

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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www.dailyindependent.com.pk Quetta

Ph: 284 1470/2841473 REG: No. BC-116 B/ID-445 Vd XXVII No. 182, Ramazan 03, 1447 AH Saturday February 21, 2026 Pages 08, Price Rs. 15

Pakistan, US agree to enhance bilateral trade, economic ties, counterterrorism cooperation

Pak ready to work with Board of Peace for implementation of Gaza Peace Plan

WASHINGTON (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the sidelines of the inaugural meeting of Board of Peace Washington, where both sides agreed to enhance bilateral trade and economic activities as well as mutual cooperation in countering terrorism.

During the meeting, the two sides underscored the importance of continued U.S. strategic relations and expressed satisfaction over the momentum and positive trajectory of the partnership, under the leadership of President Trump.

The prime minister was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, a

press release issued by the PM House Media Wing said on Friday.

The prime minister congratulated President Donald Trump and Secretary Rubio on the successful inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace and reaffirmed that Pakistan was ready to work with the Board of Peace for the implementation of Gaza Peace Plan.

He emphasized the importance of continued high-level engagement between Pakistan and the U.S. to advance common goals in a rapidly evolving global environment.

Meanwhile, in a press statement issued by the US State Department, Secretary Rubio thanked Pakistan for its ongoing support of President Trump's Peace

Plan for Gaza and for participating in the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace as a founding member.

He also offered his condolences for the horrific January 31 attacks in Balochistan and the devastating February 6 bombing in Islamabad, reaffirming the importance of our continued partnership in the fight against terrorism.

The secretary welcomed Pakistan's participation in the recent Critical Minerals Ministerial in Washington.

The officials discussed critical minerals and energy sector development, as well as commercial investment opportunities for American companies.

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QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti expressing his views during Balochistan Assembly session.

Pak receives extraordinary welcome at Board of Peace meeting: Atta Tarar

WASHINGTON (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has said that Pakistan had received an extraordinary welcome during the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace, held in Washington earlier in the day.

Talking to the media, the minister said US President Donald Trump specifically praised the leadership of Pakistan, including Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of the Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, acknowledging Pakistan's vital role in fostering global

peace. "This high-level commendation has significantly enhanced Pakistan's international prestige and serves as a moment of pride for Pakistanis living across the globe," he added.

He said this was a clear manifestation of Pakistan's successful foreign policy and the result of dedicated teamwork.

Atta Tarar noted that Pakistan is now emerging as an influential and effective player on the world stage, moving away from a past era of diplomatic isolation.

He emphasized that

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QUETTA: Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Climate emergency deepens in Balochistan as CM Bugti warns of escalating threats

QUETTA: Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has cautioned that climate change has emerged as one of the gravest challenges of the modern era, asserting that Balochistan is enduring its repercussions more severely than many other regions of the country.

He expressed these views during a meeting with the Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, held in Quetta. The discussion focused extensively on

the environmental vulnerabilities confronting the province, climate-induced risks, and the development of a unified and effective response strategy.

Officials said the meeting underscored the importance of reinforcing collaboration between the federal and provincial governments in environmental matters. Both sides agreed on enhancing coordination, improving the allocation of resources, and expanding technical assistance to

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QUETTA: Provincial Ministers Bakht Muhammad Kakar, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran, Mir Zohoor Ahmed Buledi, Mir Asim Kurd Gailu, Parliamentary Secretary Nawabzada Zareen Khan Magi, MPAs Zamrak Khan Achakzai, Mir Younas Aziz Zehri, Mir Rehmat Saleh Baloch, Mir Zabid Ali Reki, Haji Asghar Khan Tareen, Syed Zafar Agha and Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman expressing their views on resolution during Balochistan Assembly session.

SC stays proceedings in Shehbaz's defamation case against Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court on Friday barred a trial court from proceeding with a defamation suit filed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif against PTI founder Imran Khan.

The lawsuit was filed in response to allegations made by Imran Khan, who claimed that PM Shehbaz had offered him Rs10 billion to withdraw the Panama Papers case.

PM Shehbaz maintained that these allegations, made during a TV programme on April 26 2017, were false and defamatory.

Umrani claims Intel forces behind instability of Balochistan

QUETTA: Provincial Irrigation Minister Mir Muhammad Sadiq Umrani has accused international powers of deliberately destabilizing Balochistan, stressing the need for a political solution to the province's ongoing challenges. Speaking to the media before a session of the Balochistan Assembly, Umrani highlighted that Balochistan, once a peaceful region, is now facing turmoil due to external influences. He further emphasized that the solution to Balochistan's issues lies in a political approach. "The problem in Balochistan is political, and it must be addressed politically," he said, distinguishing between the roles of government and the state. According to Umrani, peace and security are essential for the province's future, and any resolution must come through dialogue rather than external interference.

He also offered his condolences for the horrific January 31 attacks in Balochistan and the devastating February 6 bombing in Islamabad, reaffirming the importance of our continued partnership in the fight against terrorism.



WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets President Trump after the conclusion of the Inaugural meeting of Board of Peace.

CM Bugti says: New media policy underway, efforts being made to move toward digital platforms

BA demands expanded seats to boost political influence and address longstanding challenges; PA seats to be increase to 85 and NA to 28 seats

QUETTA (ANN): On Thursday, the Balochistan Assembly unanimously approved a resolution urging an increase in the province's representation in both the provincial and National Assemblies, linking enhanced political presence to the effective resolution of longstanding development and governance issues. Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti addressed the assembly, noting that a new media policy was underway and efforts were being made to move toward digital platforms. He also pledged personal funding to repair non-functional ambulances in Washuk, highlighting the administration's

commitment to improving emergency services.

The session, presided over by Speaker Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, included extensive debates on political representation, healthcare delivery, and governance reforms. Lawmakers from both government and opposition benches stressed that greater representation is crucial to tackling Balochistan's chronic structural and administrative challenges.

The resolution, presented by Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) Asghar Khan Achakzai, requested the federal government to raise the provincial assembly

seats to 85 and increase Balochistan's National Assembly allocation to 28 seats, citing the province's large geographical area, growing population, and rich resources, which have not translated into proportional development.

Several legislators emphasized broader political inclusion. MPA Mir Zohoor Buledi remarked that increasing assembly seats would help restore public confidence in the political system and integrate more citizens into the national mainstream. Opposition Leader Mir Younis Aziz Zehri pointed out that rep

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QUETTA: Provincial Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran and Senator Dostain Domki meeting with Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Governor urges promotion of mother languages to strengthen national identity, youth potential

Independent Report
QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has highlighted the crucial role of mother languages in preserving cultural identity, advancing knowledge, and fostering long-term national development.

In his message on International Mother Language Day 2026, the governor noted that UNESCO's focus on multilingual education this year, with spe

cial emphasis on empowering youth, is a commendable initiative. He stressed that mother languages form the foundation of a nation's intellectual growth and sustainable progress. Drawing a parallel to a mother's unconditional love, he described native languages as timeless and invaluable assets.

Governor Mandokhail pointed out that both the

Continued on page 2

US Supreme Court strikes down Trump's sweeping global tariffs

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court struck down Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs that he pursued under a law meant for use in national emergencies, handing a stinging defeat to the Republican president in a landmark opinion on Friday with major implications for the global economy.

The justices, in a 6-3 ruling authored by conservative Chief Justice John Roberts, upheld a lower court's decision that Trump claimed had justified his sweeping tariffs.

law exceeded his authority. The justices ruled that the law at issue—the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA—did not grant Trump the power he claimed to impose tariffs.

"Our task today is to decide only whether the power to 'regulate ... importation,' as granted to the IEEPA, embraces the power to impose tariffs. It does not," Roberts wrote in the ruling, quoting the statute's text that Trump claimed had justified his sweeping tariffs.

Defence minister warns KP CM Afridi's position 'under threat'

ISLAMABAD (INP): Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has warned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Sohail Afridi's job "was at risk", saying his recently announced "Release Imran Khan Force" was unconstitutional and illegal.

"The KP chief minister announced the release force to save his job. Except for the federal government, no one has the right to create any force," he told Geo News on Friday.

The defence minister clarified that there had never been any discussion about moving the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) abroad or to Bani Gala, Imran's residence in Islamabad.

"Perhaps, approaches were made regarding facilities," he said, adding, "some try to keep their shop open through such talk".

The remarks from Asif follow CM Afridi's announcement of the force to work towards the release of the former prime minister, imprisoned since August 2023.

The KP CM made the announcement on February 18 after lawmakers from the PTI and the multi-party opposition alliance Tehreek Tahafuz-e-Aiyen Pakistan (TTAP) called off their days-long sit-in at Parliament House in Islamabad.

Addressing a press conference outside the Supreme Court, CM Afridi said that he had been assigned the responsibility of leading a "street movement" by the incarcerated PTI founder.

He alleged that court orders were being "thrown into the dustbin" and claimed that the PTI founding chairman is still being denied access to his personal doctors.



WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the sidelines of the inaugural meeting of Board of Peace.

IMF spox says EFF reforms helped stabilise Pakistan's economy

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that Pakistan's policy efforts under its Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme have "helped stabilise the economy and rebuild confidence" with fiscal performance described as "strong".

Speaking at a weekly press briefing on Thursday, IMF Communications Director Julie Kozack said a staff team is expected to visit Pakistan from February 25 to hold discussions on the third review under the EFF and the second review under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). Kozack noted that Pakistan currently holds a primary fiscal surplus of 1.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in fiscal year 2025, which was "in line with programme targets." Headline inflation has

been "relatively contained," she added, while Pakistan recorded its first current account surplus in 14 years in fiscal year 2025.

She also referred to the recent publication of the IMF's Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Report on Pakistan, which she said "includes proposals for reforms, including simplifying tax policy design, levelling the playing field for public procurement, and improving the asset declaration transparency."

It was further stated that the IMF's review discussions will assess Pakistan's progress under the programme and determine the next steps in disbursements tied to reform benchmarks. The implementation of the Governance and Corruption Diagnostic report and the National Fiscal Pact will top the agenda of the upcoming review talks.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan presiding over the meeting regarding Canal Irrigation System operation and maintenance.

Balochistan security sparks fierce govt-opposition standoff, calls for urgent anti-terrorism reforms

QUETTA (ANN): Tensions escalated in Balochistan as government and opposition lawmakers clashed over the province's security landscape, with both sides trading accusations and calling for urgent policy action.

Government officials asserted that efforts to stabilize Balochistan are underway and highlighted recent successes in disrupting terrorist networks. Provincial Minister Mir Asim Kurd Gello pointed to the January 31 incident as evidence of the effectiveness of current counter-terrorism strategies, noting that militant objectives were foiled through coordinated action by security agencies.

Opposition leaders, however, strongly criticized the federal government's policies, arguing that mis-

management has left Balochistan increasingly insecure. Opposition Leader Mir Younis Aziz Zehri claimed that militants are now able to reach strategic roads in Quetta, turning parts of the provincial capital into what he described as "no-go areas." He warned that without immediate corrective measures, peace in the province will remain fragile.

Members of the National Party, including Khair Jan Baloch, stated that while they are not currently demanding the resignation of the Chief Minister, they may consider a no-confidence motion if security conditions fail to improve.

The opposition emphasized the need for practical action rather than rhetorical claims of success.

Ji's Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman also voiced concern, urging comprehensive anti-terrorism policies and stronger accountability mechanisms. Lawmakers from both sides highlighted that public safety and stability remain central to Balochistan's political discourse.

The standoff underscores a widening political divide over security in Balochistan, as the provincial government defends its counter-terrorism record while the opposition calls for immediate reforms. Analysts suggest the coming weeks could determine whether government initiatives translate into tangible improvements or whether the opposition gains momentum to push for drastic measures in the assembly.

HIV data gaps nursing council concerns and PSDP lapses alarm parliamentary health committee

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Standing Committee on National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, chaired by Dr Mahesh Kumar Malani, raised serious concerns over gaps in HIV reporting, weak regulatory oversight and lack of preparedness on development schemes flagging missing data alleged irregularities in the Pakistan Nursing and Midwifery Council and describing the Ministry's handling of ongoing Public Sector Development Programme schemes as alarming.

While reviewing the HIV situation the committee observed serious deficiencies in the report submitted by the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, noting that several requested details were missing including provincial HIV data from Balochistan.

Members were informed that under the National AIDS Programme an estimated 300 to 500 dollars was spent annually per patient though this was not reflected in the documents shared with the committee.

The committee noted that around 350,000 HIV patients had been reported from Sindh and Punjab indicating an increase of nearly 75 percent.

It was further informed that 20,000 new cases were reported in 2018 and 2019 while 9,700 cases were recorded in the first nine months of 2024.

Members expressed concern over the absence of treatment progress information for patients identified at Nishat Hospital and missing data relating to hundreds of reported cases from Kot Momin in District Sargodha during 2018 and 2019.

It was highlighted that 24,000 patients were registered for HIV treatment in 2019 while the minister clarified that present only 84,000 individuals were under treatment nationwide raising questions about gaps between diagnosis registration and continued care.

The committee stressed that several aspects including causal factors funding details and outcome reporting were inadequately reflected in the Ministry's submission.

Responding to the concerns the minister said the rise in reported cases was largely due to expanded testing capacity with screening centres increased from 24 to 127 leading to higher detection and reporting.

He said several positive steps had been taken during his tenure and should be properly reflected.

Pak to face New Zealand in first crucial Super Eights T20 clash

COLOMBO (INP): Pakistan will take on New Zealand in the 41st match of the Super Eights, Group 2, at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo tomorrow, on February 21, 2026, as the ICC Men's T20 World Cup enters a decisive phase.

According to the schedule, the match will begin at 6:30 pm Pakistan Standard Time (PST). With both sides eyeing a place in the semi-finals, the contest is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping the group standings.

