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Lt Colonel among two security personnel martyred, five Khwarij terrorists killed in Bannu IBO

RAWALPINDI (APP): Security forces on Saturday killed five Khwarij terrorists in an intelligence-based operation in Bannu district,

personnel in Bannu City, averting a major catastrophe, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).



while a lieutenant colonel and a soldier embraced martyrdom when a Khwarij rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into one of the vehicles of the leading group.

A vehicle-borne suicide bomber was intercepted by the leading group, foiling his nefarious design to target innocent civilians/ Law enforcement

“During the conduct of the operation, Khwarij were located and after an intense fire exchange, five Khwarij were sent to hell by the security forces. However, in desperation, Khwarij rammed the explosive-laden vehicle into one of the vehicles of the leading group,” it further said. Resultantly, Lt. Colonel Shahzada Gul

Faraz (age: 43 years, resident of District Mansehra), a brave commanding officer renowned for his daring actions, who was leading his troops from the front, embraced shahadat along with Sepoy Karamat Shah (age: 28 years, resident of Peshawar). “Khwarij are continuing with their terrorist activities inside Pakistan using Afghan soil, violating the sanctity of the holy month of Ramazan. This clearly indicates that they have no link with Islam,” the news release said.

The Afghan Taliban Regime has yet again failed to stop the Khwarij from using Afghan soil for terrorist activities inside Pakistan, that too in the holy month of Ramazan. Pakistan will not exercise any restraint and operations will continue against the perpetrators of this heinous and cowardly act for justified retribution against Khwarij.



WASHINGTON DC: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, shaking hands with US Commerce Secretary, Howard A. Lutnick after a meeting at the Department of Commerce in Washington D.C. Secretary Commerce, Government of Pakistan, and Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States of America are also seen.

CM Bugti emphasizes that violations of the official price list and hoarding in Ramazan would not be tolerated

Assures citizens that timely and effective administrative responses to complaints are being ensured

QUETTA (APP): The Chief Minister (CM) of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has ordered swift action following public complaints about butchers selling meat at prices above officially notified rates.

The move came after grievances were submitted through the Chief Minister's online portal, alleging widespread overcharging in Quetta. In response, the provincial administration launched a citywide crackdown targeting profiteers and violators of the official price list.

Authorities conducted raids across Quetta city, leading to the arrest of over 70 individuals accused of overpricing. Fines were imposed, and immediate legal proceedings were initiated against those found violat-

ing government directives. In a statement issued on X, Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that violations of the official price list and hoarding, particularly during the holy month of Ramazan, would not be tolerated. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to protecting consumers from profiteering during periods of high demand.

The CM assured citizens that timely and effective administrative responses to complaints are being ensured. He noted that strict monitoring mechanisms have been activated to maintain price stability and prevent exploitation. Officials confirmed that inspections and enforcement actions will continue in the coming days to ensure compliance with government directives and safeguard public interest.

On the third day of Ramazan, the Subdivision City team inspected 78 shops, resulting in the arrest of 48 individuals and the sealing of 19 shops. In the Subdivision Saddar area, 65 shops were checked, 24 individuals arrested, and 11 shops sealed. The Subdivision Saryab team inspected 91 shops, arresting 28 individuals and sealing 11 shops. Meanwhile, in Subdivision Kuchlak, 46 shops were inspected, leading to the arrest of 13 individuals and the sealing of 9 shops. Assistant Commissioners of Saryab, Kuchlak, and City, along with Special Magistrates, actively participated in the operations.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti offering Fataha on the sad demise of mother of Mir Hassan Khan Domki and maternal grandmother of Provincial Minister Sardar Kohiyar Khan Domki. Provincial Ministers and MPAs are also present.

Balochistan CM condemns Bannu terror attack, pays tribute to martyred officers

Independent Report
QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has strongly condemned the cowardly terrorist attack in Bannu and expressed deep sorrow over the martyrdom of Lieutenant Colonel Shehzada Gul Faraz and soldier Karamat Shah.

In a condolence statement issued on Friday, the Chief Minister said the fallen officers laid down their lives in defense of the motherland, protection of national security, and the restoration of peace. He described their sacrifice as a shining example of bravery, dedication, and unwavering commitment to duty.

“Such cowardly acts of terrorism are aimed at destabilizing the country, but they cannot shake the resolve of our nation and security forces,” Mir Bugti stated. He added that anti-state elements would never succeed in their nefarious designs.

Balochistan Govt distributes Ramadan relief packages to needy families in Quetta

Independent Report
QUETTA: The distribution of Ramadan relief packages in Quetta continues with transparency and careful organization, providing essential food and supplies to deserving and underprivileged families during the holy month of Ramadan.

On the second day of fasting, a well-organized ceremony was held at Kotwal High School, Nawa Killi, where hundreds of needy individuals received ration and relief packages. The distribution was overseen by Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini and Quetta City Magistrate Dr. Imran Zeb, along with their dedicated

team. Priority was given to the poorest and most vulnerable families to ensure they could meet their basic needs with dignity during the holy month. The district administration carried out the process efficiently, maintaining full transparency and organized planning across different areas of Quetta. Officials confirmed that similar organized relief distribution will continue in all districts of Balochistan throughout Ramadan, reflecting Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti's commitment to public welfare and

President, PM vow to completely eliminate terrorism

President, PM strongly condemn terrorist attack on security forces in Bannu

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Saturday, strongly condemned a terrorist attack of Fitna al Khwarij on security forces' convoy in District Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The president and the prime minister expressed their deep sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of Lieutenant Colonel Shahzada Gul Faraz and Sepoy Karamat Shah.

The president said that the great sacrifices of their martyrs were a national asset, President's Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

The president and the prime minister conveyed their heartfelt condolences to the families of the mar-

tyrs and prayed for the elevation of their ranks in Jannah and for grant of patience and strength to the bereaved families.

The president also reaffirmed the resolve that operations against Fitna al Khwarij would continue without discrimination and with full force, emphasizing that the nation would be protected at all costs.

The president further said that terrorists who violated the sanctity of the holy month of Ramazan had no connection with Islam.

The prime minister commended the security forces for foiling the nefarious designs of Fitna al Khwarij by eliminating five terrorists during the operation. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Pak, US express resolve to enhance bilateral economic cooperation

WASHINGTON: Pakistan and the United States on Saturday expressed a shared desire to deepen bilateral economic cooperation, especially in the fields of trade and investment.

The development came during a meeting between a Pakistani delegation, led by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, and US Commerce Secretary Howard A. Lutnick at the Department of Commerce in Washington DC. In an X post, the ministry said that both sides also discussed Washington's interest in investing in fields of ICT, Mining, and energy.

During the meeting, the finance minister appreciated the role of US Chamber of Commerce in organising the US-Pakistan Trade and Investment Forum on 31st March, 2026 which would be attended by renowned companies from both countries, besides ministerial representation from Pakistan and the USA. The finance czar expressed the hope that the office of the US commerce secretary would also participate in the same. “Both sides reiterated their commitment to further their engagements on investments in major projects in the coming months,” read the statement.

Govt to produce historic webseries on Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has decided to produce a historic web series on Pakistan's founding fathers, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal, aiming to reconnect younger generations with the ideological foundations of the country.

According to the minister, the project is being planned in connection with the 150th birth anniversaries of Jinnah and Iqbal. Participants in the meeting exchanged views on

Pakistan's creation, constitutional values and national principles. His remarks came after a detailed meeting with leading media houses and prominent producers to discuss the proposed historical drama.

Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal said the initiative seeks to familiarise youth with the intellectual journey behind



QUETTA: MNA Adil Khan Bazai shaking hands with Provincial Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami and MPA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch.

Blocking CNIC to enforce court decree violates right to life, SC rules

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court has declared as illegal the Sindh High Court's order to block a citizen's national identity card in order to enforce a court judgment, ruling that depriving a citizen of a Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) is tantamount to taking away the fundamental right to life.

Justice Muneeb Akhtar issued a three-page written judgment, stating that a national identity card is not a luxury but a basic necessity for leading an ordinary life. “Will courts tomorrow also order the disconnection of electricity and water connections for the recovery of money?” the judgment read. The court held that no

provision under Section 51 of the Code of Civil Procedure permits the blocking of a national identity card, and that without a clear provision in law, no court can order such action.

It further noted that an amendment made by the Peshawar High Court to the Code of Civil Procedure does not apply to the province of Sindh.

The case stems from a 2016 trial court decree issued against the petitioner in a property dispute, directing him to deposit a determined amount. Upon non-payment, the trial court ordered the blocking of his national identity card—a decision the Sindh High Court subsequently upheld.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Ministers Chaudhry Salik Hussain of PML (Q), Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui of MQM and Khalid Magsi of Balochistan Awami Party meeting with Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi.

Naqvi reaffirms united resolve against terrorism

Meets Ministers of PML-Q, MQM & BAP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi met with Federal Ministers representing Pakistan Muslim League (Q), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP). The meeting was attended by Chaudhry Salik Hussain of Pakistan Muslim League (Q), Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui of MQM, and Khalid Magsi of Balochistan Awami Party.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the overall national situation and matters related to internal security. The prevailing political situ-

ation in the country also came under discussion. The Interior Minister briefed the leaders of the three parties on the situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, and informed them about the measures being taken to ensure peace and stability.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Khalid Magsi appreciated the sincere efforts of Field Marshal General Asim Munir for the establishment of peace. The three leaders unequivocally announced that their parties stand shoulder to shoulder

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Sindh Assembly passes resolution declaring Karachi integral part of province

KARACHI (APP): The Provincial Assembly of Sindh on Saturday passed a resolution against a conspiracy aimed at division of the Sindh province. The resolution was moved by the Sindh Chief Minister (CM), Syed Murad Ali Shah and was supported by PTI and Jamaat e Islami members, while MQM-Pakistan MPAs rejected it.

