): Security forces killed four Indian-backed militants during an intelligence-based operation in Lakki Marwat District in the dead of last night, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The operation was launched after reports of the presence of militants described as belonging to an Indian proxy group, Fitna

al Khwarji. According to the military's media wing, troops effectively engaged the militants' location during the operation. An intense exchange of fire followed, resulting in the killing of four militants.

Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the slain militants. The

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QUETTA: Mir Tariq Khetran and Abdul Fatah Jamal meeting with Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

16 killed in Karachi building collapse after gas cylinder blast

KARACHI (INP): At least 16 people were killed and 13 others injured after a gas cylinder explosion caused the roof of a residential building to collapse in Karachi's Gul Rana Colony in the Soldier Bazaar neighbourhood, a spokesperson for Rescue 1122 (Sindh) said on early Thursday morning.

The blast occurred near Street No. 05, close to Aga Khan School. Emergency services rushed to the scene shortly after the incident, with ambulances and volunteers transporting the

injured and deceased to Civil Hospital Karachi, where treatment is ongoing. Eyewitnesses said the explosion was so intense that nearby buildings also shook, spreading panic in the area.

ASP Jamshed Nasir said, "The incident occurred at 4:15am. The building was constructed on orders. The cause of the collapse is being investigated. The gas blast occurred on the first floor."

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PTI slams Govt's silence on Imran's health, demands clarity as public unease grows

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Thursday called for immediate and complete transparency regarding the health of jailed founder and former prime minister Imran Khan, expressing growing concern over the increasing anxiety among the public.

Imran, 73, has been jailed since August 2023 after convictions he and the PTI call politically motivated. Since his 2022 ouster in a no-confidence vote, he has faced multiple cases, including over state gifts and an unlawful marriage. Some convictions have been suspended or overturned, with appeals pending. He denies wrongdoing.

The PTI has expressed serious concerns over the health of the party founder after the Supreme Court was informed that only 15% of Imran's vision remains in his right eye. The information was conveyed to the apex court by Advocate Salman Salfar, who was appointed as friend of the court. The development caused an outcry from the opposition ranks, who

Trump says US to give \$10b to new 'Board of Peace'

President praises PM Shehbaz, Field Marshal Asim during inaugural summit

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Thursday announced \$10 billion in United States (US) funding for the "Board of Peace," his Gaza stability push that has largely been snubbed by the Western democracies that normally back Washington's initiatives.

"I want to let you know that the United States is going to make a contribution of \$10 billion to the Board of Peace," he told its inaugural meeting, which gathered around two dozen world leaders and senior officials, including several of Trump's authoritarian-leaning allies.

President Trump praised Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif, who is attending the inaugural summit of the "Board of Peace" to deliberate on issues related to Gaza as Pakistan has denied that it will join the International Stabilisation Force to demilitarise Hamas.

Various other world leaders, along with United States President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance, attended the event.

Addressing the event, Trump again praised PM Shehbaz. "I like this guy," he said while recounting the events that led to the ceasefire after last year's conflict between Pakistan

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WASHINGTON D.C.: GSA Administrator Edward C. Forst on behalf of the United States and Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on behalf of Pakistan signing a Memorandum of Understanding, witnessed by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and United States Special Envoy Steve Witkoff.

CM Bugti directs authorities to maintain stability in food prices during fasting month

Says special Ramadan package being provided to 328,000 deserving families

QUETTA: Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has declared a stringent stance against any artificial inflation, hoarding, or profiteering during the upcoming Ramadan, emphasizing that safeguarding public welfare is the government's foremost duty.

In a statement from Quetta, the Chief Minister instructed all relevant departments to rigorously monitor markets throughout the holy month, ensuring that essential goods remain accessible at officially regulated rates.

He underscored that any attempt to exploit the public through price manipulation will be met with immediate and uncompromising action.

Alongside these measures, Mir Sarfraz Bugti unveiled a comprehensive Ramadan relief program aimed at supporting

328,000 families across Balochistan. This initiative is designed to protect vulnerable and low-income households from inflationary pressures, guaranteeing tangible relief during Ramadan.

To maintain accountability, the distribution of aid will be overseen by eight-member District Development Committees, ensuring that assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries efficiently and equitably.

The Chief Minister reiterated the provincial government's commitment to strengthening public support during the holy month, warning that any negligence or mismanagement will not be tolerated. He encouraged citizens to report any violations, price irregularities, or issues with the relief package directly to the Chief Minister's Complaint Cell for swift resolution.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Finance Mir Shoaib Noshervani chairing a high-level consultative meeting on the forthcoming National Finance Commission (NFC) Award while Member NFC Balochistan Mahfooz Ali Khan and Finance Secretary participated via video link.

CM Bugti vows to strengthen PWDs empowerment through KUMAK Endowment Fund

Mir Sarfraz emphasizes that program would be rolled out in phases to reach every registered person with disabilities in Balochistan

Independent Report QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has unveiled a comprehensive plan to transform the KUMAK Endowment Fund into a robust empowerment model, pledging to move beyond financial assistance and build a framework for long-term inclusion and self-reliance for persons with disabilities.

The announcement was made during the second meeting of the Provincial Council of the KUMAK Support Fund,

held at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Quetta. The session was attended by Parliamentary Secretary for Social Welfare Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzi, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, senior officials, and representatives of disability advocacy organizations.

The council resolved to expand ongoing welfare initiatives across the province with strict monitoring and transparent implementation. Bugti directed authorities to increase monthly financial assistance for registered individuals

with disabilities, enabling them to lead dignified lives. The meeting also approved the immediate procurement of assistive devices, including electric wheelchairs and mobility equipment, to ensure timely provision to beneficiaries.

Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that the program would be rolled out in phases to reach every registered person with disabilities in Balochistan. He underscored that the fund would serve as a foundation

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No deal for PTI founder: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar has strongly rejected media speculations regarding any "deal" with the incarcerated founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

"There is no deal or leniency for the PTI founder," Tarar said, adding that any impression of the government granting him concessions is "entirely false and misleading".

The minister, in a news statement, said the PTI founder is a convicted criminal serving sentences handed down by the courts.

He maintained that the news suggesting any "special relaxation" is baseless and has no reality.

Vawda warns Rana over alleged PTI founder deal claims

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senator Faisal Vawda has strongly responded to Rana Sanaullah, cautioning him against making what he called irresponsible political statements.

In a post on social media platform X, Vawda addressed Sanaullah directly, saying, "Rana Sahib, do not shoot political arrows in the air, otherwise you have surely heard the proverb about flying arrows coming back." He added that such political tactics have now become outdated. Vawda questioned to CM Shehbaz advisor Rana Sanaullah's claim that the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was allegedly offered a deal twice but refused. "First tell us when, where, and how was this offer made?" he asked.

Pak-US advance cooperation framework on Roosevelt Hotel, New York

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Governments of Pakistan and the United States have formally launched a strategic economic initiative, including collaboration with the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) regarding the operation, maintenance, renovation, and redevelopment of the Roosevelt Hotel in New York.

This engagement was negotiated and stewarded by U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff under the leadership of President Donald J. Trump, said a

press release issued by the Ministry of Finance on Thursday.

To advance this partnership, both governments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) formalizing their cooperation. The MoU was executed by GSA Administrator Edward C. Forst on behalf of the United States and Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on behalf of Pakistan, and witnessed by Prime Minister

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NEW YORK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Yvette Cooper, on the sidelines of the high-level UN Security Council meeting on Palestine.

Finance Minister says: Balochistan charts path to economic stability with strategic NFC planning

Independent Report QUETTA: Mir Shoaib Noshervani has affirmed that the Balochistan government is steadfastly pursuing a policy of balanced development, aiming to place the province on a sustained trajectory of progress and economic stability.

During a high-level consultative meeting on the forthcoming National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, the Provincial Minister for Finance and Minerals highlighted the necessity of a detailed and well-organized strategy to secure Balochistan's equitable share, taking into consideration the province's developmental challenges and increasing financial needs.

The meeting brought together NFC Member Balochistan Mehfooz Ali Khan, Secretary Finance Lal Jan Jaffar, and other senior officials, with several

participants joining via video link for a sub-committee session of the NFC. Key discussions centered on the country's domestic and external debt profile, along with crafting a robust policy framework for repayment of loans obtained from the International Monetary Fund and other international sources.

Mir Shoaib Noshervani underscored the critical need for fiscal discipline in the upcoming financial year, urging departments to curtail unnecessary expenditures and safeguard public resources.

He stressed that prudent financial management combined with fair allocation of resources is essential for reinforcing Balochistan's economic foundations and driving sustainable, long-term development.

Govt utilizing resources to provide sports opportunities to students for promotion of games: Lehri

QUETTA (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Mir Liaquat Lehri on Thursday said that the provincial government is utilizing all available resources to provide sports opportunities to the students for progress of the games.

He said that athletes and a national level tournament were organized in Balochistan in which the athletes got an opportunity to showcase their talent.

He said this while addressing a ceremony held on the occasion of the inauguration of the Futsal Ground at Government Girls Degree College Satellite Town. Mir Liaquat Lehri said

that providing quality education as well as sports facilities to female students is the need of the hour because a healthy body is the guarantee of a healthy mind.

He said that there is no dearth of talent in Balochistan, if the players are provided with appropriate opportunities, they could make Pakistan famous not only in the country but also abroad.

Mir Liaquat Lehri said that sports promote self-confidence, discipline and teamwork spirit in female students, with the establishment of the Futsal Ground, the long-standing desire of the college students has been

fulfilled, now the female students would be able to demonstrate their skills in sports along with their studies. He said that the provincial government is utilizing all available resources to provide sports opportunities to the students and athletes and a national level tournament was organized in Balochistan in which the athletes got an opportunity to showcase their talent. On this occasion, the students and teachers appreciated the initiative of establishing the futsal ground and thanked Mir Liaquat Lehri and expressed the hope that such positive steps would continue in the future.



QUETTA: Regional Head of Federal Ombudsman Ghulam Sarwar Brohi distributing appreciation certificates amongst the media representatives on best coverage.

Balochistan reviews progress on province-wide sports complex projects

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Secretary for Communications and Works, Babar Khan, chaired a high-level review meeting to assess progress on ongoing sports complex projects across Balochistan, underscoring the government's commitment to strengthening sports infrastructure for youth development.

The meeting was attended by Chief Engineers from all six zones of the Communications and Works Department, along with Superintending Engineers (SEs), District Executive Engineers, and other relevant officials.

During the session, participants were given a detailed briefing on the status of sports complex

projects underway throughout the province.

The briefing covered overall progress, expected completion timelines, technical challenges, fund releases, construction quality, and other administrative matters. Officials also outlined the pace of work in each zone, identified key obstacles, and shared measures being taken to address them. Addressing the meeting, Secretary Babar Khan emphasized that the ongoing sports complexes are projects of significant importance that will play a vital role in providing healthy and constructive activities for young people. He directed all concerned authorities to ensure completion of the projects within the stipulated

timeframe to promote sporting activities and create positive opportunities for the province's youth.

He further instructed officials to immediately resolve all technical issues affecting project implementation and accelerate the pace of construction.

Stressing accountability, he made it clear that no compromise would be tolerated on construction standards and that transparency must be maintained at every stage.

The secretary reiterated that all sports complex projects must be completed on schedule and in accordance with high-quality standards to provide modern and well-equipped sports facilities for the youth of the province.



LORALAI: Deputy Commissioner Miran Baloch listening to the problems of the New Bawar Social Welfare Committee.