Pakistan will next face England in Pallekele on February 24 before meeting hosts Sri Lanka at the same venue on February 28 in their final Super Eights fixture. If Pakistan qualifies, both the semi-final and final will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Cricketers have slightly favoured New Zealand heading into the clash, giving them a 56 percent chance of victory compared to Pakistan's 44 per cent.

Pakistan (PAK) Squad:
Pakistan will be led by Salman Agha and feature key players including Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Nafay, Babar Azam, Mohammad Nawaz, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saif Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usman Khan, and Usman Tariq.



QUETTA: Balochistan Fencing Association Secretary General Haji Muhammad Qasim, presenting commemorative shield to Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurates a new electric bus depot and charging centre in Islamabad to promote eco-friendly public transport in the federal capital.

Governor hails athletes as national treasure, vows to boost sports in Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has recognized Pakistani athletes as valuable national assets, highlighting the country's global achievements in squash, cricket, hockey, and snooker.

He reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to promoting sports and supporting athletes across Balochistan.

The governor made these remarks while meeting a delegation from the Balochistan Fencing Association, led by Secretary

General Haji Muhammad Qasim, at Governor House Quetta.

Governor Mandokhail emphasized that organizing sporting events and providing financial support to players is central to encouraging youth participation across the province. He highlighted sports as a crucial tool to divert young people from drug abuse and other social challenges.

Acknowledging the talent present in both mainstream and niche disciplines such as fencing and water sports, the

governor noted that Balochistan's youth often face obstacles due to limited facilities and opportunities.

"Our young athletes possess the potential to bring honor to the province and the country at national and international platforms," he said, stressing the importance of sustained support, improved infrastructure, and consistent investment to fully develop their skills. He highlighted sports as a crucial tool to divert young people from drug abuse and other social challenges.

Climate emergency..

Continued from page 1

counter growing climate threats.

Reaffirming the provincial government's resolve, the Chief Minister announced the establishment of Balochistan's first Climate Fund. The initiative is designed to accelerate environmental projects and ensure the practical implementation of measures in areas most affected by climate change.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti stressed that robust policymaking combined with synchronized efforts is essential to shield the province from recurring floods, prolonged droughts, and other environmental calamities. He observed that despite contributing minimally to greenhouse gas emissions, Balochistan ranks among the most impacted provinces in terms of climate consequences, calling for stronger inter-provincial and federal cooperation to address the crisis.

Romina Khurshid Alam reiterated the federal government's determination to support Balochistan in confronting environmental challenges. She commended the provincial administration under the leadership of Chief Minister Bugti for its proactive measures, particularly the integration of women and marginalized communities into the provincial climate change policy framework.

Describing the strategy as progressive and inclusive, she emphasized that building climate resilience must center on protecting vulnerable populations to achieve long-term sustainable development.

The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment from both sides to pursue coordinated initiatives aimed at securing an environmentally resilient and sustainable future for Balochistan.

New media..

Continued from page 1

resentation should account for the province's vast constituencies, many of which are difficult to manage due to size and remoteness.

National Party lawmaker Mir Rehmat Saleh Baloch recalled a similar Senate resolution passed in 2017, asserting that strengthening parliamentary politics is key to resolving Balochistan's enduring issues.

On healthcare concerns, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman raised a call-attention notice over the lack of medicines in government hospitals despite most of the fiscal year having elapsed. Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar explained that medicines had been procured under the 2025-26 budget and distribution to districts could take up to two months. Speaker Achakzai noted improvements compared to the previous year but acknowledged ongoing deficiencies in healthcare delivery highlighted by assembly members.

The session concluded with the Speaker adjourning the assembly until Monday, February 23.

Governor..

Continued from page 1

United Nations Charter and Pakistan's 1973 Constitution guarantee the protection and promotion of mother languages. He called for encouraging scholarly, literary, and intellectual work in native tongues to promote harmony and unity among the country's diverse linguistic communities. He emphasized that International Mother Language Day not only safeguards indigenous languages but also harnesses the creative and intellectual potential of youth. Mother languages, he said, serve as powerful mediums for communication and cultural transmission across generations.

The governor also paid tribute to scholars, writers, and poets who have contributed to preserving native languages.

Pakistan, US..

Continued from page 1

"Met today with Pakistani Prime Minister (Shehbaz Sharif). Appreciate Pakistan's ongoing support of @POTUS's Peace Plan for Gaza and for joining the Board of Peace. In our meeting, we discussed the importance of our strategic relationship on critical minerals development and counterterrorism," Rubio said in a social media post on 'X'.

In response deputy prime minister Ishaq Dar thanked Marco Rubio and said "Pakistan values its longstanding relationship with the United States and appreciates the meaningful discussions we had today on advancing peace, cooperation in fighting against terrorism, and expanding bilateral economic and trade ties. We look forward to further strengthening our strategic partnership in all areas of shared interest".

Pak receives..

Continued from page 1

such outcomes are inevitable when leadership remains honest and prioritizes national interest.

The prime minister maintained a firm stance on the occasion that the land belongs to the Palestinians and that they must be granted their right to self-determination in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. Tarar said while praising PM Shehbaz for his advocacy for Palestinians' rights at the Board of Peace.

The minister said PM Shehbaz Sharif has effectively presented the case of the Palestinian people at every major forum, including the United Nations and the SCO.

He highlighted that the establishment of an independent Palestinian state is indispensable for lasting peace in the region, adding that these points represent the sentiments of every Muslim. The meeting of the Board of Peace concluded with a cordial conversation between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Donald Trump, he said, noting that the body language of both leaders during their interaction reflected mutual trust and understanding.

TENDER NOTICE

Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The Executive Engineer Roads Kuchlak CWPP&H Department Quetta invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Rates

Tender Fee 1000 PKR for each work

S.No	Name of Work/s	E/Cost
1	CONSTRUCTION OF BT ROAD SIDE DRAINS AT KILLI RAGHA SARA GHURGAI DISTRICT QUETTA TSE-25260297283 (E-Bids Only)	59,702,000
2	CONSTRUCTION OF B/T ROAD PEER NANA SAHAB STREET SRA GHURGAI BYPASS DISTRICT QUETTA TSE-25260297263	14,926,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required The bidder must have completed 2 Assignment of similar nature of work Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk. Issuance of tender Documents: Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk. Last Date of bid submission: Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 10 March, 2026 till 11:00 AM through supplier dashboard. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 12:00 PM on EPPS System Address: Office of the Executive Engineer Roads Kuchlak CWPP&H Department Spiny Road Quetta.

Executive Engineer Roads Kuchlak CWPP&H Department Quetta

PRQ No.3887/20-02-2026

TENDER NOTICE

The (Project Director Mekran Medical College Turbat) invites bids from eligible Bidders for following work. Bid Security 2% Tender Fee Rs. 1000/-

S.No	Name of Items	E/Cost
1	DEVELOPMENT OF AUDITORIUM ROAD AND PARKING AREA AT MEKRAN MEDICAL COLLEGE TURBAT TSE-252602975133	10,946,109

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Method of Procurement: Single Stage One Envelope Bidding procedure. Eligibility of Bidders: the bidder must have registered with Income Tax, BRA, and also completed 1 assignment of similar nature work and Turnover of at least PKR 7.662 Million in 3 subsequent previous years. Registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C-6 and above (up to 25 million) in Relevant category and special code is CE10(i) (General Civil Engineering Work) CE01-(i) (Road and Pavement Drainage & Retaining Structure) Bid Security: the bids must accompany bid security in the shape of call deposit and Bank Guarantee of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Issuance of tender documents: from the date of publication of during office hours on working days. Last date of Submission of Bid: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 12th March, 2026 12:00 PM at the office of the Project Director Mekran Medical College Turbat. Date of Tender Opening: The tender will be open on 12th March, 2026 in office of the under signed in presence of bidders or their authorized representatives by the Procurement Committee at 01:00 PM. Address: Office of the Project Director Mekran Medical College Turbat M-8 CPEC Road Turbat. Ph#0852-400612.

Project Director Mekran Medical College Turbat

AB No.882/20-02-2026

CANCELLATION

This is to inform all concerned that the tenders bearing Nos. TSE-252602968063, TSE-252602968113, and TSE-252602968133 under PRQ No. 3636 dated 06-02-2026 stand cancelled.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER-ROAD Communication Works PP&H District Harnai.

PRQ No.3893/20-02-2026

CORRIGENDUM

With reference to PRQ No. 3835/18-02-2026 published in daily newspapers (Quetta and others), wherein the last date for bid submission for the following BSDI Projects/Schemes was notified as 23-02-2026:

1. TSE-252602968983	2. TSE-252602968863
3. TSE-252602969013	4. TSE-252602969073
5. TSE-252602969033	6. TSE-252602969113
7. TSE-252602969103	8. TSE-252602968793
9. TSE-252602969543	10. TSE-252602969593

It is hereby informed that the LAST DATE FOR BID SUBMISSION for the above-mentioned schemes has been extended up to 26-02-2026 at 10:00 AM. The tenders will be opened on the same date at 11:00 AM in the office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Office Pishin, instead of Executive Engineer (Building) CWPP&H Department District Pishin, at the prescribed time and date. All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged as already published under PRQ No. 3646/06-02-2026 and available on the BPPRA website.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER BUILDING Communication Works PP&H District Pishin

PRQ No.3873/20-02-2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The DIRECTOR GENERAL NORTH invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Rates Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB.

S. No	Name of Work/s	Estimated Cost	Tender Fee	Bid Security	TSE No.
1	SOLARIZATION OF GOVERNMENT HIGH-HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS & GCEES (08 IN DISTRICT) SIBI DIVISION	123,479,000	1,500 PKR	2%	252602978673
2	SOLARIZATION OF GOVERNMENT HIGH-HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS & GCEES (08 IN DISTRICT) ZHOB DIVISION	99,543,000	1,500 PKR	2%	252602978713
3	SOLARIZATION OF GOVERNMENT HIGH-HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS & GCEES (08 IN DISTRICT) LORALAI DIVISION	67,714,000	1,500 PKR	2%	252602978763

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: The criteria of basic eligibility given in the Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk Issuance of tender Documents: Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk Last Date of bid submission: Bid can only be submitted latest by 9th March, 2026 till 10:30 AM Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 11:30 AM Address: House #1-A, Opposite Night Star Complex Samungli Road Quetta Phone no: 0812442007. Email: ishtaqpr@gmail.com

DIRECTOR GENERAL (NORTH) ENERGY DEPARTMENT.

PRQ No.3881/20-02-2026

Naqvi inaugurates new electric bus depot, charging centre in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has inaugurated a new electric bus depot and charging centre in Islamabad to promote eco-friendly public transport in the federal capital.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, he said around 125,000 citizens of Islamabad are currently benefiting from the electric bus service on daily basis. He added that a target has been set to increase the number of passengers to 250,000 per day. The Minister emphasized that special consideration has been given to routes for male and female students. He also announced the extension of the electric bus service to Rawat.

He said the electric bus



QUETTA: Parliamentary Secretary Hadia Nawaz Baloch talking to Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti during Balochistan Assembly session.

NA body expresses concern on hockey team issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Sub-Committee of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) has taken notice of the issues faced by the national hockey team saying it will seek a detailed briefing on the matter.

Participants expressed deep concern over the current state of hockey in the country. Meherun Razaq Bhutto said what had happened to the national hockey team was unfortunate and that the committee would review who was actually responsible for the incompetence. "Our hearts beat for hockey just as they do for cricket. We will determine who is responsible for ruining our sports," she remarked.

rektor General of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), and other committee members.

The sub-committee meeting, held here at Parliament House under the convenship of Meherun Razaq Bhutto on Friday, was attended by Pakistan Hockey Federation's Ad-hoc President and Federal Secretary Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Mohyuddin Wani, the Di-

TENDER NOTICE

TSE-252602978533 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB.

The Executive Engineer PHE Division Surab invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Rates

Tender Fee 650 PKR Bid Security 2%

S.No	Name of Work/s	E/Cost
1	Drilling and Development of Tube well for Killi Samiullah District Surab	4,125,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required The bidder must have completed 1 Assignment of similar nature of work Turn over of at least 2,887,500 PKR Amount in 1 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 650 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 10 March, 2026 during office hours on working days Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 10 March, 2026 till 11:00 AM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 12:00 PM Address: Near DC office Surab Phone no: 0812446852 Email: arshedbuzdar@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PHE DIVISION SURAB

PRQ No.3875/20-02-2026

TENDER NOTICE

The Directorate General of Social Welfare & Special Education Balochistan invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. TSE-252602979411 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB.

Tender Fee 1,000 PKR

S.No	Class of Object	Bid Security
1	Furniture & Fixtures (Total Item(s) Count: 10)	2%

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 3 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 2,000,000 in Previous 1 Years Turn over of at least 2,100,000 PKR in 1 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List Sales Tax Certificate The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan JV is not permissible Submission of the required Bid Security in case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be declared as in-eligible and non-responsive Submission of the required Bidding document Fee Brochures / technical data sheet (having complete technical specifications of the offered goods/items The bidder must provide last two years audit reports duly audited by CA registered Auditors Firm Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 1,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 09 March, 2026 during office hours on working days Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 09 March, 2026 till 10:00 AM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 11:00 AM Address: Directorate General of Social Welfare & Special Education Brewery Road, Quetta Phone no: 0819213170 Email: dg.swdgn@gmail.com

Deputy Director Directorate General Social Welfare Balochistan Quetta

PRQ No.3891/20-02-2026

Federal Ombudsman Brohi highlights media's role in boosting public awareness

QUETTA (APP): The Regional Head of the Federal Ombudsman in Balochistan, Haji Ghulam Sarwar Brohi, has reiterated that the Ombudsman provides an effective and reliable platform for addressing complaints against government departments. He commended the media's efforts in raising public awareness about this avenue for redress.

Speaking to the Bureau Chief of APP, Sarwar Brohi emphasized the pivotal role of the media in highlighting public concerns and acting as a bridge between citizens and state institutions. He noted that

the media serves as the voice of the people, particularly the marginalized and underprivileged, ensuring their issues reach the highest authorities in a timely and effective manner.