On the floor of the house, CM Syed Murad Ali Shah, in a strongly worded resolution condemning what he termed “divisive statements” about breaking up Sindh or separating Karachi, declared that the province's unity and territorial integrity are non-negotiable and constitutionally protected.

In a comprehensive address to the House, the chief minister said Sindh was “not merely an administrative unit but one of the world's oldest living civilisations,” tracing its identity from Mohenjodaro to the historic Sindh Legislative Assembly that passed the Pakistan Resolution in 1943. “The province that played a foundational role in the creation of Pakistan cannot allow the fragmentation of its own historic homeland,” he asserted.

Shah condemned calls for carving out Karachi as a separate province, maintaining that the city, historically known as Kolachi,

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QUETTA: Special Magistrate City Dr. Imran Zaib distributing ration amongst the needy at Killi Kotwal Nawa Killi on the special directions of Balochistan Chief Minister and under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Quetta.

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NADRA achieves 97% national coverage as annual report highlights expanding registration network

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has submitted its annual performance report for the year ending January 2026 to the Ministry of Interior, revealing major progress in both citizen registration and digital identity services across Pakistan.

According to the report, 227 million citizens are now registered with NADRA, pushing the country's total coverage to nearly 97 percent. Of the registered population, 48 percent are women and 52 percent are men, a distribution the authority says reflects a continuing improvement in women's participation in the registration system.

The report further states that 31.9 million children have had their births recorded at Union Councils, although they have not yet been integrated into NADRA's central system. The authority describes this as the next major step toward achieving full national documentation.

NADRA's biometric database continues to expand rapidly. The system now contains facial records of 170 million people, iris scans of 7 million individuals, and nearly 1.64 billion fingerprints. In the year 2025 alone, the authority conducted 465 million biometric verifications, which it says played a vital role in strengthening transparency and supporting the government's transition to digital governance. The registration system saw steady growth during the year. Overall, national registration rose by four percent, the registration of children under 18 increased by eleven percent, and the renewal of expired identity cards went up by twenty-four percent. A striking rise of nine hundred percent was recorded in the cancellation of identity cards following the death of cardholders, while women's registration increased by eight percent, a trend NADRA has de-

scribed as a welcome development. To expand public access, NADRA operated 938 registration centers across Pakistan by the end of the year. Seventy-five new centers were established, while 138 new counters and an additional 126 counters were added to existing offices to meet rising demand.

To reach remote and underserved regions, 231 mobile registration vans—including 33 satellite units—were deployed, complemented by Minipacs and motorbike teams providing services at the Union Council level, where 62 counters remained active. Overseas Pakistanis also saw improved access to documentation through the establishment of six new counters in five different countries.

The report notes that NADRA has transformed 98 percent of its transactions into cashless processes and modernized its national call center to enhance public experience.



ISLAMABAD: Muslim break their fast during holy month of Ramadan.

Sustained peace, stability in region not possible without Kashmir solution: APHC

SRINAGAR (INP): In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, All Parties Hurriyat Conference has said that the dream of sustained peace, stability and development in the region can only be realized through the resolution of lingering Kashmir dispute.

According to Kashmir Media Service, illegally detained APHC Chairman Masarat Alam Butt in a message from the infamous Tihar Jail in New Delhi has urged India to abandon the policy of keeping Jammu and Kashmir together through military force and fulfill its promise of giving the Kashmiri people their right to self-determination.

He said due to the non-resolution of the Kashmir dispute, not only are the Kashmiris suffering from problems and difficulties, but this issue is also the main reason for the tension between Pakistan and India.

Masarat Alam Butt said India's stubbornness is the biggest obstacle in re-

solving the Kashmir dispute amicably, the United Nations should put pressure on India to settle this issue in accordance with its resolutions.

He said that India itself had taken the Kashmir dispute to the United Nations and had promised the Kashmiris before the international community that they would be given the opportunity to decide their own future through a plebiscite in accordance with the resolutions of the World Body but later India reneged on its promise. He said when the Kashmiris tried to remind India of its promise, they were subjected to all kinds of atrocities.

The APHC Chairman said that despite Indian atrocities, the Kashmiris were determined to continue their struggle for the right to self-determination. He said that the people of Kashmir had made countless sacrifices for their legitimate right and their sacrifices would not be allowed to go waste.

Syedaal highlights importance of mother languages

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan Nasar on Saturday that a mother language forms the intellectual foundation, cultural identity, and historical continuity of any nation.

In his message on the occasion of International Mother Language Day, he stated that language is not merely a means of communication but a custodian of a nation's collective consciousness, values, traditions, and cultural heritage.

He noted that the preservation of mother languages is, in essence, the preservation of national identity and cultural sovereignty. The Deputy Chairman highlighted that educational experts and researchers have consistently shown that early childhood education in the mother tongue significantly enhances cognitive development, comprehension, and creative abilities.

Children instructed in their native language tend to

perform better academically and maintain a stronger connection with their cultural and social values.

He observed that Pakistan represents a rich tapestry of linguistic and cultural diversity. Languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, Saraiki, Brahui, Hindko, Shina, Balti, Khowar, Kashmiri, and many others are spoken across the country.

These languages are invaluable components of the nation's identity and serve as repositories of history, folklore, Sufi poetry, and literary heritage. While Urdu, as the national and link language, plays a vital role in strengthening unity among the federating units, he underscored that all languages spoken in Pakistan deserve equal respect, recognition, and institutional support. Syedaal Khan Nasar further noted that Pakistan's mother languages have produced eminent poets, writers, intellectuals, and scholars.



QUETTA: Special Magistrate Izatullah Sub Division (Sariab) taking action and price hikers.

scribed as a welcome development.

To expand public access, NADRA operated 938 registration centers across Pakistan by the end of the year. Seventy-five new centers were established, while 138 new counters and an additional 126 counters were added to existing offices to meet rising demand.

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The report notes that NADRA has transformed 98 percent of its transactions into cashless processes and modernized its national call center to enhance public experience.



Governor of Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan inaugurating solarization at the Bibi Pakdaman Shrine in Lahore.

Pak, SA Women ODI series begins today

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan will face South Africa in a three-match women's ODI series commencing from February 22 (Sunday). The ODI matches will be played on 22, 25 February and 1 March. The first and third games will start at 1pm PKT, while the only day-night fixture at SuperSport Park, Centurion will get underway at 4pm PKT. This is Pakistan women's second ODI series against South Africa in six months.

Pakistan's 15-member squad will be captained by Fatima Sana, while Laura Wolvaardt will lead the home side. Pakistan come on the back of a comprehensive win in the third

T20I of the series, winning the game by 53 runs.

The squad features one uncapped player for Pakistan, with left-arm pacer Tasmia Rubab braced for her ODI debut.

The three-match ODI series is part of the 2025-2029 ICC Women's ODI Championship; the competition that serves as a qualification route for the 2029 Women's Cricket World Cup.

In this cycle, each side will feature in eight three-match ODI series; four home and four away, so every game carries significant value in the Championship standings.

For Pakistan, in the current squad, in the bat-

ting department, Sidra Amin has featured in 13 ODIs against South Africa, scoring 476 runs at an average of 43.27 including two centuries and as many half-centuries.

In the bowling unit, left-arm spinner Nashra Sundhu has played 16 matches, claiming 25 wickets at an economy rate of 4.16 with her career-best figures of 6-26 coming against the Proteas in September 2025.

Wahab Riaz talking to PCB Digital ahead of the ODI series said:

"The T20I series was very competitive and we will look to give South Africa a tough time in the ODI series as well."

Gilani highlights importance of mother languages on Intl Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, on Saturday, said that a mother language forms the very foundation of a person's identity, dignity, and cultural heritage.

In his message on International Mother Language Day, he stated that a mother tongue not only defines who we are but also reflects our traditions, values, and rich cultural legacy.

He noted that research consistently shows that children who begin their education in their mother tongue experience more balanced and effective cognitive development.

"A mother language is a child's first voice and the custodian of inherited

knowledge and traditions, playing a fundamental role in shaping personality and intellectual growth," he remarked.

The Chairman Senate observed that Pakistan is a vibrant mosaic of languages. Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, Saraiki, Brahui, Hindko, Hazarvi, and many others represent the nation's shared culture, history, traditional bonds, and historical narratives.

He highlighted that Urdu continues to serve as a vital link language connecting the federating units; however, all languages spoken in Pakistan deserve equal respect and pride.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani further stated that Pakistan's mother languages

Another earthquake jolts KP cities, Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): A 4.5 magnitude earthquake again jolted Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and some Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cities on Saturday at 9.27 am. Tremors were also felt in Haripur, Khanpur, and Swabi areas of KP.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the earthquake measured 4.5 on the Richter scale. Its epicenter was recorded near the northern region, and it lasted for a few seconds. Many residents reported feeling their homes and offices shake.