Provision of health facilities to people responsibility of all of us: DC Kalat

QUETTA (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kalat Munir Ahmad Durrani on Thursday said that provision of the best health facilities to people is the responsibility of all of us. He said this while chairing the monthly meeting of District Health Management Committee.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Shah Nawaz Baloch, DHO Dr. Anjum Babch, MS Teaching Hospital Dr. Nasrullah Langoo, DSM PPHI Mujeeb Baloch, Deputy DHO Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Noorzai, Incharge RHC Mande Haji,

Dr. Fida Baloch, Dr. Munawar, Drug Inspector Dr. Muhammad Tahir, District Accounts Office Aftab Dehwar, District Medicine Store Incharge Dr. Waseem Langoo, Superintendent DHO Office Rizwan Haider participated in the meeting. The meeting discussed the health sector, attendance of doctors and other technical staff in hospitals, shortage of doctors and other staff, transfer and posting of doctors, provision of medicines in hospitals, provision of ambulances and other basic facilities in BHUs and other issues.



QUETTA: A street vendor serves pakoras and samosas to customers for iftar.

DC conducts surprise inspection at Wadh Hospital

Independent Report
KHUZDAR: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razaq Sasoli directed Assistant Commissioner Akbar Ali Mazarzai to inspect Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Wadh. The inspection reviewed staff attendance, patient care, and hospital facilities.

Medical Superintendent Dr. Abdul Rauf Mengal briefed the AC on operational challenges. Officials instructed deductions for absent staff and emphasized strict accountability.

Measures to improve hygiene, treatment efficiency, and timely patient services were reinforced, particularly for patients from remote areas.

The inspection supports Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti's vision to modernize healthcare, ensuring accessible, reliable medical services. Authorities reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing staff accountability, patient care standards, and overall public health infrastructure across Balochistan.

Female education officer inspects exam arrangements in Gwadar schools

Independent Report
GWADAR: District Officer Education (Female), Zaraton Baloch, conducted a comprehensive tour of multiple educational institutions in Gwadar, reviewing arrangements for ongoing matriculation examinations. The visit included Government Girls Middle School Shinkani Darg, Government Girls High School Gwadar, and Government Girls High School Malaband, among others.

During the inspection, Zaraton Baloch closely monitored exam arrangements, emphasizing transparency, order, and merit-based conduct. Staff were instructed to provide a calm and conducive environment for students to ensure optimal performance. The officer also visited the library at Senator Ishaq School, praising its setup and management as exemplary. Additionally, the officer highlighted the importance of nurturing student potential and uncovering hidden talents to achieve academic excellence.

Quetta sees sweeping raids on counterfeit beverages; 26 units penalized

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Balochistan Food Authority (BFA) has conducted a major crackdown in Quetta targeting the sale of fake beverages, seizing substantial quantities of counterfeit soft drinks and fruit juices. The raids, based on intelligence reports, focused on Boreech Market, Satellite Town, and Old Fruit Market, uncovering a sophisticated network and tracing its supply chain.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the counterfeit products were transported from Peshawar to

Quetta via a bilty system. These fake beverages, branded under well-known company names, were intended for widespread distribution across Quetta and surrounding areas.

In addition to seizures, 26 food and production units across Quetta and neighboring districts were fined for violations including poor hygiene, use of substandard ingredients, and labeling infractions. Legal action is ongoing, and the investigation has been expanded to target the central sources of the counterfeit supply.



QUETTA: A view of busy road looks desert due during the holy month of Ramadan.

AC Musakhel reviews steps to establish Ramadan Sasta Bazaar for facilitating people

QUETTA (APP): On special directive of Deputy Commissioner Musakhel Abdul Razaq Khajak, Assistant Commissioner (AC) Najibullah Kakar, on Thursday, chaired a meeting to review measures of establishment of Ramadan Sasta Bazaar for facilitating people in the month of Ramadan.

The meeting was attended by the President of the Traders Association, officers of the relevant departments, administrative officials and local shopkeepers and various issues were discussed in detail to provide maximum facilities to the people during the month of Ramadan.

In view of the holy month of Ramadan, an effective strategy was formulated in the meeting to provide relief to the people and ensure the uninterrupted availability of food items and keep prices moderate.

The important points under consideration on this occasion included arrangements for the establishment of Ramadan Sasta Bazaar, issuance of the official Ramadan rate list and its strict implementation, preparation of Ramadan security plan, establishment of Ramadan control room and its effective functioning, and other related matters.

Addressing the participants of the meeting, AC Najibullah Kakar said that the month of Ramadan is a holy month of blessings, blessings and worship,

in which providing maximum convenience to the people is the top priority of the district administration.

He urged the business community to completely avoid overselling, hoarding and artificial inflation, keeping in mind the sanctity and respect of Ramadan and ensuring implementation of the official price list.

He clarified that any individual or shopkeeper found involved in overselling or illegal profiteering in violation of the official rate list would be taken against him strictly according to the law.

The AC directed the officers of the concerned departments to regularly monitor the markets, utility stores and cheap markets dur-

ing Ramadan and ensure the provision of quality and affordable essential commodities to the people at all costs.

The meeting also decided that the Ramadan Control Room would be activated to immediately address public complaints, while security at mosques, markets and public places would be made more effective under comprehensive security arrangements.

On this occasion, the administration reiterated its resolve that all available resources would be utilized to provide full relief to the public, keep prices under control and maintain an atmosphere of peace and order during the holy month of Ramadan.



KALAT: Deputy Commissioner Munir Ahmed Durrani presides over the meeting of District Health Management Committee.

DC Loralai orders swift, high-quality execution of development projects

Independent Report
LORALAI: Deputy Commissioner Miran Baloch has underlined that the quality and timely completion of development initiatives in Loralai will remain non-negotiable, reaffirming that public interest is the foremost priority.

Chairing a District Coordination Committee (DCC) meeting at the DC Office, he was joined by FC Colonel Hasan, SDPO Abdul Karim Mandokhail, XEN

B&R Ahmed Din, XEN PHE Akhtar Mandokhail, and senior officials from all district departments. The session provided a detailed review of ongoing development schemes, government programs, and public relief projects. During the meeting, DC Miran Baloch instructed that all projects completed under the Balochistan Special Development Initiative Phases I and II be uploaded promptly on the online portal.

Balochistan pushes for resilient and inclusive social services amid growing challenges

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Additional Chief Secretary for Development & Planning Balochistan, Zahid Saleem, underscored that strengthening comprehensive and sustainable social services remains a top priority for the provincial government, particularly in the face of climate and socioeconomic pressures.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the policy consultation titled "Advancing Social Services in Balochistan Amid Climate and Social Challenges," held at Serena Hotel, Islamabad, Zahid Saleem highlighted the need for coordinated strategies, effective policy-making, and partnerships with development actors.

The event was organized by the Department of Development & Planning, with technical support from UNICEF.

Zahid Saleem noted that Balochistan confronts multiple obstacles, including its vast geographic expanse, climate change impacts, natural disasters, and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

He stressed that reforms in health, education, nutrition, clean drinking water, and social protection must be inclusive, equitable, and resilient to crises, ensuring all citizens—especially women, children, and vulnerable populations—have access to quality services.

He emphasized that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires evidence-based policymaking, inter-provincial coordination, international collaboration, and active engagement

with development partners.

The consultation aimed to gather experts, policymakers, and development stakeholders to develop actionable recommendations to enhance social service delivery across the province.

Acknowledging UNICEF's technical support, Zahid Saleem highlighted the role of global expertise in improving opportunities and services for children and marginalized groups. The session was attended by federal and provincial officials, development partners, civil society representatives, and sectoral experts, who contributed proposals to strengthen the effectiveness, reach, and resilience of Balochistan's social services.



QUETTA: MPA Rehmat Saleh Baloch meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

BRA orders overseas recruitment agents to register, comply with 5% service tax

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan Revenue Authority (BRA) has issued directives to abroad recruiting agents engaged in overseas employment placements, instructing them to immediately register with the authority and ensure timely submission of tax returns for each tax period.

According to the BRA, under Schedule III of

the Balochistan Sales Tax on Services (BSTS) Act, 2015, as amended through the Finance Act 2025, a 5 percent tax has been imposed on recruitment services provided for overseas employment. The authority emphasized that all relevant service providers are legally obligated to pay the tax at the prescribed rate and file returns within stipulated deadlines.

Balochistan unveils business facilitation centre to modernize investment and trade

Independent Report
QUETTA: Balochistan is gearing up to transform its investment landscape with the launch of the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) under the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBOIT), aimed at simplifying commercial, industrial, and investment procedures across the province.

During a high-level meeting assessing readiness for the BFC inauguration, Vice Chairman BBOIT Bilal Khan Kakar outlined that the centre will streamline business operations, enhance transparency, and boost overall efficiency. He confirmed that Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti will officially inaugurate the facility soon, signaling the government's determination to foster a more investor-friendly environment.

Bilal Khan Kakar highlighted that the BFC forms a core component of the Chief Minister's digitalization drive, enabling access to government services through online platforms. Functioning as a "one-window operation," the centre will allow entrepreneurs and investors to complete multiple regulatory and administrative tasks at a single point, reducing delays, cutting bureaucratic hurdles, and saving valuable time.

The meeting also reviewed logistical, institutional, and operational arrangements for the inauguration. The Vice Chairman instructed officials to ensure all preparations are completed efficiently and on schedule, emphasizing that the BFC is expected to stimulate investment, generate employment opportunities, and contribute significantly to Balochistan's economic growth.

ADC oversees dev. projects and ensures smooth Matric exams

Independent Report
USTA MUHAMMAD: Additional Deputy Commissioner Usta Muhammad, Muhammad Ismail Lashari, has directed officials to maintain rigorous oversight of development projects, ensuring citizens benefit from high-quality, sustainable facilities delivered under government initiatives.

Following instructions from Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal, ADC Lashari conducted a detailed inspection of completed projects in Tehsil Gandakha. He closely evaluated streets and roads paved with tuff tiles, reviewing their durability, workmanship, and compliance with technical standards. Officials and contractors provided briefings

on project progress, materials used, and dimensions of the streets and roads. Lashari stressed that all work must strictly follow approved designs and specifications, with zero tolerance for substandard execution or negligence.

ADC Lashari noted that Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal has issued firm directives to uphold transparency, quality, and timely completion in all development initiatives. He reaffirmed the administration's commitment to public welfare, warning that any mismanagement will result in strict, impartial action against responsible officials.

Later, the ADC visited an examination center to inspect the ongoing annual matriculation exams.

Friday February 20, 2026

Poor optics

The controversy surrounding the medical care, or lack thereof, given to incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan has shone a harsh spotlight on the intersection of politics and basic human rights in today's Pakistan. Speaking on Tuesday, the interior minister accused the jailed leader's sister, Aleema Khan, of "delaying" Mr Khan's medical checkup for three days, allegedly so she could 'do politics' over his health.

"Almost all political leaders were on board, but Aleema Khan sahiba vetoed them," Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi claimed. According to the minister, her insistence that Mr Khan's checkup and treatment be conducted under specific circumstances was merely a means to keep the matter of his deteriorating health alive for as long as possible. But while the opposition TTAP alliance quickly dismissed Mr Naqvi's statement as "blatantly misleading and contrary to the facts", remarks made by some PTI leaders regarding Mr Naqvi's role and their interactions with the government seemed to partially endorse it.

Mr Khan's sisters later made a set of counterclaims in their own press conference, presenting a very different picture compared to the interior minister's version of events. According to them, their brother was "not fine". They recalled he was not given prompt treatment when he flagged his eye condition some three months ago to jail authorities. They also claimed that the government had reneged on its promises to transfer Mr Khan to a private hospital and to grant the family access to the doctors nominated by it.

From where things stand, it is very difficult to ascertain how much of what each party says is true. Clearly, there is significant disagreement within the PTI camp concerning the right course of action regarding Imran Khan's health, with some leaders seemingly willing to trust the government's handling of his condition, while others, especially his family, insist on personal oversight.