Haji Ghulam Sarwar Brohi praised the media's consistent role in disseminating the Ombudsman's message across the country, including remote areas of Balochistan. He stressed that the fundamental purpose of journalism is to highlight public issues and convey them promptly to relevant authorities, adding that responsible journalism is essential for transparency and good governance.

Reflecting on his tenure, Ghulam Sarwar Brohi shared that when he assumed charge of the Ombudsman's Balochistan office, the number of complaints was limited. However, due to increased public awareness, positive media engagement, and improved institutional performance, the office now receives thousands of complaints, which are processed on a priority basis.

He expressed satisfaction that the institution is providing timely and free-of-cost justice, further strengthening public trust in the ombudsman system.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti shaking hand with Parliamentary Secretary Nawabzada Zareen Khan Magsi.

PB-36 Quetta re-election set: Authorities finalize security and polling arrangements

Independent Report
QUETTA: Officials have finalized key arrangements for the upcoming re-election of the Provincial Assembly seat PB-36 Quetta, following a crucial meeting chaired by Returning Officer Shah Nawaz Baloch. The session addressed preparations across the constituency's seven polling stations.

The meeting was attended by the District Election Commissioner Quetta, Assistant Commissioner Quetta, and other senior officials, who reviewed essential aspects including the deployment of polling personnel, security measures,

and the smooth management of the re-election process. Authorities underscored the necessity of maintaining a transparent and fair electoral process, with strict protocols to safeguard both voters and election staff. Final decisions on logistical arrangements and other operational details were confirmed during the discussion.

The district administration is coordinating closely with law enforcement agencies to guarantee that the re-election proceeds without interruption, ensuring a secure and orderly environment for all voters.



JAFFARABAD: Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan presides over the meeting regarding anti-polio campaign.

Ramadan price crackdown in Quetta leads to 113 arrests, officials warn of zero tolerance

QUETTA (ANN): The district administration has intensified its crackdown on price gouging and illegal profiteering during Ramadan, resulting in the arrest of 113 individuals and the imposition of fines on several shopkeepers.

Deputy Commissioner Quetta, Mehrullah Badini, confirmed that strict enforcement measures have been applied across multiple sub-divisions. In the City sub-division, 41 butchers and tandoor owners were apprehended, while the Saddar sub-division saw 32 arrests involving butchers and bakers. The Kuchlak sub-division reported 22 detentions, and 18 individuals were taken into custody in the Saryab sub-division.

"The district administration is committed to protecting the public during Ramadan and will continue to take decisive action to maintain controlled pricing," said Deputy Commissioner Badini.

The campaign is part of ongoing efforts to prevent illegal profiteering, ensure essential goods remain affordable, and safeguard citizens from unfair market practices throughout the holy month. Violators are being prosecuted, with cases filed and many sent to jail to reinforce accountability.

In an official statement, the administration advised residents to verify prices while shopping and report any shop failing to display the official rates to the District Administration's complaint cell. Citizens can lodge complaints via the dedicated numbers: 0844210820 and 03367970773. This initiative is part of the district's continued drive to prevent illegal profiteering and ensure that essential goods remain accessible at regulated and fair prices. The administration stressed that all violators will be prosecuted under the law to safeguard consumers and curb price manipulation.



QUETTA: Resident of Eastern Bypass Nizamuddin addresses media at Quetta Press Club.

BRA demands prompt registration of real estate service providers

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Balochistan Revenue Authority (BRA) has directed all real estate agents, property dealers, and related service providers to complete their registration without delay. The move enforces the Balochistan Sales Tax on Services (BSTS) Act 2015, which imposes a 5% sales tax on services linked to property transactions, including buying, selling, and renting.

BRA emphasized that all service providers must file their tax returns for each tax period promptly to avoid penalties. With the deadline approaching, non-compliance and tax submission requirements may result in fines and legal action under the BSTS Act.

The authority urged businesses and individuals to strictly follow tax regulations to prevent legal or financial repercussions. Timely registration and adherence to tax rules are not only mandatory but also support the orderly functioning of the province's real estate sector.



QUETTA: A delegation of Nasirabad led by Divisional President PML-N Naseerabad Muhammad Hussain Gola meeting with Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Teams formed to control cheating in examination centers of Balochistan: Younis Lehri

QUETTA (APP): Personal Secretary of the Controller Balochistan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BBISE), Muhammad Younis Lehri on Friday said that special teams have been formed to prevent cheating in the examination centers and provide a conducive environment to the students.

He said this while talking to Bureau Chief Quetta of Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) Nazir Muhammad called on him at his office.

Detailed discussions were held regarding the arrangements, transparency and discipline of the ongoing matriculation examinations during the meeting.

In the meeting, Muhammad Younis Lehri said that comprehensive steps have been taken by the Balochistan Board to ensure the peaceful, transparent and orderly conduct of the ongoing matriculation examinations.

He said that special teams have been formed to prevent cheating in the examination centers and provide a conducive environment to the students. Effectively monitor the examination process so that the examination system can be run completely in accordance with the principles of merit and transparency, he said.

He further said that as per the instructions of the Controller Balochistan Board, all the staff is performing their responsibilities in an efficient manner and the convenience, security and timely examination process of the students are being ensured during the examinations.

He said that the board is trying to adopt a modern and systematic method in conducting examinations so that students would not face any kind of difficulty. On this occasion, Bureau Chief Nazir Muhammad appreciated the steps taken by the Balochistan Board for the transparent conduct of examinations.

He said that the organized conduct of examinations is of great importance in promoting a positive and quality educational environment. He said that the media would continue to play its effective role in providing accurate information to the public in a timely manner and highlighting the positive performance of the education sector.



QUETTA: Muslims offering 1st Friday prayer of holy month of Ramadan in provincial capital.

District Complex Usta Muhammad project at cost over one billion to be completed till 2027: Jamali

QUETTA (APP): Xen Buildings Muhammad Yasin Jamali on Friday said that under-construction District Complex Usta Muhammad project at a cost of more than 1.3 billion rupees would be completed till 2027. He said that this is a big and an important development project for the Usta Muhammad district. He said this while giving a detailed briefing regarding the under-construction District Complex Usta Muhammad. The Xen said that the work on the project is progressing at a fast pace and the construction activities are being monitored regularly so that there is no compromise on the quality.

He said that for this purpose, the concerned officers and technical staff are inspecting the work on a daily basis.

He further said that with the completion of the district complex, district officers would have offices at one place, which could not only facilitate the execution of government affairs but also the public would have the facility of solving their problems under one roof instead of going around different departments.

Xen Buildings said that the pace of work on the construction of the District Complex Usta Muhammad block has been further accelerated and it is expected to be completed by the end of March or the first week of April and the Deputy Commissioner Office would be shifted to the new building, while construction work on other parts of the complex would be continued. He said that this project is an important step towards better governance and provision of public facilities in the province as per the vision of Mir Sarfraz Khan Bugti, Chief Minister of Balochistan.

He said that the provincial government is taking special interest in the timely and quality completion of this important project. Finally, he thanked Deputy Commissioner Usta Muhammad Muhammad Ramzan Palal for his cooperation and guidance and expressed his determination that the project would be completed within the stipulated time.



NASEERABAD: Deputy Commissioner Captain (ret) Zulfiqar Ali Karar presides over the District Health Committee meeting.

Naseerabad DC orders tough action to protect teachers and revitalize education system

Independent Report
NASEERABAD: Deputy Commissioner Captain @ Zulfiqar Ali Karar underscored the government's dedication to strengthening education, warning that anyone obstructing newly appointed teachers or harassing female educators will face strict legal consequences.

His remarks came during a pivotal meeting of the Education Group, chaired by the Deputy Commissioner and attended by Assistant Commissioner Dera Murad Jamali, District Education Officer Abdul Hafeez Khoso, District Health Officer Dr. Ayaz Hussain Jamali, representatives from the Treasury Office, UNICEF officials, and members of the Teachers' Union.

Abdul Hafeez Khoso provided a comprehensive update on ongoing teaching activities, teacher availability, the status of closed schools, and other administrative matters impacting the district's education system. Captain @ Zulfiqar Ali Karar directed authorities to accelerate efforts to reopen closed schools and deploy teachers based on merit, prioritizing candidates from the respective Union Councils to ensure local representation and strengthen community engagement in education. He stressed the need for rigorous monitoring to guarantee teacher attendance in all schools.

Zero tolerance for lapses in healthcare DC Naseerabad orders crackdown on absenteeism and irregularities

Independent Report
NASEERABAD: Deputy Commissioner Naseerabad, Captain @ Zulfiqar Ali Karar, has declared that safeguarding public health and ensuring the availability of essential medical services remain at the forefront of the government's agenda, directing all concerned departments to perform their duties with integrity and commitment.

He made these remarks while presiding over a meeting of the District Health Committee. The session was attended by District Health Officer Dr. Ayaz Hussain Jamali, Medical Superintendent Civil Hospital Dr. Habib Pandrani, District Accounts Office representative Amjad Behrani, PPHI District Support Manager Tariq Shahbaz Katohar, Drug Inspector Dr. Ejaz Ali, and PS to Deputy Commissioner Manzoor Shirazi.

Officials briefed the meeting in detail on the status of healthcare delivery across the district, highlighting operational challenges, the performance of various health facilities, and measures taken against doctors and staff found absent from duty.

Addressing participants, the Deputy Commissioner stressed that the provision of efficient and timely medical treatment is a shared obligation of the government, medical practitioners, and paramedical personnel. He made it clear that any form of negligence or failure to fulfill assigned responsibilities would not be tolerated.



QUETTA: Inspector General Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir lays a floral wreath at martyred memorial during a ceremony.

DC Jaffarabad calls for intensified coordination to achieve polio-free district

Independent Report
JAFFARABAD: Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan has reaffirmed the government's dedication to eradicating polio, stressing the critical need for strengthened collaboration among all relevant institutions. His remarks came during a key review meeting assessing the district's ongoing anti-polio campaign.

The session, chaired by Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan, brought together District Health Officer Dr. Abdul Manan Lakhti, DSM Faizal Iqbal Khoso, polio program staff, health officials, and representatives from field and departmental teams.

Officials reviewed the outcomes of the recent campaign, examining reports from various union councils. The briefing highlighted that teams successfully visited households and administered polio drops, achieving satisfactory coverage across the district.

Despite these achievements, the meeting identified minor lapses and administrative gaps in certain areas, which were flagged for corrective measures to ensure no child is left unvaccinated in future campaigns. Deputy Commissioner Khalid Khan directed that microplanning at the field level be enhanced, with particular focus on high-risk zones. He emphasized meticulous tracking of unvaccinated children to secure full coverage and ensure the effectiveness of each campaign.

Acknowledging the overall success, he warned that even minor shortcomings must be addressed proactively, noting their importance in achieving long-term eradication goals.

The meeting also concluded with plans to launch a more robust awareness drive ahead of the next polio campaign, aimed at boosting community engagement and cooperation at the grassroots level.



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini talking to media person about Ramadan Sasta Bazaar.

Pishin admin cracks down on hoarding, arrests 13 during Ramadan price-control drive

Independent Report
PISHIN: In a major initiative to protect consumers during Ramadan, the Pishin district administration has conducted an extensive price control and anti-hoarding operation across the district, resulting in the arrest of 13 shopkeepers and the sealing of an equal number of shops.

The operation, supervised by the Deputy Commissioner, took place simultaneously in all tehsils — Pishin, Barshore, Karizat, and Humzai. Price control magistrates and relevant officials carried out inspections of markets, shops, and warehouses to ensure compliance with government-notified rates.

According to official records, 336 raids were carried out during the campaign. Fines totaling Rs38,000 were imposed on violators, and 109 shopkeepers received warning notices for failing to display official price lists. The Deputy Commissioner reaffirmed the administration's commitment to strict enforcement of fixed rates, emphasizing a zero-tolerance approach toward hoarding and profiteering. He stressed that safeguarding citizens from exploitation and ensuring affordable access to essential goods during Ramadan remains a top priority. Residents were also urged to report any violations of approved price lists so that immediate corrective measures could be taken.



QUETTA: Needy people gather outside DC Office in Quetta for ration during Ramadan-ul-Mubarak.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Saturday February 21, 2026

Difficult neighbour

As Pakistan contends with frequent acts of terrorism — many traced to the banned TTP based in Afghanistan — it is understandable that officials here are frustrated with the country's western neighbour. Talking to foreign media outlets recently, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that Pakistan will again strike targets inside Afghanistan if terrorism emanating from that country continues. He has suggested that India and the Afghan Taliban are working in cahoots, waging a 'proxy war' against Pakistan.

According to the minister, the present circumstances are the result of "what we did" in Afghanistan during the 1980s and post-9/11, a reference to the Afghan jihad and the foreign invasion of Afghanistan after the Sept 11 attacks. He has made such remarks several times in the past.

While such reactions from officialdom may be expected due to the high number of terrorist attacks, and Kabul's frustrating lack of action against violent groups based on Afghan soil, military action of the sort the defence minister is advocating should be absolutely the last resort. In particular, making such comments publicly is ill-advised, despite the obstinance of the other side, and will only serve to further vitiate the atmosphere in the region.

That Taliban-ruled Afghanistan has become a hotbed — once again — of global terrorist outfits is beyond dispute. Several UN assessments have confirmed this, with the last Security Council report saying that the TTP may develop into an "extra-regional threat". The same report points out that no foreign state actually believes the Taliban when they claim they are not harbouring terrorists.

Pakistan is not alone in blaming Kabul for not taking action against violent terrorists; Tajikistan has expressed similar complaints. However, while the problem is clear, the solution is not that straightforward. Pakistan and Afghanistan traded fire last year, and while that exchange may have brought down levels of infiltration, the TTP remain ensconced in Afghanistan.