Some people rushed outdoors as a precaution, while local authorities confirmed that there were no immediate reports of injuries or structural damage.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people filing drinking water at a water filtration plant at I-10 sector.

Sindh Assembly..

Continued from page 1

emerged from Sindh's soil and remains geographically, historically and emotionally inseparable from it.

"Any attempt to divide Sindh or detach Karachi is contrary to history, constitutional spirit and democratic norms," he said, adding that such rhetoric harms national cohesion.

Referring to constitutional safeguards, the chief minister cited Article 239 of the 1973 Constitution, which requires the consent of not less than two-thirds of the concerned provincial assembly for any alteration of provincial boundaries.

"If any such move is attempted, it is this Assembly-by a two-thirds majority-that will decide," he told lawmakers.

Murad Shah recalled that a similar resolution had been passed by the Sindh Assembly in 1994, emphasizing that this was "not the first time" the province had resisted attempts to undermine its unity.

He also noted that when Karachi was declared the capital in 1948, the country did not yet have a constitution, arguing that constitutional clarity today sheds light on his contributions.

The resolution condemned "any conspiracy aimed at the division of Sindh or the creation of a separate province comprising Karachi," reaffirmed that Karachi shall "forever remain" an integral part of Sindh, and called on all political stakeholders to refrain from divisive rhetoric. It further directed the provincial government to forward the resolution to the President, Prime Minister, Chairman of the Senate and Speaker of the National Assembly for record.

Without naming any political party, Mr Shah said the resolution targeted no individual but urged members to read it carefully and raise objections, if any, through democratic debate.

"Opposing this resolution would amount to supporting the division of Sindh," he remarked.

Highlighting Sindh's historical struggles, from its separation from the Bombay Presidency in 1936 to resistance against the One Unit scheme, the chief minister said the people of Sindh had consistently defended their province through constitutional and political means.

He also invoked the slogan "Pakistan Khappay," raised by Asif Ali Zardari, reiterating that the Pakistan Peoples Party stands for national unity and federalism. "PPP will never go against Pakistan's integrity. It is you who speak of dividing Pakistan," he said in a pointed rebuttal to critics. Concluding his speech, Murad Shah declared: "Even the thought, dream or idea of breaking Sindh will never succeed."

Letter, CM Murad Shah responding to the opposition's debate regarding a resolution against the division of the province. He categorically rejected claims that the resolution was unconstitutional, challenging opponents to identify even a single point that violated the law.

Naqvi..

Continued from page 1

der with the security forces in eliminating terrorists from Pakistan and will continue to do so in the future.

The Federal Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to jointly work for the establishment of peace and the eradication of terrorism. All four Federal Ministers paid tribute to the brave actions of the security forces for maintaining peace. They also paid homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives while bravely fighting the terrorists of Fina-al-Khawarij.

The Federal Ministers stated that they stand with the families of the martyrs and will continue to support them at all times.

Balochistan..

Continued from page 1

his focus on helping vulnerable communities and alleviating their hardships.

The initiative stands as a practical demonstration of the provincial government's dedication to service, ensuring that support reaches those who need it most during this blessed month. As part of this initiative, a dignified ceremony was held at Sabzal Road High School, where more than 100 deserving individuals received separate packages. The distribution was carried out under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini, with Quetta City Magistrate Dr. Imran Zeb overseeing the arrangements.

T20 World Cup: Rain washes out Pak, New Zealand Super Eight clash, both teams share points

COLOMBOL Persistent rain forced the abandonment of the Super Eight fixture between Pakistan and New Zealand in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, with not a single ball bowled at R Premadasa International Cricket Stadium in Colombo on Saturday.

Officials confirmed the decision after prolonged monitoring of conditions, with the outfield remaining too wet to permit any play. The washout meant both teams were awarded one point each in the crucial second-stage encounter.

The highly anticipated contest never got underway after steady showers that began around the toss failed to clear. Ground staff kept the covers firmly in place throughout, and officials eventually called off the match due to unplayable conditions.

Earlier, Pakistan had won the toss and elected to bat first in their opening Super Eight appearance. Captain Salman Ali Agha had said the plan was to post a strong total and defend it against New Zealand, but the weather intervened before play could begin. The abandonment leaves both sides sharing the spoils, a result that could prove significant in the tightly contested Super Eight standings.

With one point each added to their tally, Pakistan now turn their attention to upcoming fixtures against England and Sri Lanka as they look to keep their semi-final hopes alive.



RAWALPINDI: Municipal workers remove illegal billboards along Stadium Road in the city.

PTI cracks deepen over KPCMA Afridi's 'release force' plan for Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE (INP): After divisions surfaced within the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) over the health of party founder Imran Khan, the party is now split again over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi's announcement of a "force" to secure the former prime minister's release.

On the eve of Ramadan, the Tehreek Tahaffuz Ayyeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) abruptly ended its sit-in outside the Supreme Court. Speaking at the same venue, Afridi announced plans to form a force aimed at freeing Imran Khan, a move that caught many in the party off guard.

However, he contended that it could be a proposal put forward by

the chief minister and there would be deliberations. He faced within the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) who is also a member of the PTI Political Committee, would present the reasons as to why such a force was needed when the party already had existing bodies such as the Insaf Students Federation (ISF) and PTI Youth Wings.

He pointed out that if the chief minister himself stated that people from the party and its wings would be part of the proposed force, then it was worth questioning whether such a force was truly required on the ground.

He emphasised that such a force would need endorsement from the Political Committee or Secretary General Salman Akram Raja.

Sheikh Rasheed seeks court's nod for performing Umrah

ISLAMABAD (INP): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad on Saturday filed an application in an anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi, seeking permission to travel to Saudi Arabia for performing Umrah.

Sardar Shehbaz Advocate filed the application on behalf of Rasheed.

It was stated in the application that the AML chief regularly appeared in the court in connection with the hearings of his cases, and that he never misused the bail granted to him.

It was further written that the purpose of travelling to Saudi Arabia is to perform Umrah, and that the applicant would make

sure he returned to the country within the stipulated time period. "It is, therefore, prayed to the court to allow the applicant to perform Umrah."

Speaking to the media outside the court, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad said "Amnesty should be granted to everyone during the holy month of Ramadan."

Sheikh Rasheed said that unemployment has reached its peak and inflation is going to be out of control.

The seasoned politician said "Flour is being sold at the rate of Rs159 per kilogram." Sheikh Rasheed said that he wanted to appeal to the Chief Justice of Pakistan to fix appeals filed by the common man at the earliest for hearing.

Govt to produce..

Continued from page 1

ducing a high-quality historical series that reflects the lives, struggles and vision of the two national figures.

Iqbal stressed that purposeful storytelling remains one of the most powerful tools for nation building.

He described the web series as part of a broader national strategy to preserve historical awareness among young people and ensure they understand not only the leaders' struggles but also the values and determination that shaped the nation.

The minister said the series is expected to project Pakistan's narrative effectively on the global stage while serving as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy and intellectual outreach.

The government has expressed its commitment to providing initial support for high-quality historical productions. Plans are also under way to organise a specialised workshop for writers, producers and creative teams to deepen their

understanding of the thought and philosophy of both leaders.

Officials believe the series will play a significant role in strengthening national identity, values and public confidence. The planning minister also encouraged the development and promotion of local OTT platforms to support the digital distribution of meaningful content.

Highlighting the scale of the initiative, Iqbal announced that the government would provide seed funding of up to Rs500 million for productions that meet international standards. He noted that research-driven and authentic historical content would be prioritised to align Pakistan's cultural heritage with the demands of the digital age.

The minister added that collaboration with the creative industry would help strengthen the national narrative, while the constitutional struggle of Jinnah and the intellectual vision of Iqbal would be positioned within the global discourse.

Balochistan Health Minister highlights importance of preserving mother languages

Bakht Kakar stresses cultural, educational, and social value of local languages

QUETTA (ANN): Balochistan Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar emphasized the vital role of mother languages in preserving national identity, culture, and heritage, noting that nations that keep their languages alive never lose their true identity.

He stated that safeguarding all mother languages is the joint responsibility of the state and society. "Sadly, mother languages have not been granted the recognition they deserve at official levels. They must be effectively represented in edu-

cation, governance, and media," he said.

Minister Kakar added that mother languages are more than just communication tools; they form the foundation of collective consciousness and historical continuity. "Mastering one's language reflects love for it, while hatred or prejudice against another language is unacceptable," he said.

He highlighted that Balochistan's linguistic diversity reflects its intellectual depth and cultural richness, and protecting it is a key governmental responsibility. "The government

is implementing coordinated strategies for teaching, research, and documentation of regional languages. Engaging the younger generation with their mother tongue is essential for strengthening identity and intellectual self-confidence," he said.

The minister concluded by emphasizing that promoting mother languages does not weaken national unity, but rather strengthens the principle of "unity in diversity." He called for fostering love, understanding, and respect among communities to mark the significance of the day.



QUETTA: Government of Balochistan organizes Ramadan Sasta Bazar for daily use items in Quetta.

DC Usta Muhammad ensures transparent distribution of Ramadan relief package

Independent Report
USTA MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner

Usta Muhammad Muhammad Ramzan Pal emphasized that the Ramadan relief package, provided under the directives of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti for poor and deserving families, is a sacred trust. He stated that delivering it with full transparency, honesty, and accountability remains the foremost priority of the district administration.