That said, the government is also not without blame for how it has mismanaged the jailed leader's health. It may be recalled that officials had initially denied that anything was wrong with Mr Khan, and the truth only came out after information regarding his visit to Pims in Islamabad was leaked to the press. By mishandling its communications on the matter, the government itself gave good reason for the family to doubt it can promise the former prime minister's well-being, and it cannot now blame his sisters for wanting more oversight over his treatment by doctors they trust.

Therefore, while the PTI and Mr Khan's family need to firmly decide what it is that they want, the government must also respect their wishes and ensure much greater transparency in how it is dealing with Mr Khan's ailment. It must also ensure his sons can visit him. No one's health should be held hostage to political bickering.

Ahmer Bilal Soofi

Days before the Board of Peace's first meeting (scheduled for today), Israel made the very unusual move of registering broad swaths of the West Bank as state property. It smartly disguised its intentions as a move to fill in ownership gaps in the occupied areas; it plans to claim the ones where the Palestinians are unable to prove their ownership. While the specifics are yet to be known, it is a settled and trite principle of international law that an occupying power is not allowed to alter the local status quo, let alone attempt to find ways and means of claiming title to the territory itself.

This is the essence of the well-known Fourth Geneva Convention relating to the occupying power. The Convention was adopted in 1949, just four years after the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force, saw the light of day in 1945. The Charter had effectively declared that acquiring territory through the use of force is illegal. It was

thus considered necessary to establish a global regime, building on the Hague Regulations of 1907, that would deny any occupying power the right to claim title of the territory it occupied.

Read together, the UN Charter of 1945 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 made it clear that all occupations are by definition temporary and sooner or later they have to end. During the interim, the occupying forces who are de facto running the affairs of the occupied territory were to behave in a certain fashion. That's what the Fourth Geneva Convention explains in 159 articles. It imposes a long list of actions and measures that the occupier will not take. Failure would mean a minor or a grave breach of the Convention.

Even in 1949, the principles were so widely agreed upon that Israel felt obliged to sign the Fourth Geneva Convention on Dec 8 of the same year and then, after due reflection and deliberation within the country, stretching over almost

two years, it was ratified on July 6, 1951. This was in the backdrop of UNGA Resolution 181, which in 1947 had already proposed the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state and an international Jerusalem.

During its long occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, both referred to as 'occupied territories' in the world press for the last several decades, Israel has regrettably been violating several of the 159 articles of the Convention that it had ratified after almost two years of internal deliberations. Now the latest violation is the gradual registering of these lands as Israel state lands. What does all this mean for the Board of Peace?

The political domestic controversy with regard to the BoP is an issue for political parties to resolve but from a legal standpoint it is to be taken as a regional arrangement that member states can enter into under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. UNSC Resolution 2803, which was passed a few months ago,

positions itself as leading to a sort of "pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood". Para 16 of the plan annexed to the UNSC Resolution declares that "Israel will not occupy or annex Gaza". It also approves the raising of an International Security Force; once created, the right to use force of any kind and of any nature — to the extent of Gaza — by Hamas and the Israeli Defence Forces ought to cease.

However, it is to be borne in mind that Palestinians have a right to resist the occupation. That right is not negotiable and neither should the recent UNSC Resolution 2803 be read as curtailing this right. This right is given to every population — irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity — that is living under unlawful occupation.

The more brutal the tactics of the occupying power the fiercer the tactics of resistance. The greater the repression of the local population in venues such as the West Bank, the greater the justification to seek assis-

tance from third countries. That's how Iran developed a legal basis to fund Hamas to support a population that is exercising its right of recognised resistance under international law and also arguably fulfilling Iran's own obligation to make efforts to prevent genocide. Article 1 of the Genocide Convention of 1948 states that parties to the Convention "undertake to prevent" genocide. This obligation is not only for Iran but for all states that have acceded to the Genocide Convention, and which include almost all the members of the present BoP and other countries including the OIC member states.

The gradual transfer of West Bank land by the Israeli state to itself threatens the derailment of the BoP — alternatively, the board can establish its writ by asserting itself and prevailing over Israel to stop the illegal transfers and resort to status quo ante. Although the BoP was created by UNSC 2803 for Gaza's reconstruction and its eventual handing over to the Palestinian

Authority, it still has the political leverage to persuade Israel that it has to respect the Fourth Geneva Convention in the West Bank if the Gaza plan is to move forward.

We are aware that the International Court of Justice is on record as asserting that Israel's policies in the West Bank — including settlement expansion and land appropriation — are incompatible with international law. No state recognises Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank. Even Israel's closest allies, including the US and members of the European Union, have consistently treated the territory as occupied. Israel itself suspended Palestinian land registration in 1967, creating the legal vacuum it now exploits. Domestic claims cannot override international law; they remain unilateral assertions without recognition or legitimacy.

How BoP members handle this move in the West Bank by Israel will set the tone for the credibility of the sequential plan laid out in UNSC 2803.

The renewable tipping point**Khurram Husain**

An important tipping point is approaching and decision time is here. The tipping point is the cost at which battery storage of a single unit of electricity becomes competitive with grid-connected power generation systems. Once we cross that point everything changes, and we could be less than a couple of years away now.

By one estimate, the total cost of a utility-scale Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) was almost \$2,571 per kWh of electricity back in 2010. By now, this has fallen to \$192, more than a 90 per cent reduction. Estimates vary, but some of the ones I have looked at say once this figure crosses \$100 we would have passed a critical threshold. Past that point it will be cheaper to generate electricity using solar farms and store it in large utility-scale batteries than it is to generate it in large power plants that burn oil or gas. Meaning one large solar farm connected to a massive battery will credibly be able to re-

place one large power generation plant, to provide round-the-clock electricity either to the national grid, or to a micro grid.

Another report looks at actual projects coming online these days and notes that the price of an all-in BESS project has dropped to \$125 in some places as of late 2025. This means projects are now being commissioned that have \$75 per kWh for core equipment and \$50 for installation and grid connection.

Some experts watching the battery revolution happen in real time are reporting that in China the cost of deploying some of the industry's best kinds of batteries has already reached \$75 as of 2025 and is continuing to drop. This means the tipping point may be a lot closer than many of the best estimates suggest.

This is the utility-scale battery cost we are talking about, massive batteries that can replace entire power plants. Once their cost breaches the critical threshold they become feasible for

housing colonies, neighbourhoods and grid supply as well. After that, there is no stopping the revolution.

It was the same with solar panels. The critical threshold to be crossed with that was called "grid parity", where the cost of one unit of electricity produced via a fully installed and functioning solar generation system would be equal to the cost of the same unit procured from the grid. We crossed that threshold somewhere in the middle of the 2010s. The revolution took off in earnest in Pakistan after 2020 when the inflationary fire of the following years sent the price of electricity spiralling upwards, making solar more and more viable. In the years 2015 to 2020, this price was relatively stable and solar offtake was slower as a result.

But now a second boost is about to come, and by some standards, may already have arrived. Once batteries cross the same threshold the critical weakness in solar renewable energy is plugged. Up until now the biggest weakness in

solar power generation has been that it provides electricity only while the sun shines. But batteries change that. Now it will be possible to generate, store and use electricity round the clock using solar only. And the cost of setting up such a system will be competitive, and eventually below the cost of power purchased from the grid.

As the threshold approaches more and more people are asking themselves the critical question: should I get a battery? Based on a quick calculation I did on my own bills and solar net-metering benefit since it began, my short answer is "not yet". As per my calculations the cost of a 10kWh battery with a payback period of 10 years becomes competitive once the buyback rate of home solar electricity drops below Rs30 per unit.

For those who have active generation licences, this threshold has not yet been crossed. But if the government moves to offering Rs11 only for solar rooftop electricity, batteries will not only become viable

but also a necessity. Selling your own electricity to the state for Rs11 and buying theirs for Rs50, or 60 or sometimes even 70 will make no sense at that point.

A lot of batteries currently on the market may not have enough charge cycles to be able to last 10 years. That is a very long payback period and most batteries on the market today could fizzle out midway through it. And even that system, with 10 units generation and storage capacity, will not take you off the grid altogether.

It will comfortably cover you during the hours of peak billing, allowing you to use your units when you need them the most. For the rest of the day you will still be dependent on the grid. Complete off-grid viability could take more than five years. Until then, we will move towards hybrid systems, using a combination of own generation, storage and grid supply to balance our consumption and reduce the peak billing burden.

Capacity payments,

which are the largest cost burden on our power system, will start declining from 2027 onward and diminish to their lowest point by 2035, according to data from Nepra's annual reports.

This will help power tariffs stabilise. But devaluation of the rupee could reverse these gains easily, depending on how irresponsible the government on the market today is in safeguarding macroeconomic stability. So the outlook for battery storage might take a little longer to cross viability as the grid finds its footing, and quality issues will plague the sector for a while as well. Substandard batteries will impose their own costs on consumers.

But the fact that the threshold is drawing near is undeniable. Once crossed all manner of business models suddenly become viable and the grid will struggle for its own viability, mainly because it will no longer have a captive consumer base upon whom to offload the costs of its myriad dysfunctions. At that point the revolution will have attained unbreakable momentum.

Poets & politics**F.S. Aijazuddin**

Lahore took another deep, satisfying breath with the 10th Faiz Festival. Sessions spread back to back over two-and-a-half days (Feb 13-15), each a tribute to the performing arts, to drama, literature, poetry, with a nod to politics.

This often controversial festival came close to insurrection only in two sessions. One, on the Marxist Faiz Ahmed Faiz (who won the Lenin Prize for Literature in 1962) and his Chilean contemporary Pablo Neruda (who received the capitalist Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971). To summarise their shared philosophy, both forged "a pact of blood with the people". Both expressed "a deep compassion for human-kind" which inspired them to "write incisively against tyrants, war and corporate imperialists". The second, the session — 'O' Palestine — scattered words into Lahore's spring air instead of shedding blood on that hallowed ground, sacred to three religions. For over 70 years, Palestinians as Kashmiris have, with as scant a reward for their sacrifices.

An aside made by an actress in another session did ignite the audience. She referred to the shortage of contemporary themes in our television dramas. She cited the absence of serials on say Allama Iqbal, the Quaid, Faiz, and then added (almost in a whisper) the sporting 'Khans'.

She meant, of course, to include the squash champions Jansher Khan and Jahangir Khan, cricketers Majid Khan and Younis Khan, but the audience knew better. It erupted into a cacophony of delirious applause. Had there been polling

booths within the grounds of the Lahore Arts Council, the outcome of the next general election would have been decided there and then.

Earlier LitFests have focused on intercontinental writing. This Faiz Festival showcased local authors. On the first full day, nine books were launched, on the second, another eight. Foreign names yielded place to our own literati. Some of them preferred to converse bilingually. A few tripped lightly from Punjabi to Urdu to English.

The linguistic divide between Urdu (our national language, the forceful assertion of which cost us a Bengali-speaking East Pakistan) and English (the residue of the Raj) precipitated festival-goers into two separate solids. One depended on nostalgia, recalled cultures in Lucknow and Hyderabad (Deccan), now buried in time; the other, represented a younger Gen Z, which responds to tapping syllables on their mobile phones.

The poetess Zehra Nigah is one of the few surviving connections with Faiz Ahmed Faiz. She spoke thrice on the second day, and again thrice on the third day. That would have been a trial for anyone, except for the 90-year-old Zehra Nigah. The Faiz Festival to her is akin to a pilgrimage, an annual homage to her intellectual mentor Faiz sahib.