While Pakistan should defend itself resolutely and ensure that no armed actors are able to violate its territory, an active military campaign against Kabul may not deliver favourable results. In fact, it may further complicate matters. Therefore, the best option for Pakistan is to engage with friendly states, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkiye, which also have relations with the Taliban, to, at the very least, get a commitment from Kabul to stop cross-border terrorism.

Afghanistan also desires to be integrated into regional trade networks, and here Pakistan can work with China, Russia and the Central Asian states to convince Kabul that regional commerce will only be possible if it stops 'exporting' armed violence to its neighbours. As for the apparent India-Taliban nexus, Pakistan should raise the issue from global platforms so that New Delhi's machinations are known to the world.

Zafar Mirza

The eye condition of the former, imprisoned prime minister Imran Khan has become the eye of the storm in national politics. This hot news has flooded all media channels and social media platforms. Parliament was cordoned off and parliamentarians confined for three days in the parliament building. Roads were blocked in the capital and there was rioting at various points between Islamabad and Peshawar. Opposition parties staged a dharna, giving a list of conditions for ending it. Despite sore ties these days, former cricket captains from across the border expressed sympathy for Pakistan's former skipper. The government first kept its eyes shut to the problem and their spin doctors called it a storm in a teacup. The opposition was up in arms.

The combined effect of the Supreme Court and the report of the amicus curiae, the TTAP dharna and the media, eventually led to the establishment of a medical board fol-

lowed by the visit of a delegation of specialist public and private doctors. The doctors' objective assessment has provided some relief that the damage to the eye is not as extensive as first reported and hopefully will improve with treatment. Reportedly, a large number of tests are also being done to look into any systemic underlying cause for venous occlusion. So, things seem to be on track where tackling the medical problem is concerned.

But the underlying systemic problem is not just medical; it is also political. The eye affliction is underpinned by a widespread political infection yet to be addressed. It is affecting every sphere of life in Pakistan. As a result, people are becoming poorer, hapless and hopeless. Foreign direct investment is nowhere to be seen. Even local businesses are shutting down because of the very high cost of doing business. Unemployment is high and young professionals are leaving the country in droves.

The continued political instability, accen-

Eyes wide shut

uated and normalised by the underlying extractive political and economic institutions, is suffocating. When children continue to fall in gutters and die because the government concerned can't cover the manholes and local government elections are not held, despite a constitutional responsibility to do so, primarily because political juntas have to share political and financial resources with district governments, then it is a case of elite capture.

Let me try to return to the eye issue as I am pushing myself to confine this column to the eye ailment which I am finding very difficult. Let me try again.

First, the principle. The healthcare of any prisoner in government custody is the government's responsibility. This is the established law and practice globally. Even the healthcare of prisoners of war is the responsibility of the captors. Health in Prisons: a WHO guide to the essentials in prison health states that, first and foremost, all those working in the prison

system must understand that imprisonment affects human health and that inmates possess the right to the highest attainable standards of health.

Another very important principle is that of the equivalence of care. This means that "prisoners must enjoy the same standards of healthcare available in the community". This principle is part of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. These were adopted in 1955 and named in honour of Nelson Mandela and his 27 years in prison; they are commonly known as the Nelson Mandela Rules.

However trivial or abstract we consider the global standards, they still remain important as a guide for developing national laws and conducting our affairs.

And now a word about the eye ailment CRVO — central retinal vein occlusion — if this is still the diagnosis. In medicine, anything involving the retina is serious. In the simplest terms, the retina is a very

sensitive layer of tissue, made up of specialised cells called rods (for night and peripheral vision) and cones (for colour and sharp central vision) that forms the back wall of the eye. It detects light and converts it into neuronal signals which travel through the optic nerve to the brain where these electrical signals are interpreted as images. If the retinas of both eyes are not functioning then the person cannot see and goes blind.

Arteries carry blood laden with oxygen and nutrients to the tissues and the veins bring the blood back after unloading these. If the central vein of the retina gets blocked, the blood cannot drain properly from the retina. As a result, back pressure builds up and blood and fluid start leaking into the retina.

It leads to swelling in the macula (the central vision area) and the vision becomes blurred. If not attended to, the damage can be irreversible but if there is timely assessment and treatment the damage can be minimised and the vision restored.

After proper examination by a group of specialist ophthalmologists, it has been determined, thankfully, that the extent of damage was not that large and that hopefully things will normalise.

But whether they will normalise politically anytime soon is the billion-dollar question. I remember a professor from my medical student days who would repeatedly emphasise in his lectures that 'treatment is the treatment of cause'. If we continue to treat the symptoms, they may provide temporary relief but the symptoms will keep returning and most of the time with a higher degree of intensity and vengeance, as the underlying disease keeps festering.

Today, it is an inflamed eye, tomorrow it will be something else. We'll continue to circle in a downward spiral unless all powerful stakeholders start seeing beyond their noses, assess the turmoil we are in and intervene appropriately, effectively and sustainably, before it is too late.

Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

Reports on the attendance of parliamentarians during sessions almost invariably evoke much interest among citizens. Although the average attendance in the National Assembly has been hovering around 60 per cent for the last many years and the citizenry seems to have made its peace with that, there are statistics which sometimes shock the people. For example, a Fafen report on parliamentarians' attendance during the 23rd National Assembly session held from Jan 12 to Jan 22 this year indicates that 47 or 14pc members remained absent throughout the session and didn't attend even a single sitting; 276 or 83pc of the total 332 members skipped at least one session. Similar statistics about the 22nd session indicate that about 70pc of the absent members didn't seek prior leave from the House.

The system of taking attendance is such that a person marked present might not have been there throughout the sitting and his/her presence for even a fraction of the sitting may be marked as present. Given the fact that the average duration of a sitting ranges from two to three hours (it was two hours during the first year of the present National Assembly), a member attending the sitting may have been present only for a few minutes.

The absence of members from a sitting significantly impacts parliamentary proceedings. Our parliamentary system requires the presence of at least 25pc of the total members which constitutes the quorum. The Assembly proceedings are stopped after a member points out a lack of quorum and the subsequent head count confirms that the minimum required members are not present. A Pildat report indicates that during the past (15th) National Assembly, lack of quorum was pointed out in 105 (23pc) of sittings, and subsequently, 72 or 16pc of the sittings had to be adjourned on this basis. The abrupt termination of a day's proceedings impacts the productivity of the Assembly as the

day's agenda (order of the day) is left incomplete. During the five years of the 15th National Assembly, on average, less than 50pc (49.47pc to be exact) of the agenda items could be taken up by the Assembly.

Ministers' absence also impacts the quality of proceedings and some of the agenda items have to be deferred because the relevant minister is not present. During the 23rd session of the current Assembly, for example, 29 federal ministers were supposed to answer members' questions but a majority (19) of them did not show up on the day allocated for answering questions relating to their ministries. In most cases, the absence of the minister concerned deprives members of the opportunity to ask supplementary questions. Similarly, adjournment motions, privilege motions and call-attention notices also require the presence of the minister concerned. The Speaker has repeatedly expressed displeasure at the frequent absence of ministers. Sometimes, ministers of state and parliamentary secre-

aries do not show up either to fill in for the minister concerned.

Ministers generally take their cue from the prime minister and they are more likely to show up in the House if the PM is particularly about his presence. During the life of the 15th Assembly, the attendance of the PM was a mere 13pc (11pc for Imran Khan and 17pc for Shehbaz Sharif).

The attendance becomes more known through the media in the case of plenary sittings but the status of attendance is no different in the case of parliamentary committees. Many meetings are adjourned by the chair because the minister concerned and senior officials of the ministry do not show up at the meeting, leading to a wastage of financial resources spent on convening the meetings.

However, one may add that Pakistan's parliament is not the only one which faces issues of low attendance. Many parliaments face a similar situation and a number of parliaments have waived the condition of the presence of a minimum per-

centage of members for the validity of the proceedings. For example, the UK parliament and US Congress do not have a quorum requirement. The proceedings of the legislatures continue in these countries even if a single member is present in the House. In the case of the UK parliament, many parliamentary committees hold their meetings concurrently with the plenary. The proceedings of the plenary are watched by the members on CCTV while sitting in their offices or in meeting rooms. Members' presence is required when a motion or a bill has to be voted on. Bells are rung at that time and members available within parliamentary precincts rush to the chamber to vote.

The absence of a member from the precincts during the time of the plenary is, however, rare and frowned upon.

A major reason for our legislators to be casual about their presence during the Assembly sittings has a lot to do with the preferences of a majority of their voters. Most voters are not so keen about

their legislators' performance in the Assembly. A member who works very hard on his parliamentary speeches and, for example, scrutiny of the annual budget, is seldom appreciated by the constituents. People want their elected representatives to attend to their personal issues, which need an influential legislator's support for resolution due to poor governance. Finding jobs for constituents and their family members is one of the top expectations from legislators. Interceding with the local administration and police on behalf of the constituents to sort out their day-to-day problems is also among the informal responsibilities of legislators. Attending the weddings and funerals of voters' extended families, too, is a strong preference of constituents. These informal chores are likely to be of greater help to a legislator in his re-election than making a speech in the House.

The weak attendance of legislators is, therefore, not because of their lethargy. Instead, it is a reflection of the ground realities of our own governance and culture.

Parliamentarians' attendance

Cost of indifference

Naeem Sadiq

A state derives its legitimacy from its ability to safeguard its people from preventable harm — whether arising from disease, unsafe environments, violence or systemic neglect. In 'Shehla Zia vs Wapda' (1994), the Supreme Court of Pakistan declared that the right to life includes the right to a healthy and safe environment, and preventive measures should be taken to ensure the safety and security of citizens. If that is the standard of care and precaution mandated by law, why is the state indifferent to nearly 400,000 citizens who suffer dog-bites each year, resulting in around 1,000 preventable deaths?

Trapped in a cycle of post-accident reactive responses, we push for dog-bite care units, dog-bite emergency departments, dog-bite vaccines and dog-bite training programmes. While all these measures are important, we fail to address the root cause — hundreds of uncontrolled stray dogs, many infected with rabies, that roam our streets and towns, scavenging through scattered garbage and overflowing kachra kundis. Coupled with nearly 18,000 newborns arriving each day, with many destined to inhabit the same streets rather than sit in classrooms, this becomes a grim combination of painful bites and preventable deaths.

Our leaders spend billions on self-publicity, luxury Fortuners and embarrassingly extended foreign junkets, but do not have the money or mind to protect the lives of ordinary citizens. All that is needed is a fleet of vans in every town, each staffed by two trained workers to humanely capture and

transport stray dogs to purpose-built rehabilitation facilities. A long metal or fiberglass pole with a sliding cable loop at the end is the simplest method to safely guide (trap) a dog into a transport vehicle. Once admitted to a rehabilitation facility, the remaining stages — commonly called TNVR (trap, neuter, vaccinate, and tag) — can be carried out in an organised manner. Over time, this approach would eliminate the population of street dogs, prevent further breeding and enable the remaining dogs to age out without replacement.

A reactive firefighting approach has also landed Pakistan in the category of the last two countries where polio continues to persist. Most regions of the world were certified polio-free decades ago; the remaining persistent reservoirs of wild polio now exist only in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite receiving more than \$3 billion in donor support, Pakistan, with 31 polio cases reported in 2025, remains far from becoming a polio-free country. This persists despite successive nationwide campaigns delivering repeated doses of the oral polio vaccine to children — campaigns that have cost the lives of more than 150 dedicated polio workers. Harsh as it may sound, until we confront the root causes, polio will continue to cripple our children and shame our collective conscience.

The continued recurrence of polio cases ought to be of no surprise in a country that discharges nearly 99 per cent of its raw sewage into open drains, ponds, rivers, lakes and the sea. As a result, the faecal-oral transmission cycle, where germs from human or animal faeces enter another person's mouth (largely by drinking contaminated water), continues unabated. Thus, as long as untreated sewage flows freely and clean drinking water is out of reach for most citizens, escaping the clutches of polio will remain an unrealistic and distant aspiration.

Had even half the funds spent on polio drops been directed towards sewage treatment and universal access to clean drinking water, Pakistan might have escaped the dubious distinction of remaining one of the last two polio-endemic countries. There are simple, indigenous and low-cost solutions such as sewage treatment in 'constructed wetlands', that could be developed across the country in a matter of weeks and without foreign funding. Why must we continue to leave our poorest and most vulnerable children and adults exposed to life-threatening dangers such as dog-bites, rabies, and polio while the rest of us live in comfort and safety?

Pakistan cannot look forward to becoming a progressive, citizen-friendly state without eliminating the totally preventable deaths and diseases caused by faeces-laden water and rabies-infected dogs. These might appear to be dull and mundane issues, but they require far greater dexterity and determination as compared to distributing 1,000 pink scooters, 10,000 laptops and one million ration bags (at taxpayers' expense). Were our leaders to spend more time inside the country than abroad, they might finally be able to reflect on the underlying causes of these unspeakable tragedies and implement corrective actions to prevent their recurrence.

Bad taxes are narrow-based, high-rate and distortional. They treat the compliant as captive. They layer surcharge upon surcharge. They tax transactions instead of income. They complicate compliance and increase the cost of being documented. The result is a system that discourages scale and rewards informality.

Ehsan Malik

Pakistan's tax debate is framed almost entirely around one question: how much the state can collect, with tax-to-GDP ratio as an objective rather than an outcome of a sound tax regime. That is understandable in a fiscally stressed economy, but revenue is only half the story. A tax system also shapes incentives — to invest or not, to formalise or stay undocumented, to build factories or shift capital abroad. When taxation pursues revenue without regard to growth, investment and employment, the result is fewer jobs, less documentation and a shrinking base. Even when collections improve, the structure remains narrow and uneven. The issue is not only how much we tax, but how we tax. It helps to distinguish between good, bad and ugly taxes.