Mohammad Ramzan Pal clarified that strict measures have been adopted to ensure there is no negligence, bias, or irregularity in the distribution process.

A comprehensive strategy has been implemented, and all relevant officers have been issued

clear instructions to maintain the highest standards of fairness.

To guarantee organized and equitable distribution, responsibilities have been assigned to Assistant Commissioner Usta Muhammad Muhammad Ramzan Ishtiaq, Tehsildar Usta Muhammad Ali Gohar Magsi, and other concerned officers and revenue staff.

Officers have been directed to actively supervise the process in the field, correctly identify the deserving families, and monitor the distribution to ensure timely delivery of aid to genuine beneficiaries.

The Deputy Commissioner added that the distribution process is being conducted in consultation and collaboration with local councilors to ensure accurate and trans-

parent identification of eligible families at the grassroots level.

Transparency, merit, and fairness remain the guiding principles to ensure that the benefits of the Balochistan government's people-centric policies reach the truly needy.

Assistant Commissioner Mohammad Ramzan Ishtiaq reaffirmed that the district administration is committed to ensuring that the relief package reaches deserving families in a timely and transparent manner, with strict monitoring and continuous field supervision.

This initiative reflects the administration's dedication to public welfare and reinforces the government's commitment to support vulnerable communities during the holy month of Ramadan.



QUETTA: Traffic police lifting vehicle from no parking area.

AC Chaman conducts market inspections

Orders strict compliance with official price lists

Independent Report

CHAMAN: Assistant Commissioner Chaman Imtiaz Ali Baloch carried out a detailed inspection of various markets across the city during the holy month of Ramadan to review prices, quality, and hygiene standards of essential commodities.

During the visit, he checked the sale of meat, ghee, pulses, sugar, flour, vegetables, and other daily-use items in accordance with the officially notified rate list. He also examined the display of price lists at shops and obtained direct feedback from citizens present at the markets.

The Assistant Commissioner directed shopkeepers to strictly adhere to the government rate list, SOPs, and safety precautions. He emphasized that providing maximum relief to the public during Ramadan remains the district administration's top priority.

He also visited tailor shops and other businesses, imposing fines on those found violating the official rate list. Butchers were specifically warned to ensure that meat is sold

strictly according to government prices across the city. He made it clear that strict legal action would be taken against anyone charging above the prescribed rates.

Imtiaz Ali Baloch stated that the district administration remains vigilant and proactive to ensure public convenience during Ramadan.

He urged the trader community, market associations, and trade unions to cooperate fully with the administration in maintaining price stability so that ordinary citizens may receive genuine relief.

He further noted that, in line with the directives of the Government of Balochistan, daily inspections will continue throughout Ramadan. Action against profiteering and hoarding will be carried out without discrimination, keeping in view the sanctity of the holy month.

The Assistant Commissioner also appealed to the public to report instances of overpricing to the district administration so that prompt and effective action can be ensured.



QUETTA: Inspector General Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir offering Dua after inaugurating newly constructed Volleyball Football Ground at PTC.

ANP Parliamentary leader stresses protection of mother languages on Intl Mother Language day

Zamrak Khan Achakzai calls for greater representation of local languages in education, governance, and media

QUETTA (ANN): On the occasion of International Mother Language Day, ANP Parliamentary Leader Engineer Zamrak Khan Achakzai emphasized that mother languages are not merely tools of expression, but the foundation of a nation's identity, culture, and intellectual continuity.

Speaking to the media, Achakzai highlighted that languages such as Pashto, Balochi, Brahui, and Hazargi spoken across the province, are a shared cul-

tural heritage that must be preserved. He stressed that safeguarding these languages is a responsibility of both the state and society.

"Unfortunately, mother languages have not been given the recognition they deserve at the official level," he said. "They must be effectively represented in the education system, government affairs, and media."

Recalling ANP's past initiatives, he noted, "During our tenure, we took his-

toric steps to promote and preserve mother languages. For the first time, local languages were incorporated into the curriculum, and early-level education in mother languages was formally introduced."

He concluded by affirming that the ANP will continue its struggle for linguistic rights and the promotion of mother language education, ensuring that future generations grow up with respect for their cultural and linguistic heritage.



QUETTA: A view of accumulated sewerage water on double road.

Pak-China friendship Hospital strengthens healthcare inducing new staff

GWADAR (INP): The Pak-China Friendship Hospital in Gwadar announced 47 job vacancies across medical, technical, administrative and support departments, as part of efforts to strengthen healthcare services at the facility.

The hospital is operated by Indus Hospital & Health Network (IHNN) under a public-private partnership with the Government of Balochistan, Gwadar Pro reported.

According to an official announcement, IHNN, the vacancies include positions for consultants, senior registrars, specialists, senior medical officers, medical officers, pharmacists, nurses, technologists, physiotherapists and biomedical engineers.

Additional openings are available in radiology, ophthalmology, operating rooms, clinical laboratories, administration, front desk services, nutrition and food services, housekeeping, maintenance, safety and security, and travel and accommodation.

Support and technical positions include engineers, technicians, receptionists, drivers, security personnel and other staff.

Interested candidates can apply online through the Indus Hospital & Health Network's official website. The deadline for submitting applications is Feb. 24, 2026.

Since its inception in 2022, the Pak-China Friendship Hospital, Gwadar has treated more than 675,000 patients.



QUETTA: People buying jalebi to break their fast during holy month of Ramadan.

Comprehensive cleanliness drive continues across Loralai ahead of Ramazan

Independent Report

LORALAI: A large-scale cleanliness campaign is continuing across Loralai city on the special directives of Commissioner Loralai Division Wali Muhammad, with Municipal Committee teams intensifying efforts to ensure a clean, healthy, and pollution-free urban environment.

Acting on instructions from Chief Officer Municipal Committee Mohibullah Babch, sanitation staff have been actively carrying out daily operations in various parts of the city. Major garbage heaps were cleared from Posto Gali, Kabari Bazaar, Khalo Zone, and the area in front of New Al-

Habib Hotel parking, while regular desilting of drains was undertaken to improve the drainage system and prevent environmental hazards. Similar cleanliness operations were conducted in TTC Colony, Khalo Zone TTC Mohallah, and Hazara Mohallah in the Saleem Dad Complaint Zone, where drains were cleaned to eliminate foul odors, stagnation, and potential health risks.

Municipal workers used tractor trolleys to promptly collect and transport waste from different localities to designated dumping sites, ensuring systematic disposal and sustained monitoring of the campaign.



USTA MUHAMMAD: Assistant Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Ishtiaq distributing ration amongst the needy persons on the special directions of Deputy Commissioner Usta Muhammad.

Quetta struggles with soaring prices despite Ramadan relief measures

Traders exploit holy month; citizens demand immediate action on food inflation

QUETTA (ANN): Despite the start of the third day of Ramadan, citizens of Quetta continue to face soaring prices of essential goods, highlighting the failure of the administration and the Price Control Committee to stabilize the market.

Even after dozens of arrests in previous operations, everyday items— from wheat to vegetables— have doubled in price, putting them beyond the reach of low-income families.

While the government and district administration have promised "Sasta Bazaars" (affordable markets), their locations and the actual impact on prices remain unclear, leaving citizens frustrated.

Reports indicate that profiteers and hoarders have taken advantage of the

holy month, deliberately stockpiling goods and inflating prices. Bakers, too, have reduced the weight of bread by 100%, selling smaller loaves at double the cost, further straining household budgets. Citizens lament that, despite regulations on bread prices, enforcement remains inconsistent, allowing traders to continue charging exorbitantly.

Public sentiment strongly urges the government to implement a strict crackdown on profiteering and hoarding and ensure that affordable goods are genuinely available for citizens throughout Ramadan.

Observers stress that decisive action is needed immediately to protect the poor from exploitation during the holy month.



QUETTA: Aged man sells plastic pots to support family during Ramadan on Ansoomb Road in Quetta.

AC conducts surprise visit to Harnai Bazar, warns against overpricing

HARNAI: Assistant Commissioner Harnai Abdul Razzaq Tareen has reaffirmed that providing relief to the public and ensuring the availability of essential commodities at fair prices is the district administration's responsibility, warning that negligence in this regard will not be tolerated.

During a surprise visit to Hamai Bazar on Saturday, the Assistant Commissioner, accompanied by the SHO Police and other relevant officials, inspected the availability of essential commodities at fair prices and reviewed compliance with the officially notified price list, and assessed the overall cleanliness and traffic situation in the town.

Visiting various shops, Abdul Razzaq Tareen checked the prices of essential commodities and verified the display of the government-issued rate list. He directed shopkeepers to prominently display the official price list and strictly adhere to it. "Overcharging will not be tolerated under any circumstances," he warned, adding that shops found violating price regulations or failing to display the rate list would face strict legal

action, including sealing of premises and registration of cases.

The Assistant Commissioner also inspected sanitation conditions in the market and instructed the concerned staff to further improve cleanliness in and around the bazaar to ensure a hygienic environment for citizens. He emphasized that maintaining cleanliness is a top administrative priority and essential for public health.

In addition, he directed traffic police to ensure smooth flow of traffic in the town. Illegal parking, road blockages, and encroachments, he said, would not be allowed. He ordered immediate action against violators and instructed officials to devise a special traffic plan during peak hours to minimize inconvenience for residents.