She launched her fifth book of poems — a volume as slim as she is. She spoke about it and then with ineffable delicacy recited poetry by others, drawing upon a deep reservoir of familiarity with poets past and present. To her, Mir Taqi Mir, Mirza Ghalib, Firaq, Sardar Jafri, Josh Malihabadi, and Mustafa

Zaidi are still very much alive, in her mind.

She can recite their verses without any prompting. If she does need any persuasion, it is to recite her own compositions. She delighted her informed audience with one of her poems, delivered in tarannum for which she has been famous since Faiz sahib first heard her many, many years ago.

Her session with fellow poet Iftekhar Arif on the development of marsias will never be improved upon. Unlike some poets who shied away from Shia themes, Iftekhar Arif has made the familylic at Karbala as vivid to modern audiences as Bibi Zainab's unforgettable first account of that tragedy and the doleful ballad by Mir Anees.

This Faiz Festival opened with lively dances by Lahore Grammar School pupils. It ended with a Kathak performance by Nighat Chaudhary and her students. Again, Moneeza Hashmi had to quell a mob of youngsters, as she has many times before, when they hammered noisily on the doors for admittance. They do this for practice. They know that for days to come, they and 20 million others of their age will have to clamour for places in the job market.

Seats for the most popular sessions are always hard to come by. Senior citizens rely on the goodwill of young friends. One octogenarian — a former MNA and president emeritus of the Family Planning Association of Pakistan — struggled to find a suitable seat. One young man was approached to surrender his to her. He hesitated, until he was reminded that, had she been more successful in her job, he would not have been sitting where he was.

Pakistan's security challenges:**A complex and evolving landscape****By Afnan Shah**

Pakistan's security environment has never been simple. Situated at a strategically significant crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, the country faces a range of internal and external challenges that continue to shape its national priorities. While Pakistan has demonstrated resilience and strength in dealing with many threats, the evolving nature of security demands constant vigilance and strategic adaptation.

One of the most pressing concerns remains terrorism and violent extremism. Over the past decade, decisive military operations significantly weakened militant networks and restored relative stability in many regions. However, isolated attacks and cross-border militancy remind us that the threat has not entirely disappeared. Security is not achieved through military action alone; it also requires addressing root causes such as poverty, lack of education, and ideological radicalization.

Border security

presents another ongoing challenge. Tensions along the eastern border, particularly along the Line of Control, periodically strain relations and create uncertainty. At the same time, developments in Afghanistan directly influence Pakistan's internal security dynamics. Cross-border movement, refugee pressures, and militant infiltration complicate border management and demand both diplomatic engagement and effective surveillance mechanisms.

Political stability is equally vital for national security. A divided political landscape can weaken institutional performance and distract leadership from long-term strategic planning. Strong democratic institutions, rule of law, and consensus-driven governance are essential pillars for sustainable peace. National security must be viewed not merely as a military responsibility but as a collective national effort supported by political unity and public trust.

Economic challenges further intersect with security concerns. Inflation, unemployment, and fiscal instability contribute to public frustration and social vulnerability. Economic insecurity can indirectly fuel crime and make marginalized communities more susceptible to exploitation by ex-

tremist elements. Therefore, economic reform, investment in youth development, and equitable growth are critical components of a comprehensive security strategy.

In recent years, cyber security and information warfare have emerged as modern threats. Digital misinformation, cyber-attacks on institutions, and online radicalization can destabilize societies without a single shot being fired. Strengthening digital infrastructure and promoting responsible media practices are now indispensable aspects of national defense.

Pakistan's security challenges are multifaceted and interconnected. Addressing them requires a balanced approach that combines military readiness, diplomatic outreach, political stability, economic reform, and technological advancement.

The path forward lies in strategic patience, institutional strength, and national unity. Despite the complexities, Pakistan has consistently shown resilience in the face of adversity. With coordinated policies, responsible leadership, and active citizen participation, the country can navigate its security challenges and move toward a more stable and prosperous future.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi called on by All Central and Zonal members of Pakistan Ruet-e-Hilal Committee led by Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad at Governor House.

CM KP reviews service delivery under good governance roadmap

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sohail Afridi chaired a high-level meeting to review service delivery of provincial departments under the Good Governance Roadmap.

During the meeting, detailed briefings were given on interventions undertaken by 17 departments and the challenges faced in implementation.

The Chief Minister directed that preparations be finalized to make the upcoming spring tree plantation campaign the largest provincial plantation drive in the province's history. He instructed that government employees, students, and civil society be actively involved in the campaign and emphasized plantation of fruit-bearing trees in government offices and official residences.

He also ordered

weekly meetings of the Provincial Development Working Party for timely approval of development projects, reiterating that aligning service delivery with public expectations remains the government's ultimate mission.

The Chief Minister directed that the preparation of the Rs 1,000 billion Roshan Tribes package for the merged districts be completed within the current month. He further instructed that recruitment of contract doctors in government hospitals be completed by March 5.

Directives were also issued to accelerate construction work on the Kumrat Road and Hangu Sarozai Road, start mammoth services in DHQ and Regional DHQ hospitals of southern districts, and ensure 100 percent attendance of teachers in gov-

ernment schools. Emphasizing efficiency, the Chief Minister called for adoption of non-traditional solutions to expedite delayed matters.

He directed all provincial departments to begin budget preparation for the next financial year and ensure completion of mid-term actions of the Good Governance Roadmap by June this year.

He further ordered fast-tracking of the Ehsaas Apna Ghar Programme, immediate activation of dysfunctional tube wells across the province, and enhanced security for anti-polio teams.

During the briefing, it was informed that under the Good Governance Roadmap, out of 327 interventions across 17 departments, 47 have been completed while 139 are on track.

KP Governor hosts Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, calls for national harmony

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has said that religious scholars have a vital role in promoting unity, harmony and solidarity in the country, especially in the prevailing circumstances faced by Pakistan.

He expressed these views while addressing a reception and dinner hosted in honour of the members of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee at Governor House Peshawar, in connection with the advent of Ramadan. The ceremony was also addressed by Chairman Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee and Khateeb of Badshahi Mosque Lahore, Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabeer Azad, Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology, Allama Raghieb Naemi, central leader of Shia Ulema Council, Allama Shabbir Maisami, and noted religious scholar Dr Qibla Ayaz.

The Governor said that in the current situation, the responsibilities of the pulp and prayer niche had multiplied manifold. He congratulated the members of the Ruet-e-Hilal Committee and the provincial Ministry of Religious Affairs on the commencement of Ramadan across the country on the same day, expressing hope that Eid-ul-Fitr would also be celebrated nationwide on a single day.

Punjab CM orders beefing up security at mosques, imambargahs

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz on Thursday ordered tightening security in and around mosques, imambargahs, markets and other public places during the holy month of Ramadan.

She directed that additional police personnel be deployed at places of worship and public places.

The chief minister also directed that the installation of CCTV cameras, walk-through gates and search lights should be ensured.

Besides that, she directed that barriers and barbed wires be placed around congregations for Friday and Taraveeh prayers.

CM Maryam also ordered a three-layer security plan to guard such places against acts of terrorism.

Apart from that, the chief minister urged the law-enforcement agencies to increase patrolling, snap checking and search operations around places of worship so that people's lives and properties could be protected.



SARGODHA: District Public Prosecutor Malik Amir Shahzad addresses a capacity-building seminar for prosecutors handling murder, rape, sodomy, and narcotics cases.

Punjab Governor says: Ramadan is not only about worship but also teaches us to help needy, helpless people

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan inaugurated the facility of water, juice and food items available in the refrigerator installed for the needy people on the occasion of Iftar at the back of Governor House Lahore today.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that the month of Ramadan provides a rare opportunity to gather the pleasure, happiness and blessings of Allah Almighty. The Governor Punjab said that Ramadan is not only about worship but also teaches us to help the needy and helpless people. He further said that last year we started a langar

khana for the people and now we have installed a refrigerator so that the needy people can get food items from here. The Governor of Punjab said that we are trying to expand it to other cities so that as many deserving people as possible can benefit.

Talking to the media on this occasion, Governor of Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that Asif Ali Zardari bravely spent fourteen years in jail. He said that the PPP has always made sacrifices for the continuity of democracy and its stability. In response to a question, the Governor of Punjab said that PTI does politics on everything. PTI should take the constitutional path and go to the people.

Pak Army sets up free medical camp in Mir Ali

NORTH WAZIRISTAN (APP): The Pakistan Army set up a free medical camp for local residents in Tehsil Mir Ali, North Waziristan.

More than 700 individuals, including 150 children, were provided with free medical check-ups and medicines at the camp.

Teams comprising Army doctors and expert health staff examined the patients. The team included medical specialists, child specialists, surgeons and gynecologists.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan offering Dua after inaugurating facility of water, juice and food items available in the refrigerator installed for the needy people on the occasion of Iftar during Ramadan.

Court hands down life sentences in double murder case

LAHORE (INP): A sessions court on Thursday awarded life imprisonment on two counts each to Ali Hassan and his sister Kusoom Bibi for the murder of a young woman and her fiancé after she refused a marriage proposal. Additional District and Sessions Judge Shoaib Anwar Qureshi announced the verdict after the completion of the trial in the case involving the killing of Farzana Bibi and her fiancé Amanat. During proceedings, Prosecutor Shabbir Ahmed Khan told the court that Ali Hassan wanted to marry Farzana Bibi.

Mohsin Naqvi inspects under-construction police stations in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited newly-constructed and under-construction police stations in Islamabad on Thursday morning. Mohsin Naqvi inspected Kohsar police station, under-construction Women Police Station G-6 and under-construction Coral police station.

The Interior Minister reviewed the modern facilities provided in the new building of Kohsar police station. Mohsin Naqvi visited the frontdesk and other sections in Kohsar police station and directed to provide more facilities for the visitors in Kohsar police station.

Mohsin Naqvi instructed public facilities should be further improved in newly constructed police stations to promote modern policing.

Mohsin Naqvi ordered early completion of construction of Women Police Station in G-6 Sector of the federal capital.

Provision of necessary resources in this regard will be ensured on priority basis, Mohsin Naqvi said. Mohsin Naqvi gave deadline to complete the new building of the Coral police station in two months.



ISLAMABAD: School children in happy mood after receiving their part during Roshan Distribution by Allah Wale Foundation at National Special Education Centre for Hearing Impaired Children.

Zeeshan Malik inaugurates Sahulat Bazaar in PP-159

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to the Chief Minister Punjab on Political Affairs Zeeshan Malik on Thursday said that providing maximum facilities and relief to the public remained the foremost priority of the Punjab government.

He said that practical steps were being taken to ensure that citizens benefited directly from welfare initiatives. He expressed these views while inaugurating a newly established Sahulat Bazaar in Nishtar Colony, situated in Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's constituency PP-159 in Lahore.

Addressing the ceremony, he said the government was committed to fa-

cilitating citizens, particularly during times of rising prices, by ensuring the availability of essential commodities at affordable and subsidised rates.

Zeeshan Malik said the Sahulat Bazaar had been equipped with modern facilities and proper arrangements to provide a convenient shopping environment for residents of the area. He informed that the bazaar, comprising 88 shops, had been completed under his direct supervision on the special directives of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. He added that all necessary items of daily use, including vegetables, fruits, flour, pulses and other grocery products,

Rubina inaugurates Benazir Nashonuma Centre, announces increase in BISP cash assistance

PESHAWAR (APP): Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, here on Thursday inaugurated a state-of-the-art Benazir Nashonuma Centre at Molvi G Hospital, Hashnagri, and announced an increase in quarterly cash assistance from Rs 13,500 to Rs 14,500. The much needed revised assistance will benefit approximately 10 million registered beneficiaries across the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During her visit, she visited various sections of the centre, inspected healthcare facilities, and met mothers of stunted children to inquire about their concerns.