Good taxes are broad-based, predictable and neutral. They raise revenue at moderate rates across a wide base, making compliance rational and evasion less attractive. Nor do they change abruptly year after year. Most importantly, good taxes expand the base over time by rewarding formality.

Bad taxes are narrow-based, high-rate and distortional. They treat the compliant as captive. They layer surcharge upon surcharge. They tax transactions instead of income. They complicate compliance and increase the cost of being documented. The result is a system that discourages scale and rewards informality.

Then there are ugly taxes — punitive, confidence-destroying and anti-investment. Four recent examples illustrate the point.

Tax truths

The first is taxation of salaried individuals. This has become one of the most distortional features of the fiscal regime. Income tax slabs begin at relatively modest income thresholds — lower in real terms than many regional peers, including our eastern neighbour — and climb steeply to marginal rates when surcharges are applied — to 38 per cent. For non-salaried individuals, the top rate is 49pc. Over time, personal taxation has become one of the largest and most predictable sources of direct tax revenue, not because it reflects rising prosperity, but because it is the easiest segment to tax at source. The consequence is severe: highly skilled individuals face tax rates comparable to advanced economies but without comparable public services, accelerating brain drain and incentivising a shift of talent into lightly documented or informal activities.

The second is the super tax. Originally conceived as a temporary solidarity levy, it has become a recurring feature. Applied as an additional charge on top of corporate income tax, it raises the effective tax burden precisely on firms that generate profits large enough to reinvest. By these add-on levies, the state signals that scale and success will attract penalties. Investment thrives on stability; recurring 'temporary' taxes erode stability permanently.

The third is capital value tax. It is an annual levy on the value of foreign assets held by tax residents, declared in some cases after paying a one-time tax under the 2018 Foreign Assets (Declaration and Repatriation) Act. The implicit understanding was

that the 2018 levy would regularise assets — that has been undermined. Predictably, the response has been capital flight, often accompanied by relocation of individuals who make investment decisions.

The fourth is taxation under Section 7E. This taxes deemed income from immovable property based on notional valuation rather than realised cash flow. Taxing imputed income creates liquidity stress for asset-rich but cash-poor households and reinforces incentives to under-declare asset values.

Overlaying these is a high 18pc GST. In practice, where large parts of the retail and wholesale chain remain undocumented, high GST penalises the formal sector. When informal competitors evade it, the compliant lose market share. Low-income households that spend a higher share of income on consumption, bear the burden.

The consequence of this mix is visible. Investment remains subdued. Documentation stalls. Capital seeks safety abroad. And the tax base does not expand meaningfully because the system itself disincentivises entry. Pakistan does not need fewer taxes; it needs better taxes. Broadening the base, lowering marginal distortions, honouring past commitments and prioritising predictability would raise more sustainable revenue. A country seeking growth, exports and employment cannot tax its way to prosperity by punishing the very activities it wishes to promote. If taxation undermines confidence, the economy will respond by shrinking into the shadows — and the state will collect less, not more.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi being briefed about NHA Projects and departmental affairs at Governor House.

Governor KP assures support for promotion of tourism, investment

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday assured full cooperation for the promotion of tourism and attracting investment in the province, saying that KP possesses immense potential in natural beauty, historical heritage and cultural diversity.

He expressed these views during meeting with Managing Director Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), Aftab ur Rehman, at the Governor House.

During the meeting, the Governor was given a detailed briefing on the objectives and performance of PTDC, including its tourism vision, promotion and publicity programmes across the country.

He was also informed about the launch of tourism and hospitality services

under the "Salam Pakistan" brand, as well as upcoming tourism symposiums, conferences, promotional activities, tourism investment conferences and expos, ASEAN-Pakistan Tourism Business Forum, Buddhist tourism conference and National Tourism Awards 2025.

The briefing further highlighted the National Tour Guides Programme for Chitral, Kalash and Naran, along with industrial-level training initiatives in hotel management and other tourism-related sectors aimed at enhancing youth capacity. Promotional winter sports events were also discussed.

The Governor was informed that 19 PTDC motels have been handed over to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi said that the province offers vast

CM Maryam stresses collective efforts to ensure social justice

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that all stakeholders must work together to ensure social justice in society. In her message on World Day of Social Justice, she said that the Pakistan Muslim League-N government firmly believed in principles of social justice, adding that ensuring justice and equality remained among its top priorities.

She said Islam strongly advocated social justice, equality and peaceful coexistence, and highlighted that the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provided a timeless message of fairness and compassion for humanity. The CM said societies lacking social justice lagged behind in the race for progress, adding that justice and equality formed the foundation of any civilised society. She noted that the widening economic gap between rich and poor is giving rise to social challenges, and said initiatives such as the Minority Card and Hummat Card programmes reflected tangible progress towards achieving the goal of social justice.

LHC issues contempt notice to Punjab University VC on tree cutting issue

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court has issued contempt of court notice to Vice Chancellor of Punjab University on the issue of tree cutting.

During the proceedings on Friday, the court was dissatisfied with the response of the Vice Chancellor of Punjab University Dr Muhammad Ali. The court also extended the stay order on Sheranwala and Taxali Gate projects until the next hearing. The court extended the stay order for not making a tree transplant policy.

Justice Shahid Karim heard the case regarding smog prevention. Punjab University Law Officer Dr. Ali Nawaz and Legal Advisor Shalazad Shaikat and others appeared.

Member of Environmental Commission Syed Kamal Haider presented a report regarding the court orders. He told the court that a meeting was held under the chairmanship of the Environmental Commission on the transport policy. Member of Environmental Commission submitted that there are some suggestions from the WWF and the committee. Member of Environmental Commission submitted that work has to be done on Sundays too because no lawyer from PHA comes.



PESHAWAR: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader and Member of the National Assembly Shehla Raza addresses press conference with hockey olympians at Karachi Press Club.

IGP continues direct engagement with citizens via 1787 complaint centre

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Abdul Kareem on Friday continued his direct engagement with citizens by speaking to them over the phone at the 1787 Complaint Center and reviewing the requests and complaints received from across the province.

During the interaction, the IGP inquired from citizens about police action, investigation standards, conduct of officials and progress on their pending applications and issued immediate directions to the concerned officers for prompt redressal.

According to a Punjab Police spokesperson, in response to a complaint lodged by a citizen of Chakwal against police personnel, the IGP directed the DPO Chakwal to immediately contact the complainant and take necessary action. On a complaint regarding poor investigation from a citizen of Faisalabad, he ordered the SP Iqbal Town Division Faisalabad to provide immediate relief. Similarly, on a request from a woman citizen of Bahawalpur regarding delay in FIR registration, the IGP directed the DPO Bahawalpur to contact the complainant forthwith and ensure relief.

The IGP issued clear instructions that RPOs and DPOs must contact citizens on a daily basis to obtain feedback regarding action taken on their complaints and requests. He said that strict departmental action would be taken against unnecessary delays in FIR registration, weak investigations and misconduct towards citizens, adding that no exception would be allowed in such cases.

Abdul Kareem further emphasised that all complaints received through the CM Complaint Management System, Prime Minister's Portal, 1787 helpline and other sources must be resolved within the prescribed timelines and in accordance with standard operating procedures (SOPs).

30 JI workers get bail in riot case

KARACHI (INP): Anti-Terrorism Court granted bail to 30 arrested Jamaat-e-Islami workers in riot case at outside of Sindh Assembly.

The court ordered accused to submit surety bonds of Rs30,000 each. All accused were arrested on Saturday night. Accused were in jail on judicial remand. According to police, accused were entering red zone outside Sindh Assembly.



KARACHI: Muslim wait for Azan e Maghrib to break their fast during holy month of Ramadan at qayyumabad postal locality.



PESHAWAR: Faithfuls offering dua during first Jumma-tul-Mubarak prayer at historic Sunehri masjid during the Holy fasting month of Ramzanul Mubarak.

MPA Saadia reviews Ramazan relief measures, distributes laptops at Cholistan University

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Member of the Provincial Assembly Saadia Bilal carried out a series of public engagements in Bahawalpur, focusing on Ramazan relief measures for citizens and educational support for students.

Accompanied by Senior Vice President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Lawyers Wing Bilal Mahmood Malik, the MPA visited the Nigehban Ramazan Bazaar, where she reviewed the availability of essential food items at officially notified prices. She inspected fruit and vegetable stalls, checked rate lists, and interacted with citizens to assess price control and product quality on the ground. Saadia Bilal directed the concerned administration to ensure strict implementation of government price lists and ordered immediate action against hoarding or profiteering. She emphasized that, in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, providing maximum relief to the public during the holy month of Ramazan remains a top government priority.

Punjab expands vehicle, fuel perks for bureaucrats

LAHORE (INP): Government of Punjab has issued a revised motor transport policy significantly increasing vehicle engine limits and fuel entitlements for senior bureaucrats across multiple grades. The notification, issued in Lahore, allows the Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police to retain three official vehicles — 2800cc, 1800cc and 4700cc — with two vehicles receiving 800 litres of petrol monthly, while the 4700cc vehicle will have no fuel limit. Under the revised policy, Grade 20-22 secretaries can use two vehicles (2800cc and 1800cc), while Grade 21-22 officers will receive 200 litres of petrol for personal use.

Various welfare programs underway for Artists' well-being: DG KPCTA

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority is undertaking continuous measures for the welfare and well-being of artists, artisans, and cultural personalities across the province.

Several programs and policy initiatives are currently being implemented to ensure structured support for the cultural community, says Director General Muhammad Usman Mehsud while chairing a meeting regarding artists' welfare initiatives.

The Director General stated that under an ADP scheme approved in 2021, the Authority was allocated Rs. 200 million.

The profit generated from this amount, after approval by the Board of Directors, was distributed among 574 deserving artists in 2025, with each recipient receiving Rs. 100,000. The distribution ceremony was held at the Chief Minister's House.

He further informed that earlier financial assistance of Rs. 30,000 per artist had also been provided under the "Living Custodians of Culture" program, which was a specific initiative implemented under the Directorate of Culture and has since been completed.

IRSA releases 105,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (INP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 105,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 36,300 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1479.77 feet which was 77.77 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 13,800 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1183.55 feet, which was 133.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 6,900 cusecs and 60,000 cusecs respectively.

CM Murad unveils roadmap for Thar Coal-to-Fertiliser flagship project

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, while reviewing the progress and finalising the strategic roadmap for Pakistan's flagship Coal-to-Fertiliser (C2F) initiative - the Thar coal-based urea project being executed by Fauji Fertiliser Company (FFC), said it will reduce reliance on imported fertiliser, create jobs, generate exports, and add value to the country's indigenous coal resources.

The delegation, led by FFC Chief Executive Officer Jahangir Piracha, briefed the chief minister on the technical, financial and environmental aspects of the \$1.12 billion project, which aims to utilise Thar's indigenous coal reserves to strengthen Pakistan's fertiliser security and reduce import dependence.

The meeting at the CM House was attended by Principal Secretary to the CM Agha Wasif, Energy Secretary Shahab Ansari, Managing Director of Thar Coal Tariq Shah, and senior officials. The FFC team included Chief Technical Officer Syed Aamir Abbas, Head of Government and Public Relations Shabbaz A. Khan and Saad Lodhi.

FFC team briefed the chief minister that the project has achieved a critical milestone with the completion of its Bankable Feasibility Study (BFS) in November 2025, prepared by internationally reputed consultants. With the BFS finalised, the project has now entered the front-end engineering design (FEED) and project agreements phase.

Under the current timeline, financial close is targeted between late 2026 and 2027, while the Commercial Operations Date (COD) is projected for January 2031.

Describing the initiative as a "game changer", FFC highlighted that the C2F project will produce 717,000 tonnes of urea annually, with production evenly split between domestic consumption and exports. Annual urea exports are expected to generate revenues of up to \$260 million. The project is also projected to create over 3,500 direct jobs and around 7,000 indirect employment opportunities, while generating estimated annual royalties of \$5.5 million for the Sindh Government through the extraction of approximately 2.1 million tonnes of coal per year.

The integrated plant will convert Thar coal into synthesis gas through gasification, followed by desulphurisation and shift conversion to produce hydrogen for ammonia and urea manufacturing. Phase-I includes the production of bulk and bagged urea, 10.4 thousand tonnes per year of sulphur, and 717 thousand tonnes per year of surplus CO2 for downstream industrial use. Phase-II envisages the expansion of urea capacity and the introduction of green ammonia, including pilot-scale production aligned with emerging global sustainability standards. FFC noted that over \$50 million has been committed to environmental safeguards, including NOx and SOx control systems, PM2.5 particulate control, zero liquid discharge through reverse osmosis, sewage treatment, rainwater harvesting, and a waste-to-value approach producing industrial-grade gypsum, sulphur, slag and fly ash.



LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique addressing during important meeting held at Emergency Services Department.

Punjab to install 30 fog cannons worth Rs 3bn to curtail smog

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab government has decided to install 30 modern fog cannons on electric trucks at a cost of Rs 3 billion to control smog and air pollution, which will help reduce dust in major urban and industrial areas.

This initiative is part of the provincial government's comprehensive clean air and climate resilient strategy, which aims to reduce air pollution and strengthen the ecosystem. Punjab: Luxury government vehicles and unlimited petrol, new transport policy issued for bureaucracy.

According to official sources, the modern fog cannon project will play an effective role especially in pollution-affected cities and will help reduce harmful particles in the air.

KP CM inaugurates modern residential flats for Govt employees

PESHAWAR (INP): In a major step toward resolving the long-standing housing issues of government employees in Peshawar, Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi on Friday inaugurated newly constructed modern residential flats at Civil Quarters here.

According to the briefing, a total of 96 modern flats, each spread over 1,000 square feet, have been constructed at Civil Quarters. The project has been developed on 6.91 kanals of land and comprises a basement and a four-storey building, with 24 flats on each floor.