Citizens appreciated the district administration's initiative, expressing hope that such surprise inspections would help stabilize prices and discourage profiteering. Shopkeepers also assured the administration of their cooperation and compliance with the official rate list.



QUETTA: Sariab road wreckage demands urgent attention from concerned authorities for reconstruction.

Grand crackdown launched against profiteering in Khuzdar ahead of Ramazan

Independent Report

KHUZDAR: The district administration has launched a grand operation against artificial price hikes in Khuzdar on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq Sasoli, aiming to provide relief to citizens during the holy month of Ramadan. Assistant Commissioner Khuzdar Hafeezullah Kakar conducted a surprise visit to Khuzdar Bazar, inspecting the prices of essential commodities, hygiene conditions, and overall quality of goods being sold. The action followed public complaints regarding overpricing and violations of the officially notified rate list.

During the operation, three butchers were arrested and shifted to police custody for violating the government price list. Dozens of shopkeepers were fined heavily for failing to display official rate lists and for overcharging customers. Vendors found selling substandard items or

maintaining poor hygiene were issued final warnings. "Those looting poor citizens during Ramadan deserve to be behind bars," Assistant Commissioner Kakar stated, adding that no one would be allowed to take the law into their own hands or charge arbitrary prices.

The district administration has made it clear that the crackdown against profiteering and hoarding will continue throughout Ramadan. Citizens have been urged to report any instances of overcharging to the administration immediately.

For complaints, the administration has provided the following contact numbers:

In-charge Bazaar Khuzdar: 0333-7985181

Office Number: 0848-412252 Officials reiterated that strict enforcement measures will remain in place to protect consumers and ensure fair pricing in the market.

Sunday February 22, 2026

BoP meets

In true Trumpian fashion, the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace in Washington on Thursday was high on spectacle, and low on substance. Perhaps the only positive outcome was the news that Pakistan will not be among the five states contributing troops to the International Stabilisation Force to be stationed in Gaza.

Otherwise, there was vague talk of 'peace', as well as associated Israeli threats to torpedo the whole plan unless Gaza is demilitarised, which means Hamas giving up its weapons. Billions of dollars have been pledged for the occupied territory, but how many of these promises materialise remains up in the air, as Israel still controls access to the Strip. Regarding the ISF, an American general will lead the force, while Indonesia has committed around 8,000 troops for the scheme. However, Jakarta has said the mission is "humanitarian", and that its troops will not be involved in combat roles, precluding any confrontation with Hamas, which US President Donald Trump and Israel insist must be disarmed. Indonesia is aware that any potential confrontation with Palestinian resistance groups will not go down well domestically or in the larger Muslim world.

Pakistan has taken the right decision by not committing forces. The BoP and ISF are experimental entities without a clear mandate, apart from establishing 'peace' in Gaza, while the possibility of confronting Palestinians and protecting Israeli interests should immediately serve as red flags. Moreover, as per The Guardian, the US intends to build a massive base in Gaza. What is the need for such a facility? Unless there is clarity, the base will represent American occupation of Palestinian land in support of Israel on the sly.

Though plenty of optimism was visible at the Washington meeting, the Palestinians are not so sure this exercise will lead to their liberation and an end to Israeli atrocities. After all, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that there will be no reconstruction "before the demilitarisation of Gaza". Unless proved otherwise, Tel Aviv will have an invisible veto at BoP, and all plans will be tailored to its satisfaction, with crumbs thrown at the Palestinians.

Mr Trump told the meeting that "we will help Gaza". So far no help has been visible as Israel has slaughtered around 600 Palestinians since last October's ceasefire, while overall the toll of its genocidal violence has crossed 72,000 since October 2023; some studies suggest the toll may be higher. While Muslim states, including Pakistan and Indonesia, spoke for Palestinian rights at the meeting, there were no unambiguous promises from Mr Trump to stop Israel's land grabs in the West Bank — moves that a recent UN report has said resemble ethnic cleansing. Hence, expecting the BoP to chart a roadmap towards Palestinian liberation is a fallacy.

Tariq Khosa

A recent fact-finding report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has called for an urgent high-level judicial inquiry into deaths during so-called operations conducted by the Punjab Police's Crime Control Department, which has allegedly adopted a "deliberate policy of staged police encounters leading to extrajudicial killings". According to the report, as many as 924 suspects were killed in at least 670 CCD-led encounters across Punjab over eight months in 2025 since the launch of the special branch of police created to curb organised crime and heinous offences. The CCD's performance has been hailed by Punjab's political leadership as a great achievement that has protected citizens' life, property and honour.

However, HRCP has rightly described such killings — averaging more than two fatal encounters per day — as "institutionalised practice". The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022, requires the Federal

Investigation Agency to investigate every death in police custody under the supervision of the National Commission for Human Rights. Inquiries by judicial magistrates are required under Section 174 and 176 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc) in the case of custodial deaths. There's no evidence that these legal formalities were observed to even try to "justify" such fake encounters. It appears that this police culture of impunity has been perpetrated and patronised by those at the helm of political and security affairs in Pakistan's largest province.

HRCP has pointed to the lack of accountability mechanisms behind the CCD's cold-blooded violence. A uniform template of allegations is followed: suspects open fire first, police fire back in self-defence, and, under highly improbable circumstances, the suspects are killed in their accomplices' friendly fire; the dead suspects then turn out to be "hardened criminals". These have been declared "lethal shortcuts" secured by bypassing proper investigation, prosecution and judicial over-

sight. HRCP wants an immediate "moratorium" on all encounter operations until legal safeguards and independent accountability mechanisms are established.

After a year's pre-service training at Police College Sihala in 1977, I was sent to Punjab to serve as assistant superintendent of police at Sheikhpura, Pakpattan and Jhang subdivisions. Punjab Police has a reputation for using strong-arm tactics against criminals. A tough police chief in Lahore was known as 'Halaku Khan'. Since the 19th century, Punjab Police's interrogation techniques have been part of folklore. 'Effective' police officers were projected as macho figures in Punjab's vast hinterlands. There were two types of officers: those who believed that the ends justified the means and harsh and extrajudicial measures were effective crime-control methods; the other smaller group comprised those who believed in the rule of law, due process and adherence to a code that gave primacy to human rights and dignity over brutality.

My father's profession as a lawyer and his

being a disciple of Mohammad Ali Jinnah set my course; I chose the path less trodden, which followed the rule of law. As SSP, I was appointed Lahore police chief in 1991; a recent predecessor was said to be an 'encounter specialist'. The younger brother of the then prime minister was heading a crime control committee for Lahore district. It took me a while to make him understand that crime can be controlled through the painstaking tasks of intelligence collection and professional (and not extra-legal) interrogation of suspects, thorough investigations, collection of credible (and not cooked-up) evidence, assiduous prosecutions and meticulous trials. Over the next two years, the Lahore police took a rule-of-law approach to control crime as the media of those years can testify.

The same politician became Punjab chief minister in 1997 and his elder brother the prime minister. On the recommendation of the then inspector-general of police (IGP) and chief secretary, he posted me as DIG of Faisalabad region. Terrorism and sectarian

violence were at their peak in those days. The Crime Investigation Department was reorganised and an elite police force created to tackle sectarian violence. The Anti-Terrorism Act was promulgated in 1997, and special speedy trial courts were established. Within two years, hundreds of sectarian terrorists, mainly belonging to Sunni and Shia militant groups were arrested, prosecuted and incarcerated. Sectarian violence came down through lawful measures. Later, the CID was upgraded to the Counter-Terrorism Department and further successes were achieved. Both the political and security establishments achieved the desired results through an approach based on due process and the rule of law.

Punjab's current style of policing can be described as draconian. In the last three years or so, extremely harsh measures have been used against peaceful political protests, and the privacy of homes has been violated. Above all, extrajudicial and custodial killings by the CCD have created an environment of distrust and disgust. The ill-advised pro-

mulgation of the Torture and Custodial Death Act in 2022 has not stopped the killer cops from fighting crime by simply eliminating criminals. Will the federal police carry out a scrutiny of the provincial force? I doubt it. They themselves appear to be partners in this crime. The strategy of creating a special crime control department should be re-examined by Punjab's political leadership. Shortcuts to fighting crime and populist displays of swift justice will backfire. Violence begets violence.

Judicial scrutiny of custodial and extrajudicial killings under Sections 174 and 176 of CrPc is the only way to ensure viable and legal accountability. In our policing days, we were genuinely concerned when high courts took notice of illegal detentions, the misuse of force and deaths in custody. We would not let our juniors run amok. By following the unlawful directions of the ruling elite and deep state, the current police leadership has failed. They must now draw the line and ensure that the police follow the law and enhance their investigative skills and capacity.

Culture of impunity**Absorbing population growth****Zeba Sathar**

Finally, the debate about whether rapid population growth is beneficial or pernicious for the economy appears to be settled. While the evidence was extensive and categorical, it has taken several decades for the numbers to be absorbed by our leading economists. In the meantime, we have potentially lost billions of dollars in GDP, experienced the tragedy of several thousand maternal and child deaths, and seen a decline in per capita income as the cost of not pursuing sound population policies and actions to bring down our rapid population growth rate. While all our neighbours, most prominently Bangladesh, took clear and purposeful steps, we have complacently accepted high and ever rising population growth rates since 2000.