Highlighting the gravity of the issue, she said that nearly 40 percent of children under the age of five in Pakistan suffer from stunting and underweight due to socioeconomic imbalances and poverty.

To combat this monster challenge, the Benazir Nashonuma Programme was launched with a focus on the critical first 1,000 days of a child's life.

So far, approximately 4.3 million beneficiaries including 1.2 million regis-

CM approves acceleration of SWEEP to modernize Karachi's waste management system

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday approved the acceleration of the Solid Waste Emergency and Efficiency Project (SWEEP), a flagship initiative aimed at transforming Karachi's waste management system into a modern, environmentally compliant and climate-resilient framework.

Chairing a meeting at the CM House, the chief minister said SWEEP — a joint initiative of the Government of Sindh and the World Bank — is central to the vision of making Karachi a cleaner, greener and more livable city. The meeting was attended by Local Government Minister Nasir Shah, Mayor Karachi Muratza Wahab, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Principal Secretary to

environmental safeguards and timely completion of all project components.

The project focuses on developing urgently needed infrastructure, including modern Garbage Transfer Stations (GTS) and sanitary engineered Landfill Sites (LFS), to strengthen municipal solid waste management across the metropolis.

Garbage Transfer Stations are designed to enhance operational efficiency through organised waste reception, segregation and bulk transfer, thereby reducing environmental and public health risks. The landfill component provides engineered and environmentally compliant disposal of residual waste, complete with leachate management systems and gas wells.

CM Agha Wasif, Secretary Local Government Waseem Shamshad and Project Director SWEEP Anwar Shar.

The chief minister underlined that the core objective of SWEEP is to reduce Karachi's carbon footprint while ensuring compliance with national and international environmental quality standards. He said the project would not only modernize waste collection and disposal systems but also enhance safety at dump sites, rehabilitate exhausted landfill areas and improve living conditions and livelihoods of waste pickers residing nearby.

"Integrated solid waste management is essential for public health, environmental protection and climate resilience," he said, directing officials to ensure strict adherence to



Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over Solid Waste Emergency and Efficiency project meeting in Karachi.

Karachi airport upgrades central runway to handle Airbus 380

KARACHI (INP): The central runway at Jinnah International Airport Karachi has been fully upgraded and is now ready to accommodate the world's largest aircraft, including the Airbus A380.

The upgrade of Runway 25R was completed within the 18-month deadline. Following the completion of Runway 07L/25R, the runway classification has also been upgraded.

The central runway is now equipped to handle wide-body aircraft, enhancing the airport's capacity and operational efficiency for large international flights.

In addition to overflight and landing-related charges, PAA collects airport charges from departing passengers both domestic and international at the rate of PKR 600 for domestic and PKR 4,600 for international departures.

NAB Chairman strengthens Pak-Qatar cooperation in anti-corruption and business transparency

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Lieutenant General (Retired) Nazir Ahmed, met with Qatar's Ambassador to Pakistan, His Excellency Ali Mubarak Ali Essa Al-Khater, to enhance bilateral cooperation in anti-corruption, criminal justice, and business transparency.

A high-level NAB delegation also participated in the meeting.

During the discussion, Chairman NAB thanked Qatar for its role as a reviewer in Pakistan's second country assessment under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), highlighting Qatar's support in presenting a positive image of Pakistan.

He also congratulated the Qatari government for successfully hosting the 11th Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) and the 15th International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA) meeting in Doha in December 2025.

Both sides reviewed progress on finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NAB and Qatar's Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA) for cooperation in criminal matters.

Minister Salman says: Rs 3b annual free treatment announced under Punjab CM's Stroke Program

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that under the Chief Minister's Stroke Program, free treatment facilities worth more than Rs 3 billion will be provided to stroke patients every year.

Presiding over the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Chief Minister's Stroke Program on Thursday, he said that important steps are underway to implement revolutionary and historic initiatives in the health sector of the Punjab government, adding that significant progress has already been made in the program's implementation.

Secretary Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Azmat Mahmud and Professor Qasim Bashir attended the meeting. Professor Qasim Bashir gave a detailed briefing to the committee about the program, which was appreciated by members who also offered valuable suggestions.

The minister said the initiative aims to save thousands of lives. He added that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved the establishment of a stroke management center in every district. An in-principle decision to appoint a neurologist and pediatric neurologist in every District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital is also being implemented.

Khawaja Salman Rafique said a mechanism is being devised to provide immediate stroke management training to doctors and nurses in all districts. Steps are also underway to launch a telemedicine project through which district hospital doctors will be able to consult specialists for the prompt treatment of stroke patients.

He further said that a public awareness campaign will be launched, emphasizing the critical importance of the "golden hours" in stroke treatment.



PESHAWAR: Chairperson BISP, Rubina Khalid, cuts the ribbon during the inauguration of the Benazir Nashonuma Facilitation Centre at Molvi Ameer Shah Hospital.

Minister Junaid reaffirms Commitment to protect Arabian Sea marine mammals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry reaffirmed the government's steadfast commitment to safeguarding rich marine biodiversity, especially vulnerable cetaceans like whales and dolphins in the Arabian Sea.

In a message on International Day for Marine Mammals, the minister warned that these ocean giants face growing threats from overfishing, bycatch, ship strikes, noise pollution, and habitat loss. "Yet they underpin our coastal ecosystems, blue economy, and national livelihoods," he said.

Following the International Whaling Commission (IWC)'s global moratorium on commercial whaling, the day underscores the need to protect species like whales, dolphins, seals, and sea otters from pollution, fishing gear, and habitat degradation.

The IWC was founded in 1946 under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. It has more than 80 member countries, including many non-whaling nations. Its headquarters are in the United Kingdom, and it focuses mainly on whale protection, ecosystem health, and responsible ocean management.

Arabian Sea hosts over 20 cetacean species, including endangered Arabian Sea humpback whales, blue whales, Bryde's whales, and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins.

Commonly sighted are spinner dolphins, Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins, and finless porpoises. To date, 27 whale and dolphin species have been recorded in Pakistan's waters.

Junaid Chaudhry highlighted recent encouraging sightings off Gwadar, Balochistan. A fishing boat captain captured video of

six endangered Arabian Sea humpback whales breaching simultaneously, a rare sign of recovery. "The presence of more than six whales signals improving populations along our coastline," he noted.

Junaid Chaudhry also cited a Bryde's whale group in Gwadar's eastern bay, further showcasing Balochistan's coastal biodiversity. In November 2025, a large pod of bottlenose dolphins appeared in Gwadar's West Bay, near frequent hotspots like the Indus Delta, Charna Island, Ormara, and Astola Island.

The minister praised fishermen for reporting sightings and urged awareness campaigns. "We must promote sustainable practices to protect these ecosystems," he said, calling on the public to reduce plastic use, join beach clean-ups, and learn about ocean conservation to bolster the blue economy.



Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairs economic coordination committee meeting virtually in Islamabad.

Jam engages carpet sector to address sector-specific challenges, diversify exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan chaired a meeting with representatives of the Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) to review the challenges confronting Pakistan's hand-knotted carpet export sector, a traditional powerhouse of craftsmanship, employment, and foreign exchange earnings, and discuss immediate facilitation measures.

The PCMEA delegation, led by Patron-in-Chief, Abdul Latif Malik and Senior Vice Chairman Mr. Usman Ashraf, highlighted disruptions in the supply of essential intermediates required for carpet production which are adversely affecting exporters' ability to honor international commitments, risking loss of market share and exports.

The delegation sought urgent government intervention to resolve operational bottlenecks, said a release issued here issued here on Thursday.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan reaffirmed that promoting value-added exports such as hand-knotted carpets remains a key priority of the Ministry of Commerce.

He emphasized the sector's significant contribution to employment generation, women's empowerment, and preservation of traditional craftsmanship.

He assured the delegation of proactive support to address supply constraints and facilitate exporters, particularly micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) operating in the sector.

The Minister also called for institutionalizing planning through structured secretariats under sectoral councils, with clearly defined mandates and time-bound deliverables.

Addressing the business community at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), the High Commissioner highlighted the longstanding friendship between the two nations, recalling that Pakistan was among the earliest countries to recognize Malaysia's independence in 1957 and supported its constitutional development.

He also acknowledged the historic role of Pakistanis who stood with Malaysia during pre-independence challenges, describing the relationship as one rooted in brotherhood and mutual respect.

Referring to the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Malaysia last year, he noted that seven Memorandums of Under-

Malaysia keen to enhance halal food, pharma & agro trade with Pakistan: HC

ISLAMABAD (APP): High Commissioner of Malaysia Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan Thursday reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to deepening economic and business relations with Pakistan, emphasizing that while political ties remain robust, there is significant room to expand and re-balance bilateral trade.

Addressing the business community at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), the High Commissioner highlighted the long-standing friendship between the two nations, recalling that Pakistan was among the earliest countries to recognize Malaysia's independence in 1957 and supported its constitutional development.

He also acknowledged the historic role of Pakistanis who stood with Malaysia during pre-independence challenges, describing the relationship as one rooted in brotherhood and mutual respect.

Referring to the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Malaysia last year, he noted that seven Memorandums of Under-

standing were signed, including collaboration in the Halal sector. Malaysia committed to importing up to \$200 million worth of Halal meat annually from Pakistan, with approximately \$100 million already imported.

Malaysia is also sourcing agro-products such as potatoes, onions and basmati rice from Pakistan, where Pakistan ranks as the second-largest rice supplier to Malaysia.

He observed that current bilateral trade, valued at approximately USD 1.6-1.8 billion, remains below potential and is tilted in Malaysia's favor.

As an food importer serving a population of 34 million, Malaysia sees strong potential to increase imports of Pakistani poultry, dairy products, halal meat and other agricultural commodities to help re-balance trade.

The High Commissioner emphasized the need to convert political goodwill into tangible business outcomes and called for structured, sector-focused engagements between ICCI and Malaysian business chambers.



HYDERABAD: Vendor displays fresh jujubes in baskets at the fruit market to attract customers as preparations intensify ahead of the holy month of Ramadan.

NA body reviews PR, NHA issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Affairs on Thursday discussed matters relating to Pakistan Railways (PR) and the National Highway Authority (NHA), focusing on pension liabilities and traffic congestion issues.

The meeting was chaired by Rana Iradat Sharif Khan. The Secretary, Parliamentary Affairs, briefed the committee on complaints received by the Prime Minister's Delivery

Unit regarding pension payments to Pakistan Railways' retirees.

A Member of Finance informed the committee that Pakistan Railways has undertaken active liability management to address longstanding employee obligations.

The department disbursed Rs5.622 billion towards commutation payments, cleared up to May 31, 2023, and Rs1.103 billion towards leave encashment, cleared up to March 31, 2024.

OGDC announces gas, condensate discovery at Dars West-3 Well

ISLAMABAD (APP): Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC), Pakistan's leading exploration and production company, on Thursday announced a gas and condensate discovery at its Dars West-3 well located in the Tando Allah Yar district of Sindh. The new development well was successfully tested in the C-Sands of the Lower Goru Formation, said a news release.

The well was drilled to a total depth of 2,100 metres and tested using OGDC's in-house technical

expertise. During testing, Dars West-3 flowed at a rate of 9.70 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas along with 580 barrels per day (BPD) of condensate at a choke size of 36/64 inches.

The wellhead flowing pressure was recorded at 1,725 psi from the Lower Goru C-Sand reservoir.

The encouraging results further confirm the hydrocarbon potential of the Lower Goru Formation in the Dars West area and strengthen OGDC's resource base.