Officials informed that all basic facilities, including electricity, water supply, gas, security, and parking, have been provided in the residential complex to ensure safe, respectable, and comfortable living for government employees.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi said the project reflects a practical effort to provide improved housing facilities to government employees.

Punjab govt committed to upgrading emergency services: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Health and Emergency Services Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that the Punjab government is committed to taking emergency services to the next level. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting to review the Chief Minister's initiatives held at the Rescue Headquarters on Friday.

Secretary Emergency Services Dr. Rizwan Naseer briefed the meeting on the progress of the new airstrip in Bhakkar for an air ambulance service, expansion of rescue services in various towns, deceased care services, and provision of modern equipment for flood response. A briefing was also given on the safety survey report of high-rise buildings across Punjab.

On this occasion, the minister said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz

Domestic, international airlines raise Umrah fares

KARACHI (INP): As Ramadan starts, domestic and international airlines have raised Umrah fares amid rising pilgrim demand.

Aviation sources report that business class tickets have surged to PKR 500,000, while economy and economy-plus fares now range between PKR 180,000 and PKR 200,000.

Normally, economy fares were around PKR 130,000-140,000, and business class tickets were PKR 425,000-450,000.

Sources said the increase is due to a surge in Umrah pilgrims during the first ten days of Ramadan, with fares expected to climb further in the second and third decades.

China-made electric buses launched in Gujjar Khan

ISLAMABAD (INP): A fleet of China-manufactured electric buses has begun operations in Gujjar Khan, marking the first deployment of the green public transport service at the sub-district level in Punjab and underscoring expanding technological cooperation between Pakistan and China.

The provincial ministers Khawaja Manshaullah Butt and Bilal Akbar Khan were chief guests at the opening ceremony.

The launching is part of a project launched by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif to provide modern and efficient travel facilities to the public. The inauguration ceremony was also attended by provincial officials, lawmakers and district administration representatives.

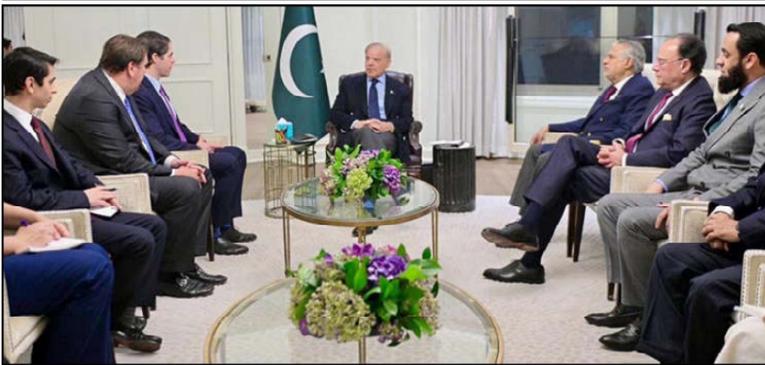
The service will initially operate along the route connecting Gujjar Khan Bus Terminal, Sohawa city and the Police Complex, improving mobility for thousands of daily commuters.

The newly launched buses are part of Punjab's broader transition toward environmentally sustainable public transportation. Powered entirely by electricity, the vehicles are designed to reduce urban air pollution, lower fuel import costs and promote climate-friendly mobility solutions.

Each bus is equipped with modern safety and surveillance systems, including seven onboard cameras to enhance passenger security.



KARACHI: Fire Brigade officials conduct rescue operation after oil spill fire near PIDCL in Karachi.



WASHINGTON: CEO of United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) Mr. Benjamin Black called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

PM invites DFC to enhance financing for Pakistan's energy, mining, IT projects

WASHINGTON (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday highlighting Pakistan's fast-improving macroeconomic fundamentals, government's commitment to deepening structural reforms, and attractive investment climate, invited the United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to enhance its financing for projects in the energy, mines and minerals, agriculture and IT sectors.

The prime minister, in a meeting with CEO of International Development

Finance Corporation Benjamin Black here on the sidelines of the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace, appreciated the expanding economic partnership between Pakistan and the United States.

Benjamin Black was accompanied by DFC's Head of Investments Conor Coleman and the senior leadership of the agency.

The prime minister recognized DFC's crucial role in catalyzing joint ventures between private enterprises of the two countries, essential to job cre-

Macroeconomic growth thru export-led strategy, key to poverty alleviation: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal on Friday emphasized that macroeconomic growth driven by an export-led economy and performance-based industrial units at provincial and district levels, was the need of the hour to alleviate poverty in the country.

Addressing the "Launch of Poverty and Inequality Estimates 2024-25" ceremony held at the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Auditorium, the minister underscored the importance of developing competitive human resource capital across all federating

units.

He stressed for the promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and cottage industries at district and provincial levels to unlock local potential and eradicate poverty at the grassroots level, while advancing progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Export-led growth, along with quality education and competitive human resource development, can play a major role in reducing poverty at both national and provincial levels," he said.

The minister noted that due to the global food inflation super cycle during COVID-19, along with en-

Seven Ramadan bazaars providing essentials at controlled prices: Tariq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Friday said that seven Ramadan Sasta Bazaars set up by the government, are supplying essential items to the public at officially fixed prices.

Speaking to reporters after visiting the Ramadan Bazaar in G-6, he said the special markets have been set up in G-6, Barakahu, H-9, Tarnol, Pak-Town, Taramri and G-10 to provide relief to citizens during the holy month.

The Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, police officers and other officials were also present during the visit.

The minister said the

bazaars are offering vegetables, fruits, flour, sugar, ghee, pulses and other daily-use items at government-approved rates. He added that the administration is strictly monitoring prices and quality of the items.

During the visit, he also inspected various stalls and expressed satisfaction with the quality of the fruits and vegetables.

He said that prices were being charged according to the official list. He further said that the Metropolitan Corporation and district administration are not charging any rent from stallholders during Ramadan so that prices remain affordable for the public.



Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, speaks to the media during his visit to G-6 Ramzan Bazar in Islamabad.



QUETTA: Aman selling jackets from roadside stall.

OGDC announces oil, gas discovery at Baragzai X-01 (Slant)

ISLAMABAD (APP): Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC), Pakistan's leading exploration and production company, on Friday announced a significant oil and gas discovery at its exploratory well Baragzai X-01 (Slant), located in Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The discovery has been made over the Lumshiwai Formation within the Nashpa Exploration Licence. During Cased Hole Drill Stem Test (CHDST-04) conducted in the Hangu and Lumshiwai formations, the well produced 225 barrels of oil per day (BOPD) and 1.01 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas through a 32/64" choke at a wellhead flowing pressure of 190 psig.

Baragzai X-01 (Slant) was spudded on December 30, 2024, as an exploratory well to assess the hydrocarbon potential of multiple formations, including Lokchart, Hangu, Lumshiwai, Samana Suk, Shinawari, Datta and

Rupee gains 01 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 01 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs279.56 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs279.57.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs280.30 and Rs282.25, respectively.

Pakistan, Philippines agree to boost multi sector cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and the Philippines, at the second meeting of their Joint Economic Commission held in Manila, agreed to enhance cooperation across multiple sectors and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening economic engagement through practical and result-oriented initiatives.

The Meeting was co-chaired by Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Muhammad Humair Karim

Kidwai and Undersecretary for International Trade of the Department of Trade and Industry Philippines, Atty. Allan B. Gepty, according to press release issued by Economic Affairs Ministry here Friday.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Asima Rabbani, Pakistan's Ambassador to the Philippines, and Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez, Philippine Ambassador to Pakistan, along with senior officials of both sides.

China leads Pakistan's net FDI inflows at \$ 72.6m in Jan 2026

ISLAMABAD (INP): China remained the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan, contributing net FDI of US\$ 72.6 million in January 2026, accounting for 41.9% of the country's total net inflows of US\$ 173.3 million during the month.

This was reported by on Friday quoting State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data.

In January, Pakistan received US\$ 98.8 million in inflows from China, while US\$ 26.2 million was recorded as outflow, bringing net FDI from China to US\$ 72.6 million.

During the first seven months from July to January in FY 2025-26, Pakistan received total FDI inflows of US\$ 2,078.7 million (US\$ 2.08 billion), while outflows stood at US\$ 1,097.4 million (US\$ 1.10 billion), resulting in net FDI of US\$ 981.4 million, according to SBP data.

China remained the leading investor during this period, contributing US\$



Market Committee Chairman Haji Mir Sher Ahmed Kurd inaugurates Ramadan Sasta Bazar in Quetta.

PSX turns bullish, gains 999 points to close at 173,169 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Friday, gaining 999.42 points, a positive change of 0.58 percent, to close at 173,169.71 points compared to 172,170.29 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 537.645 million shares with a traded value of Rs 23,790 billion, against 542.979 million shares valuing Rs 27,363 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization increased to Rs 19,602 trillion from Rs 19,514 trillion a day earlier.

Out of 475 active companies in the ready market, 158 advanced, 257 declined, and 60 remained unchanged.

K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 73.134 million shares, followed by WorldCall Telecom with 46,207 million shares and Bank of Punjab with 31.618 million shares.

The top gainers included PIA Holding Company Limited B, which rose by Rs 280.34 to close at Rs 16,857.00, and Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which gained Rs 184.21 to settle at Rs 26,212.00.

Sindh govt implements policy measures to reduce growing pressure on harbour

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Livestock & Fisheries Muhammad Ali Malkani stated that the Sindh government is implementing policy measures to reduce the growing pressure on the harbour.

He expressed these views while chairing the Board meeting of the Karachi Fisheries Harbour Authority, said a statement on Friday.

The meeting was attended by Parliamentary Secretary for Livestock & Fisheries MPA Asif Khan, Secretary Livestock & Fisheries Dr. Kazim Hussain Jatoi, MD Karachi Fisheries Harbour Authority Zahid Khemto, senior officials

from the Environment Department and Fishermen Cooperative Society, as well as Director General Fisheries (Marine) Asim Karim.

The Board decided that all future measures will be implemented in accordance with the requirements of the Master Plan and in line with European Union policy.

Commercial matters, employee promotions, salary increases, and new appointments will be resolved in line with Sindh government policy, while keeping in view the decisions of the Supreme Court and High Court, and based on recommendations from the Sindh Law Department.

LESCO announces end to electricity bill collection services at post offices

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) announced the discontinuation of electricity bill collection services at post offices, marking a significant shift in the utility's payment system. Under the new arrangement, consumers will no longer be able to pay their LESCO electricity bills through Pakistan Post counters.

The decision is part of a broader strategy to enhance operational efficiency, streamline billing procedures, and modernize payment mechanisms for electricity users.

LESCO described the move as an important initiative aimed at improving service delivery and ensuring a smoother, more transparent payment experience. The company emphasized that discontinuing bill collection through post offices will not affect the issuance of electricity bills or the supply of power to consumers.

SBP injects over Rs 1.6trln in market

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Friday, injected Rs 1,603.6 billion through Reverse Repo Purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) to maintain liquidity in the market. The central bank conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7 and 14-day tenors on February 20, 2026, and injected Rs 1,393.1 billion against 11 bids while other Rs 210.5 billion were injected through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO.

The central bank, for the Reverse Repo Purchase of 14-day tenor, received 7 bids cumulatively offering Rs 1,505.5 billion at the rate of return ranging between 10.51 to 10.54%. The SBP accepted Rs 1,300 billion against 7 quotes at 10.51% rate of return. The total amount offered at 10.51% was Rs 481 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs 275.5 billion on a pro-rata basis.

Moreover, the SBP also received 4 bids for the 7-day tenor, cumulatively offering Rs 93.1 billion at the rate of return ranging between 10.53% to 10.54%.

Weekly inflation rises by 1.16pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), increased by 1.16 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on February 19, 2026, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review was recorded at 335.67 points, up from 331.81 points last week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI registered an increase of 5.19 percent.

The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) increased by 1.11 percent to 325.80 points from 322.23 points.

The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 rose by 1.50 percent, 1.03 percent, 0.92 percent and 0.78 percent, respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 17 (33.33 percent) items increased, 12 (23.53 percent) items decreased and 22 (43.14 percent) items remained stable.

Major commodities registering a week-on-week increase included bananas (16.05%), electricity charges for Q1 (15.41%), garlic (5.86%), chicken (5.49%), onions (3.83%), tomatoes (3.82%), diesel (2.69%), petrol (1.93%), beef (1.03%), LPG (0.75%), mutton (0.69%) and long cloth (0.28%).

On the other hand, major commodities witnessing a decrease included eggs (11.78%), potatoes (2.24%), wheat flour (2.02%), pulse masoor (1.47%), sugar (0.96%), vegetable ghee 2.5kg (0.72%), pulse gram (0.58%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.19%), gur (0.16%), vegetable ghee 1kg (0.11%), rice IRR1-6/9 (0.08%) and mustard oil (0.07%).

On a year-on-year basis, major increases were observed in the prices of tomatoes (85.20%), wheat flour (31.33%), gas charges for Q1 (29.85%), electricity charges for Q1 (17.33%).

SCCI discusses upcoming exhibitions with Pak HC to South Africa

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, along with Qaiser Baig, Chairman of the Departmental Committee on Fairs and Exhibitions/Delegations, held an online meeting with the Pakistan's High Commissioner to South Africa.

The meeting focused on preparations and coordination for upcoming Pakistani exhibitions in South Africa. During the discussion, both sides explored avenues to enhance the visibility of Pakistani products, particularly from Sialkot, in the South African market.

President SCCI Syed Ahtesham Mazhar highlighted the export potential of Sialkot's industries and emphasized the importance of strong diplomatic and institutional support to facilitate business-to-business linkages and trade promotion initiatives.

SAWiE, AgriCapture partner to cut methane emissions, support farmers through carbon credits

ISLAMABAD (APP): SAWiE Ecosystems (Pvt) Limited and AgriCapture on Friday entered into a strategic partnership to reduce methane emissions from rice cultivation in Pakistan and generate new income streams for smallholder farmers through high-integrity carbon credits in the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM).