The consensus created at DawnMedia's Pakistan Population Summit last December confirmed several truths. First and foremost is that economic growth and prosperity for Pakistan are impossible under current demographic trends. High fertility and population growth

rates are eating into an already low economic growth, resulting in greater poverty and income inequalities. There is categorical evidence that larger households with more dependents save less, spend less on education and eat lower-quality food.

Second, the expectation of a demographic dividend due to the surge in the working population is an elusive dream. In fact, this dream has been shattered by growing unemployment figures and a rising gap in the ability to generate employment to keep up with the millions of youth entering the labour force each year. The finance minister has publicly admitted that it is next to impossible, as not enough jobs are being generated to keep pace with the forecasted surge in the working-age population.

Third, it was proclaimed that urbanisation would be the engine of growth and generate employment. However, it has been pointed out by Pakistan@2050 that structural changes are required to produce more jobs. Rapid urbanisation is being led by a push out of agriculture in rural areas to escape poverty, and not as a pull fac-

tor in search of better jobs. In fact, additional jobs in new sectors only provide minimal employment.

The summit brought together a wide spectrum of participants and speakers, generating some optimism that we have turned the corner on population issues. Foremost, a media house took the initiative of organising a summit on population.

Another prominent media house has just launched the Waqfa campaign to raise awareness and change behaviour. Much of this positivity is the outcome of the Council of Islamic Ideology and Population Council consultation on the concept of tawazun (balance) and birth spacing last year. This declaration has been endorsed by 37 prominent ulema supporting family planning and birth spacing for improved outcomes for mothers, children and families.

Another hopeful sign is the unusual cross-party support for the national issue of tackling high population growth rates. The Parliamentary Forum for Population has had successful meetings over five years, discussing resource-sharing around population. Forum members passed a unani-

mous resolution in parliament last August.

If a consensus has emerged, why is there very little action at the national or provincial level that reflects a commitment to lowering population growth on an urgent and priority basis? This is not to undermine efforts and statements issued periodically by the provincial and federal leadership.

The need to act is immediate. There is no time for piecemeal efforts or waiting for the provinces to reach the same level of capacity and concern regarding this daunting challenge. The federal government should take the first step and become the dominant partner. It must demonstrate intent, moving beyond statements: theirs should be a policy setting and coordination role with the provinces and regions. Larger provinces, such as Punjab and Sindh, can generate their initiatives, but less-resourced provinces and regions definitely require supplemental funds from the centre.

The finance minister has been most consistent and prominent in publicly expressing that population growth is not just an im-

pediment but an existential crisis for Pakistan. Creating the financing and resources to balance population concerns, especially in the most challenging, poorest, remotest and vulnerable parts of the country, must be his ministry's priority. Direct financing for districts that are most vulnerable and lack the basics, preventing millions of households from accessing education, health and family planning, has to become as much of a priority as other financing reforms.

The Benazir Income Support Programme is renowned as one of the largest social protection programmes in the world. It is centred on women. Unwanted pregnancies affect the poorest women most directly, as do unwanted and mistimed births, which are not within their control. A cash transfer programme must be launched that enables poorer households to access family planning services. This programme would follow the same rationale as providing income support to women living in the poorest households through BSP. The poorest women, when able to fulfil their unmet needs, will provide

for improved health outcomes for families and create an economically powerful impetus for improving household welfare. It will present a programme that enables millions to benefit from improving other outcomes — such as their own health, household savings and children's investments — and trigger a new turnaround dynamic.

In addition, the federal government must activate and announce the CCI mandated population fund. This population fund should be well-resourced and function under the finance ministry; it would be used to award grants to provinces and regions for additional family planning services. Grants can be directly linked with performance in improving health and related outcomes.

Finally, there is a growing consensus that population concerns will not be solved without improving educational outcomes, particularly for women and girls. The most powerful way of empowering women is through education and skills, but especially through paid work, by ensuring their safety, mobility and employability.

The coming war**Zarrar Khuhro**

If you want to determine whether war will take place, don't focus on what the potential belligerents are saying; focus, instead, on where armies and supplies are being moved to. One carrier strike group — spear-headed by the nuclear-powered USS Abraham Lincoln — is already deployed 700 kilometres off the Iranian shore. It carries a complement of 60-90 aircraft including stealth fighters, attack helicopters and a full electronic warfare suite. Another carrier strike group, led by the USS Gerald Ford will be arriving in a week or less. The most advanced US carrier in the fleet, the Ford will add 70-plus aircraft to the tally, along with its advanced radar systems. Both carriers are supported by numerous military vessels, including high-tech destroyers, meaning that about a third of US naval assets are, or will soon be, in a position to strike Iran.

F-15 Strike Eagles, F-35A stealth fighters and F-22 Raptors have been deployed from bases in the UK, Spain and Germany to the Middle East with additional assets en route from the US. More importantly, the US has deployed six out of its 16 E-3 Sentry aircraft to the region. The Sentry is America's most advanced "eye in the sky" command and control platform capable of airborne surveillance and early warning, with the ability to track over 600 targets simultaneously — aircraft, drones, cruise and ballistic missiles — and effectively coordinates the entire airspace of the battle. It's a flying super-radar and the mother of all force multipliers rolled into one and it is not deployed lightly or for PR purposes. With its inclusion,

the US has deployed a quarter of its entire airpower to the Middle East, making it the largest deployment of US airpower in the region since the 2003 Iraq war. Is all this for show? Is such a massive deployment only a bargaining tool? That's unlikely at best and delusional at worst. Nor is the build-up limited to offence; anti-missile systems are in place across the region to interdict any missile and drone attacks by Iran on Israel or US bases.

Those who believe the US has no intention of attacking Iran point to the lack of boots on the ground, but that calculation is based on the flawed premise that the US has any intention of occupying Iran. It does not; this would run contrary to the Trumpian way of war: short and sharp conflicts that can be sold as a victory for the president while also showcasing America's unparalleled military might.

It is sufficient for the US to simply bomb away all of Iran's offensive and defensive capabilities, degrade its command and control, and attempt to isolate, incapacitate or decapitate Iran's military and political leadership. In that calculus it would open up the way, as the extremist evangelical US Senator Lindsey Graham said "for the Iranian people to stage their own regime change".

With the weakening of central authority, one should expect Kurdish militants and separatists in Sistan-Baluchistan to step up their attacks, with the Mujahideen-i-Khalq staging guest appearances.

All this will undoubtedly receive not just CIA support but also Mossad's, which we have seen has deep infiltration in Iran. A beaten, broken

and balkanised Iran, along the lines of Libya, Sudan, Iraq and Syria, would suit Israel perfectly; it's what they want for the entire Middle East, as per the Yinon Plan of the 1980s.

As for the US, only the naïve would believe that there is a difference between their aims and those of Israel, at least when it comes to Iran, and then there are domestic politics to consider; given the fallout of the Epstein files, with even some Republican politicians calling out President Donald Trump. Would it be hard to imagine that he would start a war as a distraction? Didn't Bill Clinton bomb Afghanistan and Sudan just three days after testifying to his relationship with Monica Lewinsky?

But negotiations are still on between Iran and the US and, yes, there is a non-zero possibility they may succeed. What exactly is on the table? What are the face-saving off-ramps? For Iran to give up its enriched uranium is political and strategic suicide; anything less would be unacceptable to America. And then there is the big picture. China buys up to 80 per cent of Iran's oil — some 1.38 million barrels a day — amounting to 14pc of China's seaborne crude oil imports.

Taking that off the table, or even disrupting it, amounts to economic warfare against China and can be seen as a prelude to containment, much like Venezuela before it. Because if you actually believe the US is 'managing' its decline and is happy to allow China its sphere of influence, then you're wrong.

The US plans to be the dominant global power for the foreseeable future and is acting accordingly. In that pursuit, chaos in Iran is indeed a desirable outcome.

Photo-op moment**Rafia Zakaria**

On Tuesday, commuters in Mumbai woke up to an odd sight. Among the teeming millions crowding the city's streets was none other than French President Emmanuel Macron. In the early hours of the day, amid the omnipresent petrol fumes and blaring horns, Macron was jogging on the city's famous seaside promenade Marine Drive. Macron, sweating and in shorts, wanted to go for a run in India.

This should have been the main story in Indian media that day. A world leader chose to experience life at street level in one of the world's busiest cities. And not simply for this reason — Macron was in India to discuss defence and technology cooperation as part of the new bonhomie between India and the EU and the recent 'mother of all deals'. On the table was a multibillion-dollar agreement for 114 Rafale aircraft.

It is perhaps because the Rafales are such a sore point in India that the media and public were largely uninterested in Macron and his photo-ops. Everyone, and India is no exception, wants what they do not have and, in this case, the buddy relationship that it truly cares about appears to be the one with the US. Which is why the focus wasn't on Macron but US President Donald Trump's men in town. The same week, Trump's envoy to Central and South Asia, Sergio Gora, and Admiral Samuel Paparo, head of US Indo-Pacific Command, visited the Indian Army's Western Command Headquarters. Here was the photo-op India really wanted: the US admiral seated at the centre of a large semicircle of Indian and American defence officials — a visual symbol, in India's telling, of the close rela-

tions between the two countries.