LARKANA: A vendor sells samosas outside his shop during the holy month of Ramadan.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, CMA CGM Maupassant, Hansa Europa, Sidra Al-Wakra, Corona and Wadi Al-Sail scheduled to load/offload Containers, Bitumen, Palm oil and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal and Gasport Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, AS Alva, Chemroad Echo and Paolo Topic carrying Containers, Palm oil and steel coil also arrived at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim during the same period.

A total of ten ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three vessels CMA CGM Maupassant, Poineer Gas and Galaxy Gas left the port on Thursday morning, while another containership Hansa Europa is expected to sail on Thursday afternoon.

SIMAP applauds PM for safeguarding existing solar net metering consumers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Surgical Instruments Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SIMAP) Zeshan Tariq expressed its sincere appreciation to the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, for his timely intervention in protecting the interests of existing solar energy consumers by allowing them to continue under the previously approved net metering mechanism. In a press release, Chairman SIMAP Zeshan Tariq said that the government and the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) have now permitted

the existing solar consumers to retain their current net metering agreements until the expiry of their contractual terms. This step ensures that the industries that invested in solar energy based on the earlier policy framework remain protected.

He added that the SIMAP acknowledges this decision as a positive reflection of the government's commitment to promoting renewable energy adoption, and safeguarding businesses that have made substantial investments in good faith under national energy policies.



QUETTA: Provincial Finance Secretary Lal Jan Jaffar presides over the meeting regarding sales tax in Balochistan.

PSX turns bearish, sheds 6,682 points to close at 172,170 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday witnessed a bearish trend, losing 6,682.81 points, a negative change of 3.74 percent, to close at 172,170.29 points compared to 178,853.10 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 542.979 million shares with a traded value of Rs 27.363 billion, against 697.682 million shares valuing Rs 49.992 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization decreased to Rs 19.514 trillion from Rs 20.227 trillion a day earlier.

Out of 483 active companies in the ready market, 32 advanced, 384 declined, and 67 remained unchanged. World Call Telecom topped the volume chart with 84.183 million shares, followed by K-Electric Limited with 62.013 million shares and Trust Sec. & Bro (R) with 45.71 million shares.

The top gainers included Dawood Lawrencepur Limited, which rose by Rs 25.88 to close at Rs 668.89, and Shahmurad Sugar Mills Limited, which gained Rs 20.90 to settle at Rs 399.93.

Farmer-centric research imperative to drive agri productivity: DG Ishtiaq

FAISALABAD (APP): Director General (DG) Agriculture (Farms & Training) Punjab Dr. Ishtiaq Hassan has said that translating agricultural research from laboratories to farmers' fields is need of the hour as farmer-centric research is imperative for increasing agri productivity.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ishtiaq Hassan said that agricultural research must be made "farmer-friendly" and aligned with the challenges posed by climate change. He said that the primary objective of every research initiative should be to enhance per-acre yield. He stressed the importance of effective implementation of the approved program under adaptive research and said that timely dissemination of modern agricultural recommendations to the farmers is imperative for agricultural progress. He said that the core purpose of adaptive research is to ensure that scientific findings directly benefit the farmers at grassroots level.

Chairing a meeting at Ayub Agricultural Research Institute (AARI) on Thursday, he approved 90 experiments and finalized the annual research program for Kharif Crops 2026.

The agricultural experts and scientists presented detailed briefings on research priorities and production strategies for the upcoming season.

Roshan Digital Account inflows cross \$ 12 billion

KARACHI (APP): State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Thursday announced that Roshan Digital Account has achieved another milestone, surpassing US\$ 12 billion in total inflows with over 0.9 million accounts opened by Overseas Pakistanis.

Cumulative funds received via the RDA initiative up to February 10, 2026 amounted to US\$ 12.007 billion while the number of accounts opened touched the 904,000 mark, the central bank informed and also paid gratitude to the Overseas Pakistanis for their continued trust and support in the RDA initiative.

The inflow of remittances under Roshan Digital Account (RDA) was recorded as \$ 11.923 billion by the end of January 2026, as compared to US \$11.707 billion inflows in December 2025 while the number of accounts registered under

the programme also rose to 901,764 in January 2026 from 893,130 accounts in December 2025, the latest SBP data showed.

Inflows of remittances in RDA during January were recorded at US\$ 216 million as compared to US\$ 213 million in December and US\$ 181 million in November 2025, the data depicted.

Roshan Digital Accounts provide innovative banking solutions to millions of Non-Resident Pakistanis (NRPs), including Non-Resident Pakistan Origin Card (POC) holders, seeking to undertake banking, payment, and investment activities in Pakistan.

By the end of January, overseas Pakistanis had invested US \$518 million in Naya Pakistan Certificates, US \$1.063 billion in Naya Pakistan Islamic Certificates, and US \$114 million in Roshan Equity Investment.

CDNS secures Rs24 billion in Islamic investment inflows

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Islamic finance sector continues to gain momentum as the Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) recorded Rs24 billion in Shariah-compliant investment inflows from July 1, 2025, to February 18, 2026, bringing the institution close to its annual target of Rs25 billion for the fiscal year 2025-26.

According to a senior CDNS official here on Thursday, the achievement reflects growing investor confidence in interest-free savings instruments amid Pakistan's evolving financial landscape.

Nearly 94 percent of the annual Islamic finance target has already been achieved midway through the fiscal year.

"We have revived and reinforced our focus on Islamic finance during the current fiscal year, which is expected to support sustainable growth of Pakistan's Islamic economy," the official said.

He attributed the strong inflows to the issuance of dedicated Islamic bonds and Shariah-compliant savings certificates, which have attracted investors seeking halal returns while contributing to national savings.

The latest performance builds on CDNS's recent track record in the Islamic finance segment. During fiscal year 2024-25, the directorate successfully met its target of Rs24 billion in Islamic investments.

In FY 2023-24, CDNS mobilized approximately Rs75 billion through Islamic bonds alone, establishing a foundation for expanding Shariah-compliant products and institutional reforms.

Officials highlighted that Islamic finance has become an integral component of the global financial system, accounting for a significant share of several major economies.

Leghari orders Old rules to apply to net metering cases filed before February 8

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Power Sardaar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari on Thursday directed that all net metering applications submitted up to February 8 be processed under the previous regulations.

The decision safeguards applicants who filed before the deadline from being affected by subsequent regulatory changes.

According to the announcement, all electricity distribution companies, including K-Electric, have been instructed to provide net metering facilities to these applicants and to ensure immediate implementation of the orders.

Currently, a total of 5,165 applications have been submitted across all distribution companies, including K-Electric, by February 8. These applications represent a cumulative capacity of 250,822 megawatts, which will be added to the national grid once processed.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves stand \$ 21.30 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 21.301.5 million as of February 13, 2026 while the reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan increased to \$ 16,196.9 million.

"During the week ended on 13-Feb-2026, SBP's FX reserves increased by US\$ 19 million to US\$ 16,196.9 million," the central bank reported on Thursday in its weekly statement on the position of liquid foreign reserves.

However, the net foreign reserves held by the commercial banks decreased by \$ 92.3 million to \$ 5,104.6 million, as shown in the break up of forex reserves for the period under review.



QUETTA: Vice Chairman BBoT Bilal Khan Kakar presides over the inaugural ceremony of BFC.

Hamas tightens grip in Gaza as Trump pushes peace plan

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO/JERUSALEM: Hamas is cementing its hold over Gaza by placing loyalists in key government roles, collecting taxes and paying salaries, according to an Israeli military assessment seen by Reuters and sources in the Palestinian enclave. Hamas' continuing influence over key Gaza power structures has fueled widespread skepticism about the prospects of US President Donald Trump's peace plan, which requires the militant group to give up its weapons in exchange for an Israeli military withdrawal from the territory.

Trump's international Board of Peace, which is meant to supervise Gaza's transitional governance, is holding its inaugural meeting in Washington on Thursday. "Hamas is advancing steps on the ground meant to preserve its influence and grip in the Gaza Strip 'from the bottom up' by means of integrating its supporters in government offices, security apparatuses and local authorities," the military said in a document presented to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in late January. Hamas says it is ready to hand over administration of the enclave to a US-backed committee of Palestinian technocrats headed by Ali Shaath, a former Palestinian Authority official in the occupied West Bank. But it says Israel has not yet allowed committee members to enter Gaza to assume their responsibilities.

Netanyahu did not respond to Reuters' questions about Hamas' control over Gaza. An Israeli government official, speaking on condition of anonymity, dismissed any notion of a

future role for the group as "twisted fantasy," saying, "Hamas is finished as a governing authority in the Gaza Strip."

The Israeli military declined to comment on Hamas' assertions. Israeli military officials say Hamas, which refuses to disarm, has been taking advantage of an October ceasefire to reassert control in areas vacated by Israeli troops. Israel still holds over half of Gaza, but nearly all its 2 million people are in Hamas-held areas. Reuters could not determine the full scope of Hamas' appointments and attempts to replenish its coffers.

Hamas has named five district governors, all of them with links to its armed Al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations.



France's President Emmanuel Macron speaks with media after attending the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi.

Russia has taken 'over 1,000' Kenyans to Ukraine: intelligence report

Monitoring Desk
NAIROBI: More than 1,000 Kenyans have gone to fight for the Russian army in Ukraine, most of them tricked into signing military contracts, according to an intelligence report presented to Kenya's parliament.

Multiple media investigations, including one published earlier this month by AFP, have exposed how Russia has enticed men from African countries with promises of lucrative jobs, only to force them into fighting on the front line in Ukraine.

A joint investigation by Kenya's National Intelligence Service and Directorate of Criminal Investigations, presented in parliament on Tuesday, put the number of recruits from the country at "over 1,000" —

far higher than the figure of "around 200" given by authorities in December.

"The Kenyans leave the country on tourist visas to join the Russian army through Istanbul, Turkey, as well as Abu Dhabi, UAE," Kimani Ichung'wah, parliament majority leader, told lawmakers.

But he said increased border enforcement at Nairobi's airport meant recruits were also now traveling to other African countries to avoid detection.

Ichung'wah said unlicensed recruitment agencies in Kenya were "colluding with rogue airport staff."

He said at least 39 Kenyans were currently hospitalized, 28 missing-in-action and 89 on the front line.

Scores killed in militant attacks in northwest Nigeria

Monitoring Desk
LAGOS: Militant fighters have killed scores of people and destroyed seven villages in raids in northwest Nigeria's Kebbi state, the police said Thursday.

Members of the Lakurawa group attacked villages in the Bui district of Arewa northern region at around 1:15 p.m. (12:15 GMT) Wednesday, said Kebbi state police spokesman Bashir Usman.

A security report seen by AFP said the militants had killed "more than 30 villagers."

Usman said: "Scores of people were killed as residents from Mamunu, Avasaka, Tungan Tsoho, Makangara, Kanzo, Gorun Naidal, and Dan Mai Ago mobilized to resist the attackers."

The attackers had also rustled "some cattle" in the

raids, he added. Police, soldiers and local militia were immediately sent to the area.

The attacks came days after the state hosted the UNESCO-listed Argungu fishing festival, about 60 kilometers (38 miles) from the Arewa region, where the attacks took place.

The Lakurawa group has been blamed for many of the attacks on communities in the northern part of the state and in neighboring Sokoto state.

Its members stage deadly attacks from their forest base, rustling livestock and imposing "taxes" on locals.

The Nigerian government said the Christmas day air strikes by the US military in Sokoto had targeted members of the group and "bandit" gangs.

India to make Rafale jets with France in boost to defence ties, Macron says

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: France and India are entering a new era of defence cooperation with plans to jointly produce Rafale fighter jets as well as helicopters, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday, adding France also hopes to sell more submarines to India.

India's expected order for another 114 Rafales is a "new step forward" in defence ties between the two countries and France hopes to see this replicated with submarines as well, Macron told reporters at the end of a three-day visit to India.