The collaboration, part of the Global Rice Methane Initiative across South Asia, aims to scale climate-smart agricultural practices including Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD) to curb greenhouse gas emissions from flooded rice systems, said a press release.

Carbon credits generated from the 2026 growing season will be developed under Verra's VM51 methodology, ensuring measurable, transparent and high-integrity methane reductions.

Pakistan cultivates rice on approximately 3.9 million hectares, ranking among the world's top 10 producers and contributing around two percent of global output. However, flooded rice fields are estimated to emit 7 to 8 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent annually in the country.

By promoting improved water management practices, the partnership seeks to significantly cut methane emissions while enhancing productivity, water efficiency and climate resilience.

Under the initiative, smallholder farmers, particularly women, will be trained to adopt sustainable rice cultivation techniques and generate verified methane-reduction carbon credits, enabling access to climate finance through carbon markets.

Chief Executive Officer of SAWiE Ecosystems, Fritz Boehmer, said the partnership with AgriCapture would help harness the potential of methane reduction through AWD, creating additional incentives for farmers while enabling sustainable and traceable rice production.



LAHORE: Aman carries flour bags after shopping at a Ramadan Sasta Bazaar.

Trump says 'considering' strike on Iran as Tehran says draft deal to be ready in next 'two, three days'

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): US President Donald Trump said he was considering a limited strike on Iran after ordering a major naval buildup in the Middle East aimed at heaping pressure on Tehran to cut a deal to curb its nuclear programme.

The latest threat came after Iran's foreign minister said a draft proposal for an agreement with Washington would be ready in a matter of days following negotiations between the two sides in Geneva earlier this week.

Trump had suggested on Thursday that "bad things" would happen if Tehran did not strike a deal within 10 days, which he subsequently extended to 15.

Asked by a reporter on Friday whether he was contemplating a limited military strike, Trump answered: "The most I can say — I am considering it."

After the talks in

Geneva, Tehran said the two sides had agreed to submit drafts of a potential agreement, which Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told US media would be the "next step".

"I believe that in the next two, three days, that would be ready, and after final confirmation by my superiors, that would be handed over to Steve Witkoff," he said, referring to Trump's main Middle East negotiator.

Araghchi also said US negotiators had not requested that Tehran end its nuclear enrichment programme, contradicting statements from American officials.

"We have not offered any suspension, and the US side has not asked for zero enrichment," he said in an interview released Friday by US TV network MS NOW.

"What we are now talking about is how to

make sure that Iran's nuclear programme, including enrichment, is peaceful and would remain peaceful forever," he added.

His comments stand in contrast to information relayed by high-ranking US officials, including Trump, who has repeatedly said Iran must not be allowed to enrich uranium at any level.

Western countries accuse the Islamic republic of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, which Tehran denies, though it insists on its right to enrichment for civilian purposes.

Iran, for its part, is seeking to negotiate an end to sanctions that have proven to be a massive drag on its economy.

Economic hardships sparked protests in December that evolved into a nationwide anti-government movement last month, prompting a crackdown from authorities.



US President Donald Trump speaks during a Working Breakfast with Governors at the White House in Washington, DC.

Israel stoking 'ethnic cleansing' fears in Gaza, West Bank: UN

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Increased Israeli attacks and the forced transfer of Palestinians have sparked concern over ethnic cleansing in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the UN human rights office, OHCHR, said in a report issued. The report covers the period from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025 and is based on monitoring conducted by OHCHR and information from governmental sources, other UN entities, and non-governmental organizations.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed announces end of mob culture in Bangladesh

DHAKA (BSS/APP): Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said the mob culture in Bangladesh has ended with the BNP government assumed office through the landslide victory in the 13th parliament election.

"Mob culture in Bangladesh ends. The mob culture in no way to be tolerated," he added. He made the remarks while speaking to reporters on his first working day at the Home Ministry in Bangladesh Secretariat here this afternoon.

The Home Minister said they will not tolerate anymore occupying the highways and roads and

the methodical destruction of entire neighbourhoods and the denial of humanitarian assistance appeared to aim at a permanent demographic shift in Gaza," it said. "This, together with forcible transfers, which appear to aim at a permanent displacement, raise concerns over ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the West Bank."

The report details the continued killing and maiming of unprecedented numbers of civilians by Israeli forces in Gaza, the spread of famine in the enclave, and the destruction of the remaining

civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and homes. This was "imposing on Palestinians conditions of life increasingly incompatible with their continued existence in Gaza as a group." The patterns of deadly attacks witnessed in Gaza raised grave concerns that Israeli forces intentionally targeted civilians and civilian objects, and launched attacks knowing that the loss of life, injury or damage "would be clearly excessive in relation to the military advantage anticipated, which would constitute war crimes."

Iranian, Saudi FM's hold talks over phone

TEHRAN (IRNA/APP): Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, have discussed mutual ties.

Araghchi held a telephone conversation with Farhan late on Wednesday to exchange views on bilateral relations.

The top Iranian diplomat informed his Saudi counterpart of the developments regarding the Iran-US nuclear negotiations.

For his part, the Saudi foreign minister expressed gratitude for the information shared by the Iranian foreign minister and hoped that the ongoing discussions would continue until a result is reached.

Arab Group calls for UN steps to compel Israel to reverse West Bank annexation

NEW YORK (SANA/APP): The Arab Group at the U.N. Security Council renewed its condemnation of Israel's recent measures aimed at asserting control over the West Bank, expanding settlements, enabling settler violence and forcibly displacing Palestinians. The group said these unilateral actions violate the U.N. Charter, international law and relevant U.N. resolutions.

During a Security Council session on the Palestinian issue, Syria's Permanent Representative to the U.N. and current chair of the Arab Group, Ibrahim Olabi, said on behalf of the group that Israel's actions amount to an attempt to eliminate the prospect of a Palestinian state and undermine peace efforts.

The group welcomed international positions rejecting annexation — including that of U.S. Presi-

dent Donald Trump — and called for concrete measures to compel Israel to reverse policies aimed at annexing Palestinian territory, warning they threaten regional security and stability.

The Arab Group urged the Security Council to act under its mandate to maintain international peace and security. It reaffirmed commitments in the New York Declaration and the July 19, 2024 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, stressing the need to uphold Palestinian self-determination and counter settlement expansion and forced displacement. The group also condemned Israel's ongoing attacks in the West Bank and Gaza and its obstruction of humanitarian aid to Gaza. It stressed the need to respect the ceasefire, including its humanitarian provisions, by fully lifting restrictions on aid delivery.

Stocks drop, oil rises after Trump Iran threat

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Most Asia equities fell and oil prices rose on Friday after Donald Trump ratcheted up Middle East tensions by hinting at possible military strikes on Iran if it did not make a "meaningful deal" in nuclear talks.

The remarks fanned geopolitical concerns and cast a pall over a tentative rebound in markets following an AI-fuelled sell-off this month.

Traders are also looking ahead to the release of US data later in the day that will provide a fresh snapshot of the world's top economy.

A slew of forecast-beating figures over the past few days have lifted optimism about the outlook but tempered expectations for more interest rate cuts.

The US president told the inaugural meeting of the "Board of Peace", his initiative to secure stability in Gaza, that Tehran should

make a deal.

"It's proven to be over the years not easy to make a meaningful deal with Iran. We have to make a meaningful deal otherwise bad things happen," he said, as he deployed warships, fighter jets and other military hardware to the region.

He warned that Washington "may have to take it a step further" without any agreement, adding: "You're going to be finding out over the next probably 10 days."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier warned: "If the ayatollahs make a mistake and attack us, they will receive a response they cannot even imagine."

The threats come days after the United States and Iran held a second round of Omani-mediated talks in Geneva as Washington looks to prevent the country from getting a nuclear bomb, which Tehran says it is not pursuing.

Kim Jong Un opens rare party congress in North Korea

SEOUL (AFP/APP): North Korea's ruling party has opened a landmark congress, state media said Friday, launching a political spectacle expected to unveil the next phase in the nation's nuclear weapons programme.

Leader Kim Jong Un took centre stage with a speech to start the Workers' Party congress, a gathering that directs state efforts on everything from house building to war planning.

Party elites packed the cavernous House of Culture in Pyongyang for the once-in-five-years event, which is typically capped with an immense parade flaunting the military's latest weapons.

The congress offers a rare look into the workings of a nation where even mundane details are shrouded in secrecy—and will be closely watched for insights into Kim's long-term thinking.

Kim said North Korea had overcome its "worst

difficulties" since the last congress in 2021, and was now entering a new stage of "optimism and confidence in the future."

"Today, our Party is faced with heavy and urgent historic tasks of boosting economic construction and the people's standard of living and transforming all realms of state and social life as early as possible," he said Thursday, according to state media.

He also singled out "deep-rooted defeatism" and "immaturity in leadership ability" that still hindered the party's work, a sign of possible reprisals against officials seen to have fallen short.

Kim has already declared this year's congress will lay out plans to bolster North Korea's nuclear arsenal.

It has been more than eight years since North Korea's last nuclear test triggered a man-made earthquake undermeath the northern Hamyong mountains.

Deadly California avalanche search to go through weekend

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): The search for a ninth person believed killed in a huge avalanche in California will stretch into the weekend, US officials said Thursday, as atrocious weather continues to hamper operations.

The bodies of eight people known to have died when they were engulfed in a wall of snow cannot be moved because of the storm pummeling the Sierra Nevada mountain range—and the risk of yet more avalanches.

"Due to hazardous weather conditions, avalanche victims cannot be safely extracted off the mountain today," the Nevada County Sheriff's office said on Facebook.

"Recovery efforts are expected to carry into the weekend."

Six people survived Tuesday's tragedy, one of the deadliest avalanches in modern US history.

The group—four guides and 11 paying clients—was on their third

day of a backcountry skiing trip on the 9,109-foot (2,776-meter) Castle Peak in the Lake Tahoe region of northern California, an area popular with mountain enthusiasts.

The six who survived—five clients and a guide—managed to call for help shortly after disaster struck, but white-out conditions and the risk of further snow slides meant rescue teams could not reach them for several hours.

Two had to be helped down and needed hospitalization.

The US Forest Service said Thursday all lands it manages in the area will be shuttered for the next few weeks to help in the recovery operation.

"Due to the current instability of the snowpack and need to prioritize first responder access to the area, members of the public are prohibited from entering the closure area during search and rescue operations," a statement said.



Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto and US President Donald Trump sign a statement agreeing to implement the reciprocal trade agreement in Washington D.C.

Washington mayor seeks White House aid on giant sewage spill

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): Washington's mayor declared a public emergency Wednesday over a major sewage leak, seeking aid from the White House after the Trump administration criticized local leaders for their response.

One month ago, a pipe carrying sewage from the US capital and parts of the neighboring states of Maryland and Virginia burst, sending hundreds of millions of liters of waste into the Potomac River. The ecological disaster has become a danger to the river's health and residents who use it for drinking water, while stoking a political fight between President Donald Trump and a rising Democratic star, Maryland Governor Wes Moore.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser requested a

presidential disaster declaration and "declared a local public emergency" in order to get federal funds for the relief effort, her office said in a statement Wednesday.

She was also seeking 100 percent "reimbursement for costs incurred by the District and the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority" related to the disaster, it added.

Scientists have detected dangerously high concentrations of bacteria from fecal matter, including E.coli, in waters affected by the spill. With the leak's Maryland location upriver from Washington, much of it found its way to the waters skirting the US capital. On Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt accused Moore of having "abandoned and neglected" the 60-year-old pipe.

French minister pledges tight security at rally for killed activist

LYON (AFP/APP): French police will be out in force at a weekend rally for a slain far-right activist, the interior minister said Friday, as the country seeks to contain anger over the fatal beating blamed on the hard left.

Quentin Deranque, 23, died from head injuries after being attacked by at least six people on the sidelines of a protest against a politician from the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) party in the southeastern city of Lyon last week.

His death has fomented tensions ahead of municipal elections next month and presidential polls next year, in which the far-right National Rally (RN) party is seen as having its best chance yet at winning the top job. President Emmanuel Macron, who is serving his last year in office, has said there was no place in France.

Florida airport to be renamed after US President Donald Trump

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): An airport in Florida will soon be renamed after US President Donald Trump, after a bill proposing the change was approved by the state's legislature on Thursday.

Trump, a real estate mogul who has plastered his name on buildings around the world, has sought to leave his mark on the country in an unprecedented image and building campaign.

Florida's Republican-led legislature approved a bill to rename the Palm Beach International Airport as the "President Donald J. Trump International Airport," state records show. Governor Ron DeSantis, once a Trump opponent, is expected to sign the measure into law.



An Israeli strike on Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp killed one person.

UN Mission Chief for Colombia condemns pre-election violence

BOGOTÁ (AFP/APP): Miroslav Jenca, the head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, denounced the "concerning" rise of violence ahead of 2026 elections, he told AFP in an interview on Wednesday.

Ahead of the legislative elections and a presidential vote on May 31, at least 61 political leaders have been killed, according to Colombia's Electoral Observation Mission.

Candidates are under threat of violence in 130 municipalities—about a third of the total—according to observers. "It is very

concerning, and it is clear that the situation is deteriorating," Jenca said. As of last year, the Slovak diplomat leads the mission created in the wake of a truce between rebel faction FARC and the government of then-president Juan Manuel Santos, charged with overseeing the implementation of the peace agreement, which called for the disarmament of thousands of guerrillas. The FARC peace agreement "opened up democratic spaces" in remote parts of Colombia where participation in politics had been restricted by rebel groups.

Canada announces lifting of economic sanctions on Syria imposed since 2011

OTTAWA (SANA/APP): Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Anita Anand said Canada had introduced substantial amendments to the "Syrian Economic Measures Regulations," including lifting the comprehensive economic embargo in place since May 2011.