Photos tell stories and this one certainly does. For one thing, it reveals just how desperate India is for American attention and esteem. As defence analyst Pravin Sawhney pointed out, allowing a senior US operational commander access to a sensitive military installation near the Pakistani border was a "blunder". The reason is simple — according to the Indian government 'Operation Sindoore' is ongoing. The US, given Trump's statements and Congressional and military reports, accepts the Pakistani version of events, even increasing the reported number of downed aircraft. Given this, inviting a top US commander to inspect facilities and chat informally with Indian military officials was evidently a political decision born of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government's desperation to show Washington that they too are a capable military.

Whether India admits it or not, it has been rankled by Pakistan's gains in 'military diplomacy'. Field Marshal Asim Munir's presence at the retirement ceremony of outgoing US Gen Michael Erik Kurilla was the source of much discomfort to India. Admiral Paparo's visit appeared designed to create similar relationships between India's military elite and US commanders. Such was the desire for this that the Indians — likely goaded by the ultra-nationalist Modi government — were willing to open the doors of their war headquarters to commanders of the very country that has not been interested in its claims of victory.

This was not the only contradiction on display. India also hosted an AI summit intended to showcase it as an emerging AI powerhouse and dealmaker. Yet the spectacle was odd in a country that already has a tremendous labour surplus. What will the millions and millions of Indians do when their jobs are swallowed up by AI? There was little discussion of how India — one of the largest users of ChatGPT — will power data centres when it cannot even meet its own existing needs. The logistical snafus and reports of technological deceit, including the removal of participants because they tried to present a Chinese robot as Indian, only deepened the contradictions.

These are sad realities. The fact is that America has dealt some blows to India's self-esteem and exposed lies inherent in the nationalist propaganda peddled by Modi and his BJP. Big talk of Hindu supremacy, belligerent Islamophobia and unprovoked attacks on Pakistan can only go so far. India's population still buys these lies but its ever harder to do it and requires more mental gymnastics. The aftermath of Operation Sindoore revealed that Karachi was never conquered, and many Indian planes were indeed shot down. America's closed doors have eliminated a pipeline to getting training and wealth that the Indian middle class relied on to furbish its dreams.

This week's events reveal the hollowness of Modi's attempts at a comeback from these losses. Like all demagogues, Modi has drowned India in what's politically expedient, opening up sensitive military installations for photo ops or peddling AI without considering how large-scale implementation is likely to destroy the Indian workforce.

Governor Kundi directs expedited completion of highway projects in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has directed authorities to accelerate the pace of work on ongoing and proposed highway projects to ensure their timely completion and improved travel facilities for the public in the province.

He issued these directives during a meeting with Member of the National Highway Authority Ashfaq Ahmad at the Governor House. GM CPEC Syed Nawaz Khan and GM Chitral Zahir Khan were also present on the occasion.

The Governor was briefed that work on the 50-kilometre Yarik-Sagu Road under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor would begin soon, while the Sagu-Zhob project has been sent for approval and progress is underway.

The 127-kilometre Sarai Gambila-Kohat section of the Indus Highway is planned to be dualized with special safety measures to prevent accidents. The Kohat-Jand-Pindi Motorway has been completed and is likely to be inaugurated shortly.

The meeting was informed that the dualization and upgradation of Old Bamu Road are underway, while the Lachi-Gandi Chowk project has been completed. Work on the Peshawar Northern Bypass is progressing swiftly and is expected to be completed soon. Progress is also continuing on Chitral-Booni-Mastuj-Shandur Road, Chitral-Ayun-Bumburet Road, Gilgit-Shandur Road and Garam Chashma-Chitral Road.

It was proposed that work on Pezu-Tank Road and Yarik-Tank Road be

initiated soon to facilitate a large population. The need to dualize Dera Ismail Khan-Dera Ghazi Khan Road and construct two bypasses was also highlighted.

The bridge on the Kalur Kot-Kot Jai Link Road has been completed, while construction of the road falls under the provincial government. The Governor directed the authorities to contact the Punjab government in this regard.

The meeting was further informed that an interchange at Paharpur is proposed under CPEC. The Khyber Pass Economic Corridor was described as a key project, while a proposal to expand the Peshawar-Nowshera GT Road to three lanes is under consideration. Work on the first phase of Chakdara-Chitral Road will also commence soon.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan hosted an iftar dinner in honour of the legal community at Governor House Lahore.

Sindh Govt announces comprehensive reform plan to make SBCA effective

KARACHI (APP): After detailed deliberations, institutional review, and calculated consultations on the structural and operational challenges facing the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), Provincial Minister for Local Government, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, has announced a comprehensive reform and enforcement framework aimed at transforming SBCA into a transparent, accountable, technology-driven and effective regulatory organization.

According to a press release issued by Director Media Management, the decision follows an in-depth assessment of persistent issues, including illegal constructions, dangerous and dilapidated buildings, protection of heritage structures, delays in construction approvals, governance weaknesses, and

complaints of corruption within the system. The Minister emphasized that the Government of Sindh is committed to restoring public confidence and strengthening regulatory oversight to protect human lives and urban infrastructure.

Taking strict notice of illegal constructions across Karachi, the Minister directed that a Special Anti-Illegal Construction Task Force be constituted immediately.

The Task Force will focus on identification, monitoring and demolition of unauthorized structures. It will utilize modern drone surveillance technology to detect illegal constructions in real time.

Drone surveys will be made mandatory in densely populated areas to ensure continuous monitoring and early intervention.

Sindh government to introduce more new buses in Karachi to improve public transport system

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh government has decided to introduce more new buses in Karachi as part of its ongoing efforts to improve the city's public transport system and provide relief to commuters.

The decision was taken during a high-level meeting of the Transport and Mass Transit Department chaired by Senior Provincial Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon.

The meeting reviewed progress on ongoing projects, including the Red Line BRT, and discussed key measures aimed at enhancing public convenience and strengthening the overall transport network in the metropolis. The session was attended by Transport Secretary Asad Zamin, Managing Director SMTA Kanwal Nizam Bhatto, Project Director Yellow Line Kamal Dayo, and CEO of Trans Karachi Fawad Ghaffar Soomro, along with

engineers and consultants concerned.

During the briefing, the CEO of Trans Karachi presented a detailed update on development work related to the Red Line BRT project, outlining the progress achieved so far, challenges being faced, and future targets. Officials informed the meeting that work on the corridor is underway, though certain hurdles remain.

Addressing the participants, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that while the overall pace of work on the Red Line BRT is satisfactory, it must be further accelerated. He directed all relevant departments to ensure daily monitoring of progress and emphasized that the timely completion of the corridor is the Sindh government's top priority to reduce commuting difficulties, traffic congestion, and daily hardships faced by citizens.



KARACHI: Underprivileged people having iftar meals under Qayyumabad flyover.

CM administers oath to newly elected office bearers of PPC

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi here Saturday administered oath to newly elected office bearers of Peshawar Press Club (PPC) and congratulated journalist community for continuing democratic process.

Addressing the oath taking ceremony, he said that journalist community of Peshawar never delayed elections despite unfavorable conditions adding that elections in PPC speaks of the ingrained democratic norms in the journalist fraternity.

He paid tribute to journalist community for their sacrifices, professionalism and working under unfavorable circumstances including militancy. He said that we want to strengthen journalism and all the institutions that give strength to democracy.

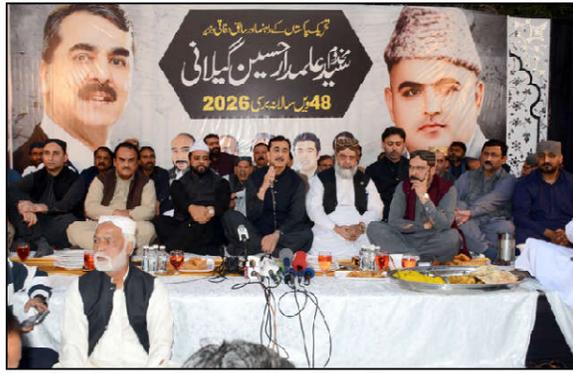
Mysterious illness claims four lives in Kashmir

KASHMIRE (INP): A mysterious illness has claimed four innocent lives in the village of Atta Muhammad Khosa, located in Kashmir, Sindh, officials and local sources report.

According to residents, the disease appeared suddenly, and within a week, four children, including two brothers from the same family, succumbed to the illness. Among the deceased are Irshad Ali and Irfan Ali Solangi, whose family reported that both boys died within 24 hours of each other due to the mysterious condition. Locals described symptoms including throat problems and rapid deterioration within a single day. Other affected individuals include Saddam Hussain and Sara Bibi Solangi. A health department team has reached the village, and medical experts are assessing the situation to determine the cause and contain the outbreak.

According to details, Mustafa Kamal few days ago said that 84 new cases of HIV/AIDS surfaced after "wrong syringes" were used to administer injections to children and elders.

Sindh AIDS Control Programme has still failed to share details of HIV/AIDS cases during the year 2025. Sindh AIDS Control Programme has now established a screening camp at Valika Hospital in Karachi.



MULTAN: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani addressing the gathering during the 48th death anniversary of his father Alamdar Hussain Gilani at the shrine of Musa Pak.

Doors of the Governor House open for everyone: Sardar Saleem

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan hosted an iftar dinner in honour of the legal community at Governor House Lahore. A large number of lawyers, former Chairman Senate Nayyar Bukhari, attended the iftar dinner.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that he is a worker and likes to be among the people. The Governor Punjab said that this series of iftars will continue. He said that the doors of the

Governor House are open for everyone. The Governor Punjab said that the day is not far when Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will be the Prime Minister of this country.