"On Rafale, what we want to do is expand. India confirmed a few days ago its willingness to command a new bunch of Rafales ... 114 ... and to co-produce in India," Macron said.

Police arrest King Charles' brother Andrew over misconduct relating to Epstein

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: King Charles' younger brother Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor was on Thursday arrested on suspicion of misconduct in public office over allegations he sent confidential government documents to Jeffrey Epstein.

UK police have a general practice of not publicly naming suspects but they gave details that identified the former prince, who has been under investigation over allegations that he had passed documents to the late convicted sex offender while working as a trade envoy.

Thames Valley Police, which earlier this month said it was looking into the allegations, said a man in his 60s had been arrested and was now in police custody.



Members of a Palestinian family sit next to their belongings after their building was demolished by Israeli bulldozers near the settlement of Hagai, south of the occupied West Bank city of Hebron.

Australian defence firm helps Ukraine zap Russian drones

SYDNEY (AFP/APP): One of Australia's most highly valued defence firms is helping Ukrainian soldiers knock Russian drones off the battlefield, riding a surge in military spending by Western governments with tech combating the weapon of the future.

From the trenches of Ukraine to the Red Sea and Central America, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are an ubiquitous part of modern conflict—conducting surveillance, taking airports offline, dropping deadly

payloads, and carrying out so-called "kamikaze" strikes. Shares in the Sydney-based DroneShield—whose tech was originally conceived as a high-tech mosquito swatter—soared over 300 percent in the last year on hopes that it is uniquely positioned to profit from the wars of the 21st century.

"Any future war will have all the normal things you expect like tanks and artillery and missiles but also to have drones, and with it, you need counter drone systems to cover

that," CEO Oleg Vornik told AFP at the firm's headquarters in Sydney.

"You have to now assume the threat from the air is just as likely as the threat from the ground."

An hour's drive from DroneShield's headquarters, in a leafy Sydney suburb, the firm's technicians try to give a sense of what it looks like in the field.

A drone hovers over the trees as a technician wields DroneGun Tactical, its black veneer and size looking like something out of science fiction.

Israel restricts Friday congregation at Al Aqsa to 10,000

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Israel on Wednesday imposed restrictions on Palestinian worshippers from the occupied West Bank attending weekly Friday prayers at the Al Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem and capped the worshippers number at 10,000 during the holy month of Ramadan which began on Wednesday.

The Israeli authorities also imposed age restrictions on West Bank Palestinians, permitting entry only to men aged 55 and older, women aged 50 and older, and children up to age 12 to attend the Friday prayers.

"Ten thousand Pales-

tinian worshippers will be permitted to enter the Temple Mount for Friday prayers throughout the month of Ramadan, subject to obtaining a dedicated daily permit in advance," COGAT, the Israeli agency in charge of civilian matters in the Palestinian territories, said in a statement.

"Entry for men will be permitted from age 55, for women from age 50, and for children up to age 12 when accompanied by a first-degree relative," COGAT said, adding that restrictions apply only to Palestinians travelling from the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

US renews threat to leave IEA

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: US Energy Secretary Chris Wright renewed his threat Thursday to pull out of the International Energy Agency, saying Washington would press the organization to abandon a net-zero agenda "in the next year or so."

Speaking on the last day of an IEA ministerial meeting in Paris, Wright said the 52-year-old agency should return to its founding mission of ensuring energy security.

The IEA was created to coordinate responses to major disruptions of supplies after the 1973 oil crisis, but Wright complained that it has adopted a climate agenda that includes the goal of reaching net zero emissions by 2050.



White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt holds a briefing at the White House in Washington, DC, US.

Bill Gates pulls out of India AI summit; anger mounts over organisational lapses

Monitoring Desk
DAVOS: Bill Gates pulled out of India's AI Impact Summit hours before his scheduled keynote address on Thursday, dealing another blow to a flagship event already marred by organisational lapses, a robot row and complaints of traffic chaos.

Gates' absence, followed by another high-profile cancellation by Nvidia's Jensen Huang, adds to a difficult opening for a summit billed as the first major artificial intelligence forum in the Global South, where India has sought to position itself as a leading voice in

worldwide AI governance. The Gates Foundation said the billionaire will not deliver his address "to ensure the focus remains on the AI Summit's key priorities." Only days ago, the foundation had dismissed rumours of his absence and insisted he was on track to attend. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for children's safety on AI platforms as he addressed the gathering on Thursday, alongside French President Emmanuel Macron, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei.

Five miners trapped deep underground after mudslide floods South African diamond mine

Monitoring Desk
JOHANNESBURG: Five miners were trapped deep underground at a South African diamond mine after a mudslide flooded a shaft they were working in, mine officials and a labor union said Thursday.

The miners have been trapped since the early hours of Tuesday, according to the Congress of South African Trade Unions — an alliance of labor unions that includes the main mineworkers union. The congress said the miners were thought to be trapped around 800 meters (half a mile) underground.

Ekapa Mining General Manager Howard Marsden, whose company operates the mine, told national broadcaster SABC on Wednesday that rescuers were pumping water out of the shaft while a separate team was trying to drill a hole to where the miners were believed to be trapped to try to establish communication with them "or any proof of life."

The mine is in the central city of Kimberley, which is renowned for its diamond mines and was at the heart of the global industry after diamonds were discovered in the area in the late 1800s.

Zuckerberg says Meta apps not designed to lure children

Monitoring Desk
LOS ANGELES: Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg pushed back in court on Wednesday against a lawyer's suggestion that he had misled Congress about the design of its social media platforms, as a landmark trial over youth social media addiction continued.

Zuckerberg was questioned on his statements to Congress in 2024, at a hearing where he said the company did not give its teams the goal of maximizing time spent on its apps.

Mark Lanier, a lawyer for a woman who accuses Meta of harming her mental health when she was a child, showed jurors emails from 2014 and 2015 in which Zuckerberg laid out aims to increase time spent on the app by double-digit percentage points.

Zuckerberg said that while Meta previously had goals related to the amount of time users spent on the app, it has since changed its approach.

"If you are trying to say my testimony was not accurate, I strongly disagree with that," Zuckerberg said.

The appearance was the billionaire Facebook founder's first time testifying in court on Instagram's effect on the mental health of young users.

While Zuckerberg has previously testified on the subject before Congress, the stakes are higher at the jury trial in Los Angeles, California.

White House tells Iran to do deal as Trump hints at US strikes

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The White House warned on Wednesday that Iran would be "wise" to do a deal with the United States as President Donald Trump once again hinted at military action. The two sides recently resumed indirect talks, mediated by Oman, after Trump repeatedly threatened military action against Iran over a deadly crackdown on protesters last month.

A previous attempt at negotiations collapsed when Israel launched surprise strikes on Iran last June, beginning a 12-day war that Washington briefly joined to bomb Iranian nuclear sites. "Iran would be very wise to make a deal with President Trump and with his administration," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters.

On Wednesday, Trump again suggested the United States might strike Iran in a post on his Truth Social site, with a US military buildup underway in the Middle East.

He warned Britain against giving up sovereignty over the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean, saying that the archipelago's Diego Garcia airbase might be needed were Iran to agree a deal. "In order to eradicate a potential attack by a highly unstable and dangerous regime," CNN and CBS reported on Wednesday that the US military will be ready to launch strikes against Iran as early as this weekend, though Trump has reportedly not made a final decision yet. The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday that Trump has been briefed on his military options with "all of them designed to maximize damage."

Five children among fireworks shop explosion

BEIJING (AFP/APP): Five children were among the 12 people killed in an explosion at a general store selling fireworks in China during the Lunar New Year holiday, state media said Thursday.

Setting off fireworks and crackers is common during holiday celebrations in China, especially around Lunar New Year.

The explosion occurred on Wednesday afternoon in Jinpu village, in the central province of Hubei.

"Following thorough search and rescue operations, the incident was confirmed to have resulted in 12 fatalities: seven adults and five minors," state broadcaster CCTV said Thursday, citing authorities.

The identities of all victims have been verified, it added.

"Aside from one indi-

vidual, identified as the proprietor Mr Lin, the remaining 11 were customers purchasing fireworks," the report said.

Three of the customers who died had travelled from Chengdu, roughly 780 kilometres (485 miles) away, to visit their relatives, it added.

A police investigation is underway to determine the cause of the explosion.

Several major Chinese cities have banned the use of fireworks and firecrackers in recent years for safety and pollution control reasons, but the practice remains very popular in rural areas.

Fatal explosions regularly occur around the holidays.

On Sunday, an explosion at a fireworks shop in eastern China's Jiangsu province killed eight and injured two.

Former South Korea leader Yoon Suk Yeol gets life in prison for insurrection

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: A South Korean court sentenced ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol to life in prison on Thursday after finding him guilty of leading an insurrection with his martial law declaration in 2024.

Yoon abruptly declared martial law in a televised address in December 2024, saying drastic measures were needed to root out "anti-state forces" in South Korea's National Assembly.

The 65-year-old hardline conservative was later impeached, arrested and charged with a litany of crimes ranging from insurrection to obstruction of justice.

Presiding judge Ji Gwi-yeon said Yoon sent troops to the assembly building in an effort to silence political opponents who had frustrated his attempts to govern.

"The court finds that the intention was to paralyze the assembly for a considerable period," Ji told the

Seoul Central District Court.

"The declaration of martial law resulted in enormous social costs, and it is difficult to find any indication that the defendant has expressed remorse for that," the judge said.

"We sentence Yoon to life imprisonment."

Former defense minister Kim Yong-hyun was sentenced to 30 years in prison for his role in the crisis. Prosecutors had sought the harshest penalty for Yoon's insurrection charges, urging the court during hearings in January to sentence him to death.

South Korea has an unofficial moratorium on capital punishment — the last prisoners were executed in 1997 — with a death sentence effectively banishing Yoon to life behind bars. Thousands of supporters gathered outside the court ahead of the verdict, toting placards that read "Yoon Great Again" or "Drop the charge against President Yoon."

UK condemns 10-year sentence for British couple in Iran

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: British foreign minister Yvette Cooper on Thursday condemned as "totally unjustifiable" the 10-year sentence given to a British couple in Iran for spying, saying the government would continue to press for their release. Craig and Lindsay Foreman had been charged with espionage after Iran accused them of gathering information in several parts of the country.

"We will pursue this case relentlessly with the Iranian government until we see and Lindsay safely returned to the UK and reunited with family," Cooper said in a statement.

The Foremans were arrested on January 3 of last year while traveling through Iran on a global motorcycle journey. Iranian state media announced their detention the following month over espionage charges and they have now been held for more than 13 months. Joe Bennett,

Lindsay's son, said in a separate statement the couple had appeared at a three-hour trial on October 27, in which they were not allowed to a defense.

"We have seen no support the charge of espionage," he said, adding that the family deeply concerned about the couple's welfare and the lack of transparency the judicial process.

Bennett called on the British government to "act decisively and use every available avenue" to secure their release.

The Iranian embassy in London did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the sentencing.

According to a family tement, the couple have been held for extended periods without being able to communicate. They have had limited or delayed access to legal representation, periods of solitary confinement and delays in receiving funds for basic necessities.



Supporters of South Korea's former president Yoon Suk Yeol react as they watch a live stream of Yoon's trial near the Seoul Central District Court in Seoul.

President reaffirms commitment to social justice, expands support for vulnerable groups

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Asif Ali Zardari, while marking the World Day of Social Justice, has reaffirmed the nation's commitment to justice, equality and human dignity, pledging continued efforts to protect and uplift the country's most vulnerable communities.