In a statement, Anand said the amendments end the broad embargo linked to the defunct Assad regime. Under the decision, restrictions have been eased on the import and export of goods and services, investment activities, financial services, and transactions related to the oil and telecommunica-

tions sectors. The amendments remove 24 entities and one individual from the Syria Regulations to reduce barriers to economic activity and enable transactions with state-affiliated entities in key sectors critical to Syria's recovery.

According to the statement, Canada introduced two new listing criteria under the Syria Regulations to enable Ottawa to designate individuals and entities involved in gross and systematic human rights violations, as well as those undermining Syria's peace, security and stability.



A truck and a pickup truck collided on a highway in Egypt, killing 18 people and injuring three others, officials said.

President urges promotion of mother tongues to strengthen unity on Int'l Mother Language Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Asif Ali Zardari has called for renewed commitment to protecting and promoting the country's diverse mother tongues and said linguistic diversity was a source of strength and a foundation for inclusive national development.

In his message on International Mother Language Day, observed annually on February 21, the president said language played a vital role in shaping identity, dignity and opportunity. He noted that

Pakistan was home to a rich tapestry of languages including Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, Seraiki, Brahvi, Hindko, Shina, Burushaski, Wakhi and Hazagi, reflecting centuries of shared history and cultural exchange.

He said that while Urdu served as a lingua franca connecting the Federation, mother tongues remained the first voice of children and the primary carriers of inherited knowledge and tradition.

"Language is more

than a medium of speech. It shapes how communities remember their past, organise social life and understand the world around them. It carries moral traditions, local wisdom and inherited experience," the president said, adding that when a language weakened, more than words were lost as a distinct way of seeing and interpreting reality began to fade.

Highlighting Pakistan's multi-ethnic and multilingual character, the president said the challenge

was not diversity itself but nurturing cohesion while safeguarding shared inheritance. He stressed that unity did not require uniformity but rested on mutual recognition and equal dignity. President Zardari underscored the practical importance of mother tongues in education and daily life. He said a child who began schooling in a language spoken at home was more likely to develop cognitive skills, understand lessons, remain confident and continue education.



QUETTA: Jinnah road looks deserted during first Friday prayer of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak.



QUETTA: Inspector General Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir in a group photo with Police officers on the eve of 106th Passing out Parade at PTC.

Pakistan urges 'meaningful dialogue' as deadly Sudan conflict nears third year

UNITED NATIONS (APP): As Sudan marks 1,000 days of a brutal war between its rival military factions, a senior Pakistani diplomat Thursday told the UN Security Council that the only viable path forward lies in meaningful dialogue as he backed the efforts and peace plan presented by the transitional Sudanese Government.

"We stress that there is no military solution to this conflict," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said in the 15-member Council's debate on the sharply deteriorating situation in Sudan where violence is intensifying, famine conditions loom and civilians remaining trapped between shifting front lines.

"The Sudanese people have suffered for far too

long. The guns must fall silent, and a credible political horizon restored," he said.

Sudan has been engulfed in the conflict since April 2023, when fighting erupted between former allies—the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces militia (RSF).

What began as a power struggle metastasized into deadly conflicts across the country, most devastating in the Darfur region, which also saw longstanding ethnic tensions that prompted allegations of genocide in the early 2000s to be reignited.

In his remarks, Ambassador Jadoon condemned in "the strongest terms" the atrocities committed by RF in Darfur, including in El Fasher and earlier in El Geneina, as well as the continued violence

now unfolding in Kordofan. "We reiterate that deliberate attacks against peacekeepers, United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and facilities are unacceptable and may amount to war crimes," he said while stressing the need for holding those responsible for the atrocities accountable.

Pointing out that Pakistan's position on Sudan remains firmly anchored in the principles of the UN Charter, the Pakistani envoy said, "We reaffirm our unwavering support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Sudan.

The preservation of a unified Sudan is essential not only for its people but also for the peace and stability of the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and the Red Sea region."

PM Shehbaz holds cordial interactions with world leaders at BoP meeting

WASHINGTON (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif engaged in warm and informal interactions with several world leaders on the sidelines of the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace held here on Thursday.

The prime minister, who is on a three-day official visit to the United States at the invitation of US President Donald Trump, interacted with the partici-

parting leaders, including King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and President of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto.

During the conversations, the leaders discussed important global and regional issues, displaying genuine warmth and a spirit of close friendship.

Security measures significantly tightened across Quetta during first Friday prayers of Ramadan

Religious scholars led special prayers for stability of the nation, the eradication of terrorism, and the success of the Ummah

QUETTA (ANN): In a bid to ensure safety and prevent any untoward incidents, security measures were significantly tightened across Quetta during the first Friday prayers of Ramadan. The provincial capital saw an extensive deployment of security forces around mosques and imambargahs, with thorough checks on vehicles entering the city and at key intersections. Authorities have heightened vigilance, especially at sensitive locations, while security personnel conducted detailed searches of individuals entering mosques and imambargahs.

Additionally, security forces were stationed at prominent markets, critical junctions, and sensitive spots around the city, with the aim of deterring potential threats.

As part of the Friday prayer rituals, religious scholars led special prayers for the stability of the nation, the eradication of terrorism, and the success of the Muslim Ummah. In a unifying message, the scholars called on the public to set aside differences and unite against the forces of disruption and terrorism that seek to destabilize the country. The authorities

have left no stone unturned in securing the city. The security arrangements during the Friday prayers involved a robust presence of security forces at both the interior and exterior of mosques, ensuring a thorough check on all attendees. Additionally, the screening of vehicles entering Quetta was intensified, in line with on-going efforts to bolster security during Ramadan.

The Friday prayer sermon urged citizens to stand united, shedding personal conflicts to face the common threat posed by those who misuse religion for violence.

Asad Qaiser rejects any suggestion of deal for party founder's release

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser has rejected any suggestion of a deal for the release of party founder Imran Khan, stating that the founder will neither negotiate nor participate in any arrangement for a deal.

Speaking on the legal cases against Imran Khan, Qaiser said all charges filed against the founder are illegal and were motivated by political revenge. He emphasized that if trials are conducted fairly and on merit, there is no reason for the founder to remain in jail, and he will be released once the cases are heard properly.

Qaiser urged the government to cool the political environment, criticizing it for showing no flexibility. He stressed that Imran Khan's legal, medical, and personal matters should not be politicized, warning that leaving these issues unresolved could lead to unrest in the country.

He also demanded that the PTI founder be transferred to a hospital with access to his personal doctor. Regarding reports of a proposed force for the founder's release, Qaiser said consultations will be held before any action. Reaffirming PTI's

President convenes joint session of Parliament on March 2

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government has decided to convene a joint session of Parliament on March 2 to mark the beginning of the new parliamentary year.

According to sources, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has forwarded a summary to the Prime Minister, who will send it to President Asif Ali Zardari for formal approval.



QUETTA: Parliamentary Secretary for Population Welfare Agha Umer Ahmedzai meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Government ensures full restoration of Motorway fencing, crime drops by 40%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Pakistan has taken comprehensive and decisive measures to address the issue of damaged and stolen fencing along the country's motorway network, ensuring enhanced safety and security for commuters.

According to official sources, the initiative follows the Prime Minister's directives to address damaged and stolen fencing, which posed risks from stray animals and unauthorized pedestrian entry. A nationwide assessment was carried out to determine the extent of damage, leading to immediate restoration on a war footing to plug all identified gaps.

The National Highway Authority (NHA) and the National Highways & Motorway Police (NHMP) jointly developed

comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to safeguard motorway fencing and prevent future theft and damage.

Field formations of both organizations now maintain a detailed record of installed fencing. In case of theft or damage, immediate legal action is initiated, including registration of FIRs against offenders. The NHMP also actively pursues recovery of stolen assets, while the NHA ensures prompt reinstallation to maintain uninterrupted safety standards.

Officials termed fence theft and damage a recurring challenge; however, amendments in relevant laws are under process in consultation with the Law & Justice Division to enhance penalties and deter offenders.

Two FIA officials arrested on charges of accepting bribes

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Anti-Corruption Cell of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested two of FIA officials on charges of accepting bribes in exchange for illegal immigration clearance.

According to officials, Director General of the FIA Dr. Usman Anwar took notice of the allegations that immigration clearances were being granted in return for bribes.

The Additional Director General (Immigration) and the Director Zone Islamabad conducted an inquiry into the matter.

After the allegations were proven, a case was registered against the two FIA officials in Islamabad by the Anti-Corruption Cell. The accused officials have been taken into custody, and four passengers have also been nominated in the case.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister Muhammad Sadiq Umrani meeting with former Chief Minister Balochistan and MPA Nawab Aslam Raisani and Nawabzada Haji Lashkari Raisani.

SC dismisses federal government's time-barred appeal in service matter

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan has dismissed an appeal filed by the federal government in a service matter, declaring it time-barred. The court also rejected the government's request for condonation of delay. Justice Ayesha Malik, in a written judgment, held that the government is entitled to the same protocol in court as an ordinary citizen.

"The government is not a unique litigant; it is equally bound by the law like any private individual," the judgment stated.

The Court observed that while the state requires citizens to strictly comply with the law, it often advances various excuses when it comes to delays on its own part. Internal office rules or administrative difficulties, the judgment noted, cannot override statutory limitation periods.

The Court further remarked that factors such as shortage of government officers, non-convening of committee meetings, or transfer of officials are internal administrative matters of the government.

BRA shuts down multiple Quetta restaurants for sales tax violations

Independent Report
QUETTA: Acting on directives from Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the Balochistan Revenue Authority (BRA) has sealed several restaurants in Quetta for failing to comply with provincial sales tax regulations.

The establishments affected include Green Hotel on Prince Road, Gulshan Karahi on Togh Road, and Moon Restaurant at Millennium Mall. Officials cited non-compliance with tax laws as the reason for the closures. Authorities indicated that enforcement actions against sales tax defaulters are being intensified throughout the province to ensure adherence to regulations, enhance revenue collection, and maintain transparency in commercial operations.

Rashid Minhas' sacrifice set a timeless example of devotion to duty and unwavering commitment to the country, they added.

Govt prioritizes skills-based learning to shape future-ready youth, says Minister Wajih

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajih Qamar Friday stressed the importance of equipping young people with market-driven skills and commended Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and CM Punjab for modernizing the education system through digital transformation.

In an exclusive morning show interview with a local news channel, Wajih Qamar highlighted the government's commitment to fostering practical and professional education for young people.

She emphasized that developing market-relevant abilities is crucial for preparing the nation's youth to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

She added that strengthening technical and vocational programs is a cornerstone of the administration's education strategy, adding that modern learning approaches and industry-focused training, the govern-

ment aims to create a generation of skilled individuals capable of thriving in competitive environments.

Wajih Qamar further noted that digital tools and innovative teaching methods are being incorporated to enhance the learning experience.

She reaffirmed that nurturing a workforce equipped with contemporary competencies is essential for national growth and ensuring that future generations are ready to tackle global challenges.

Responding to a query, she praised the present government's policies, highlighting the proactive role of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Chief Minister of Punjab in addressing the needs of young people.

She noted that the government's initiatives focus on providing practical opportunities, skill development programs, and employment support, which directly reflect the ground realities faced by youth across the province.

UN Women Pak launches IT training program for 6,000 educated women

PESHAWAR (APP): In a significant step toward women's empowerment and the provision of dignified livelihood opportunities, UN Women Pakistan, under the Code for Pakistan project, has announced free IT education and professional training for 6,000 educated women across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Under this initiative, women from Peshawar, Mardan, and Swabi will be equipped with modern digital skills, enabling them to earn a lawful income through social media and other digital platforms.

A delegation of the foundation met Riaz Khan Mehsood, Commissioner Peshawar Division, at his office and briefed him on the project and other ongoing initiatives aimed at women's welfare.

According to project officials, 3,000 women in Peshawar will receive free IT education at 12 different centers, while 1,500 women each in Mardan and Swabi will be trained in advanced IT skills and online employment opportunities.

The training centers are scheduled to formally commence operations from February 26.

Appreciating the initiative, the Commissioner Peshawar Division praised the efforts of the foundation and assured full support from the provincial government.

He said the initiative is expected to play a pivotal role in equipping women with digital skills, fostering economic independence, and ensuring a secure and dignified future for them.

IHC seeks restructuring plan of NHA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on directed the Chairman National Highways Authority (NHA) to immediately send the restructuring plan to cabinet division in a case related to the appointment of officers on deputation.

The court also directed the concerned responsible officer of NHA to appear at the next hearing for the briefing into the matter.

The court directed the to submit complete details of officers and officials working on deputation at the next hearing.

Chief Justice IHC Sardar Sarfraz Dogar issued a written order regarding the hearing.

On September 25, 2025, the Islamabad High Court had given time to NHA to send the restructuring plan to the Cabinet Division.

FCCP upholds KP sales tax on construction services

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Constitutional Court has declared the levy of sales tax on construction services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa constitutional, dismissing appeals filed against the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Services Act, 2022.

The court ruled that after the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the authority to impose tax on services rests with the provinces. The written judgment was issued by

Justice Aamir Farooq. It stated that following the 27th Constitutional Amendment, the Supreme Court can no longer strike down laws on constitutional grounds, as the power of constitutional interpretation has been restricted to a designated forum. The court observed that after the 27th Constitutional Amendment, the Constitutional Court may call for records from any court or tribunal to examine constitutional questions.

Balochistan Standing body reviews agri produce markets bill 2025

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Standing Committee on Agriculture, chaired by Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, convened a meeting to discuss the Agricultural Produce Markets Bill 2025 for Balochistan. The session, held in the Provincial Assembly Committee Room, was attended by key committee members and officials, including Zabid Ali Reki, Abdul Majeed Badini, Syed Zafar Ali Agha, as well as representatives from the Agriculture and Law Departments.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan presides over the meeting regarding Development Projects in Balochistan.