In a message issued on the Day, the president said the observance of the international day underscores Pakistan's constitutional obligation to eliminate exploitation and promote the wellbeing of all citizens. Citing Articles 3, 37 and 38 of the Constitution, he emphasized the State's responsibility to ensure equality and social protection without discrimination.

The president highlighted the government's continued investment in social protection initiatives despite fiscal constraints.

The budget of the Benazir Income Support Programme has increased significantly from Rs. 34 billion at its inception to Rs. 716 billion for the fiscal year 2025-26, now supporting 10 million households nationwide.

Additional assistance is being extended through institutions such as Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution and the Prime Minister Youth Programme. These initiatives provide healthcare, education, shelter, food

support and interest-free loans, with special focus on the elderly, differently-abled persons, women, youth, minorities and transgender individuals, he said.

The president noted that provincial governments are complementing federal efforts through targeted programmes in health, education, nutrition, skill development and financial inclusion.

Among the highlighted initiatives were the Universal Health Insurance programme in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the "Bahimat Buzurg" scheme in Punjab and the Benazir Women Agricultural Workers Support Program in Sindh.



Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan addresses the 88th session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee in Geneva.

Home department boosts efficiency with real-time file tracking system

New electronic dashboard slashes delays, enhances transparency, and improves service delivery

Independent Report
QUETTA: In line with Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti's vision for modern governance, Balochistan's Home Department has launched a state-of-the-art electronic filing dashboard to streamline administrative processes and increase efficiency.

This system enables real-time tracking of file movements, offering unprecedented transparency and significantly reducing bureaucratic delays.

Hanza Shaqat, Additional Secretary of the Home Department, explained the benefits of the new system in a statement on social media. The dashboard allows authorities to monitor the status of files, identify which officer is handling them, track how long they've been pending,

and see how many files are in process. Crucially, the system flags delays, making it impossible for inefficiencies to go unnoticed.

"By introducing this system, we've drastically reduced unnecessary delays, ensuring that decisions are made faster, benefiting citizens directly," said Shaqat. He also revealed that internal assessments have shown a remarkable 150% improvement in departmental performance in just two months.

This technological leap sets a new benchmark for transparency and accountability in Balochistan's public sector, ensuring that citizens receive timely services and that government operations remain efficient and transparent.

DGPR calls for zero tolerance on negligence, strengthens public outreach across Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: Director General Public Relations (DGPR) Askar Khan has emphasized that officers who demonstrate integrity, dedication, and professionalism will receive full support, while those neglecting their duties will face strict accountability measures.

Speaking at a high-level meeting of Information Department officials, attended by Director Press Tanveer Akhtar, Director Publicity Saeed Shahwani, Deputy Director Admin Najeebullah, and other senior staff, Askar Khan reviewed the performance of both directorate and district-level officers.



QUETTA: Director General Public Relations Balochistan Askar Khan presides over the KPIs meeting.

Traffic overhaul planned for Quetta as authorities moves to ease Serena Chowk congestion

Independent Report
QUETTA: Quetta Authorities have announced a series of immediate and long-term measures to improve the city's traffic management system, with a special focus on easing chronic congestion at Serena Chowk.

The decisions were taken during a high-level meeting chaired by Quetta Division Commissioner Shahzaib Khan Kakar, attended by Deputy Commissioner Mehruallah Badini, Divisional Director Development Zahoor Ahmed, SSP Traffic Police Mirza Bilal, Director of the Balochistan Traffic Engineering Bureau Shakeel Ahmed, Deputy PD QDP Abid Ali, DSP Traffic Po-

lice Saifullah, and representatives from the Metropolitan Corporation and the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Quetta.

Officials reviewed the growing traffic volumes across the city, particularly the persistent gridlock at Serena Chowk, a key intersection that regularly experiences heavy congestion. The bottleneck has been causing significant inconvenience to commuters, especially during school hours and peak office times.

To address these challenges, the meeting resolved to implement immediate measures to improve traffic flow. Special arrangements will be introduced during school opening and

closing hours, as well as peak office periods, to minimize delays and ensure smoother commuting for residents. Dedicated committee has been constituted to conduct an on-site inspection of Serena Chowk and submit practical recommendations along with a comprehensive report to resolve congestion issues.

Commissioner Shahzaib Khan Kakar directed all relevant departments to strengthen inter-agency coordination, modernize traffic management practices, and increase personnel deployment at major intersections. He emphasized that public convenience must remain the top priority in planning and operations.



Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Social Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal chairs 9th meeting of Steering Committee on Socio-Political Domain in Islamabad.

No peace without justice, no solution without Palestinian's rights: Dar tells UNSC

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan on Thursday told the United Nations Security Council that there could be no durable peace without justice, no stability without accountability, and no sustainable solution without the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

The deputy prime minister, in his remarks at the United Nations Security Council's briefing on "the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question"

held here, emphasized Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people in their legitimate pursuit of dignity, freedom, and self-determination.

He highlighted ongoing diplomatic efforts to consolidate the ceasefire in Gaza, alleviate civilian suffering, and implement the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, as endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2803.

DPM Dar appreciated peace initiatives led by US President Donald

Trump and noted Pakistan's active collaboration within the Group of eight Arab and Islamic countries — Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Türkiye — to advance a just resolution.

He strongly condemned Israel's recent illegal measures to expand control over the West Bank, including annexation attempts, settlement entrenchment, and designation of lands as "state land."

Aleem Khan says: Pakistan emerging as strategic economic bridge linking South Asia, Central Asia & Eurasia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Thursday underscored Pakistan's transformative role as a vital "Economic Bridge" linking South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Eurasia.

Addressing the 88th session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee in Geneva, he said that Pakistan's strategic integration into the Belarus, Russia, and Central Asia corridors represents the dawn of a new era in regional connectivity, said a press release received here.

The minister said that by leveraging the monumental successes of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the nation is effectively opening its doors to provide high-efficiency trade routes for Russia and landlocked Central Asian Republics.

Central to this vision is Pakistan's active facilitation of regional transit trade to the Russian Federation and beyond through six established land corridors, he added. He said that these critical arteries include high-capacity routes via Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Iran as well as specialized China-Kazakhstan connectivity routes.

Furthermore, Pakistan is utilizing multiple Trans-Afghan corridors to link with Central Asian Republics and the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA) route connecting Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with significant scope for northward expansion.

Pakistan, Egypt FM's express satisfaction with ongoing cooperation

NEW YORK (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday met Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelaty on the sidelines of the High-Level meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Palestine here.

In the meeting, they reviewed bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction with ongoing cooperation across multiple sectors, reaffirming the importance of close coordination.

The two ministers also exchanged views on Gaza, the West Bank and regional developments, stressing adherence to international law and the need for immediate, unhindered humanitarian access.

ECC approves release of Rs19 bln for PM's Ramadan Relief Package 2026

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Thursday approved the immediate release of Rs19 billion for the Prime Minister's Ramadan Relief Package (PMRRP) 2026.

The Finance Division informed the Committee that Rs.19 billion had already been budgeted for the Ramadan package for the current financial year and that the remaining requirement would be released as and when necessary.

The Committee also discussed the operational expenditure component proposed in the summary and stressed the importance of providing a detailed breakdown of costs, including payments to partner financial institutions and expenses related to outreach and communication.

The ECC granted in-principle approval for operational expenses of Rs 1 billion, subject to submission of comprehensive details to the Finance Division to ensure that allocations are aligned with actual needs and financial rules.



QUETTA: Provincial Education Minister Ms Raheela Hameed Durrani, chairing high level meeting on promoting MHH in Balochistan

Minister Raheela says: Balochistan moves to end the 'silent crisis' driving massive female school dropouts

Independent Report
QUETTA: Ms. Raheela Hameed Durrani, Provincial Minister for Education, has declared that the government is taking decisive action to stop the alarming rate of female school dropouts caused by a lack of basic health access. Stressing that dignity is a fundamental constitutional right, the Minister stated that ensuring affordability for essential women's health

products is now an urgent educational imperative.

The Minister made these remarks while speaking to a high-level delegation of the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Working Group (MHMWG) Secretariat Balochistan.

Highlighting the stark reality that 89% of adolescent girls in the province lack adequate facilities to manage their monthly cycles, Minister Durrani

emphasized that this affordability gap is a primary, albeit silent, driver of widespread school absenteeism. Acknowledging the sweeping scale of the crisis affecting an overwhelming number of female students across the province, she framed the issue as a root cause of gender inequality in Balochistan's educational landscape that requires immediate state intervention.

Gov't taking concrete steps to address issues of Bars: Law Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday said that in consultation with the provincial government and relevant authorities, practical and sustainable solutions would be pursued to ensure improved facilities and institutional support for the legal fraternity.

The law minister held meeting with the newly elected Members of various bar associations from across the Rawalpindi Division. Minister of State for Law and Justice, Barrister

APNA delegation calls on PTA Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the All Pakistan Network Association (APNA), led by its Secretary General Zeeshan Siddiqui, called on the Chairman of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) at the PTA Headquarters on Thursday.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a range of issues related to the internet and telecom sectors and exchanged views on matters concerning industry growth and regulatory facilitation.

Steering committee directs inclusive education, backward district development

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Steering Committee on Socio-Political Domain here on Thursday sought uniform registration of all educational institutions, inclusion of madaris, accelerated development of backward districts, and national cohesion initiatives. The 9th meeting of the Steering Committee on Socio-Political Domain, constituted by the Apex Committee, was held under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, according to press release.

The meeting was attended by Provincial Finance Ministers, Chairmen of Planning and Development Boards, Additional Chief Secretaries, Secretary Planning, Secretary Finance, Vice Chairman PIDE, and senior officials from relevant departments.

The committee was established to eliminate the

root causes of extremism and subversion through improved governance and equitable development projects.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Iqbal stated that all types of educational institutions, whether private schools, madaris, or government educational institutions, should have a universal law so that no one feels discriminated against.

He emphasized that madaris are also educational institutions and keeping them in a separate category creates doubts and suspicions. They need to be brought into the national mainstream through an inclusive approach.

On the directions of the federal minister, the Directorate of Religious Education will develop a common framework for registration of madaris, schools, and technical institutions at the federal and provincial levels.



QUETTA: Advisory to CM Mir Danish Lango meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

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The ECC granted in-principle approval for operational expenses of Rs 1 billion, subject to submission of comprehensive details to the Finance Division to ensure that allocations are aligned with actual needs and financial rules.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Syed Imran Ahmad Shah; Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the concerned ministries, divisions and regulatory bodies. The summary submit-



QUETTA: Parliamentary Secretary Excise and Taxation Haji Muhammad Khan Lehri meeting with Provincial Minister for PHE Sardar Abdul Rehman Khethran.

Govt launches Ramadan "affordable market" to ensure fair prices

Independent Report
QUETTA: In line with the clear directives of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the Balochistan Department of Agriculture, through the Quetta Market Committee, has announced the establishment of a "Ramadan Sasta Bazaar" at Ayub Stadium for the entire month of Ramadan.

The initiative aims to provide residents of Quetta with high-quality food items at affordable prices, mitigating the impact of inflation during the holy month.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a range of issues related to the internet and telecom sectors and exchanged views on matters concerning industry growth and regulatory facilitation.

and fruits from within and outside the province, offered at rates below the regular market pricing, as per the official price list issued by the Market Committee.

To ensure transparency and consumer protection, dedicated price control committees have been established, while food inspection teams will actively monitor product quality. Authorities emphasized that public convenience, fair pricing, and strict quality standards remain the top priorities.

The initiative underscores the provincial government's commitment to easing economic burdens on citizens, promoting affordability, and maintaining public confidence in essential goods availability during Ramadan.



QUETTA: Quetta Division Commissioner Shahzaib Khan Kakar chairing a high-level meeting to improve the city's traffic management system, with a special focus on easing chronic congestion at Serena Chowk.