He further said that the legal community has an important role in providing justice. He said that lawyers have made many sacrifices for the continuity and stability of democracy. The Governor of Punjab said that there is an appeal to the people, especially the philanthropists, to help the deserving and poor families around them during this blessed month.

In addition, Governor of Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan inaugurated the shrine of the Bibi Pakdaman Shrine in Lahore. He also paid a visit to the shrine and offered special prayers for the security, stability and peace of the country.

The Governor of Punjab also offered nawafil in the premises of the shrine. Speaking on the occasion, Governor of Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that the shrines and dargahs should be respected.

Mother language is foundation of our identity, culture: Murad

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, on International Mother Language Day, has said that Mother language is the foundation of our identity, culture, and heritage.

He said that every child has the right to education and expression in their mother tongue.

The Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, said that youth are not only the inheritors of linguistic diversity but also the architects of its future.

He said that multilingual education is essential for inclusion, equality, and sustainable development. In the digital age, en-

surging representation of mother languages is a pressing necessity, he said adding that smaller languages must also be given equal opportunities in artificial intelligence and online platforms.

Muad said that linguistic diversity promotes social harmony, peace, and mutual respect.

The Government of Sindh remains committed to the protection, promotion, and teaching of all languages of the province.

Let us pledge to pass our mother languages on to future generations and preserve their value and dignity, he added.

Azma taunts no Ramadan package announcement by KP

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said that Ramadan Nighaban package is continuing successfully in Punjab while the KP government has not yet been able to announce any Ramadan package.

Criticizing KP government in a statement on Saturday, Azma Bukhari said the PTI founder's eyes, his teeth and comforts in jail are more important for the KP government.

The KP government's focus is more on raising a force for Imran Khan's release.



LAHORE: Provincial Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Imran Nazir inaugurates Maryam Nawaz Health Clinic at Jorray Bridge.

Foundation stone laid for revamping of Maryam Mother, Child Health Center

LAHORE (APP): Punjab's Health Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Imran Nazir formally laid the foundation stone of the revamping project of the Maryam Nawaz Mother and Child Health Center at Jorray Pull on Saturday.

The objective of this important project is to ensure the provision of modern and quality medical facilities to women and children in the area and to further strengthen the health infrastructure.

A large number of local residents, including former Member of the Punjab Assembly Muhammad Waheed Gul, attended the ceremony and termed the launch of the project as a positive development for the area. Participants appreciated the Punjab government's practical initiatives in the health sector.

Speaking on the occasion, Provincial Health

Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique said that maternal and child health is the government's top priority, and old health centers are being upgraded according to modern requirements.

He said that after upgradation, the center at Jorray Pull will be equipped with modern machinery, trained staff, and improved facilities so that residents will not have to travel to distant areas for treatment.

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Sindh AIDS Control director declines comment on AIDS cases in Valika Hospital

KARACHI (INP): Sindh AIDS Control Programme Director Dr Kanwal Mustafa has declined to comment on Federal Minister for Health Mustafa Kamal's revelation about the detection of 84 AIDS cases in Valika Hospital in Karachi "caused by negligence".

According to details, Mustafa Kamal few days ago said that 84 new cases of HIV/AIDS surfaced after "wrong syringes" were used to administer injections to children and elders.

Sindh AIDS Control Programme has still failed to share details of HIV/AIDS cases during the year 2025. Sindh AIDS Control Programme has now established a screening camp at Valika Hospital in Karachi.

No details were shared about the detection of AIDS cases during the screening process. The AIDS Control Programme also kept all the figures totally secret.

Sources said that dozens of AIDS patients have failed to get treatment in different districts of Sindh.

It is necessary to mention here that the Sindh AIDS Control Programme miserably failed to provide facilities and treatment to AIDS patients despite the availability of a budget worth millions of rupees.

Earlier, Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal told National Assembly Standing Committee on Health Services that the reuse of contaminated syringes.

Veteran ANP Kohat leader Ramzan passes away

KOHAT (APP): Senior Awami National Party (ANP) Kohat leader and veteran Khudai Khidmatgar, Muhammad Ramzan, passed away on Saturday, the party confirmed. He was regarded as one of the district's longstanding ideological workers who dedicated his life to public service and the non-violent philosophy of Bacha Khan. According to party officials, the funeral prayer of the late leader offered today (Saturday) at 2:00 pm. A large number of political workers, social activists, and community members are expected to attend. In a statement, ANP Kohat expressed deep sorrow over his demise, noting that Muhammad Ramzan's political and social contributions.

KP CM inaugurates spring tree plantation campaign

PESHAWAR (INP): Chief Minister (CM) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohail Afridi, here on Saturday, formally inaugurated the spring tree plantation campaign 2026.

During the current campaign, a target has been set to plant more than 20 million saplings in KP.

Under the Upscaling Green Pakistan Program, 18.3 million saplings will be planted, while 2.48 million saplings will be sown under the Billion Tree Afforestation Support Program, according to a briefing by KP Forest Department to KP CM.

The mega plantation event will be held on March 23 with a target to plant more than one million saplings in a single day.

Full participation of youth, students, and the general public will be ensured in the mega plantation event.

Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi planted a sapling on the lawn of the Chief Minister's House.

He said promotion and protection of forests are among the top priorities of the KP government and effective measures are being taken under a comprehensive strategy to improve the environment and increase forest cover. "Due to our continuity and effective policy measures, there has been a significant increase in forest area in the province," said Sohail Afridi. The campaign will prove to be an important milestone toward environmental sustainability.

Tree plantation must become a permanent national habit rather than a temporary campaign, said the Chief Minister.

He said that without public participation and co-operation, no government effort can achieve the desired results.

All segments of society should actively participate in the tree plantation campaign to provide a better and safer environment.

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LARKANA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) activists protest in Larkana against non-implementation of Ramadan Ordinance and rising social evils.

Education in mother tongue positively impacts children's mental growth: Maryam

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that education in the mother tongue positively impacts children's mental growth and learning abilities, while preserving a nation's identity, culture and heritage.

In her message on International Mother Language Day, the CM said that mother tongues were a vital source of civilizational and cultural legacy, passed from one generation to another, and that protecting them guarantees cultural autonomy and intellectual freedom.

The chief minister noted that the Punjab government has strengthened the Punjab Institute of Language, Art and Culture to

safeguard and promote local languages. She added that efforts were underway to connect the younger generation with their mother languages through educational curricula, research, and other initiatives, ensuring they remain aware of their cultural and historical roots.

She added that the government was committed to promoting mother tongues through education and research, aiming to connect the younger generation with their cultural roots and history. The chief minister said that efforts would continue to integrate language development into curricula and broader initiatives to preserve and advance mother languages across the province.

Punjab government waives stamp duty on merger of properties

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Government of Punjab on Saturday notified a complete waiver of stamp duty on property transfers arising from mergers and schemes of arrangement approved by the courts or the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP).

The notification follows a judgment of the Lahore High Court (Rawalpindi Bench) reported as 2025 CLD 587, delivered by Justice Jawad Hassan and Justice Malik Javid Iqbal Wains. The case examined whether the Punjab Government could levy stamp duty on merger schemes sanctioned by the Courts or the SECP.

During the proceedings, the SECP informed the Court that under Section 282(5) of the Compa-

nies Act, 2017, companies with registered offices in the Islamabad Capital Territory are exempt from stamp duty on property transfers arising from mergers or schemes of arrangement approved by the Court or the SECP.

However, this provision becomes applicable in provinces only after notification or legislation by the respective provincial governments.

The Court directed the Chief Secretary, Punjab, and the SECP to consult on the matter. Following a series of meetings and deliberations, the Punjab Government issued the notification granting exemption from stamp duty on property transfers arising from mergers or schemes of arrangement approved by the Court or the SECP.

Rs.23bln sewerage upgrade project launched in Faisalabad: Secretary

FAISALABAD (APP): Provincial Secretary for Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Engineering Noor-ul-Amin Mengal announced the launch of a Rs. 23 billion development package for upgrading Faisalabad's sewerage system.

He said that its first phase would be completed by June 2026 followed by completion of second phase by June 2027 for a sustainable and comprehensive solution to long-standing drainage problems of the city.

Reviewing construction work of an underground storage tank at Crescent Ground, he said that under the vision of Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz, similar sewerage upgradation

schemes worth Rs.200 billion are underway across the province, which are expected to be game-changers for urban service delivery.

He highlighted that multiple underground storage tanks are being constructed at strategic ponding points across Faisalabad to ensure prompt drainage of rainwater during the monsoon season.

Special safety and monitoring measures have been mandated for all development schemes to prevent negligence or lapses in execution, he added.

He stressed that all projects should be completed before the onset of monsoon this year for ensuring dissemination of benefit of these initiatives in a timely manner.

Govt reviews wheat procurement strategy, assures adequate stocks across provinces

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Wheat Oversight Committee, on Saturday, was informed that adequate wheat stocks were currently available in all provinces to meet national consumption requirements until the arrival of the new crop.

The committee, which met with Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain in chair, reiterated that there was no risk of wheat shortage in Pakistan, and coordinated measures were in place to ensure uninterrupted supply across markets.

National Wheat Oversight Committee met to review wheat procurement arrangements, stock availability, and price stability measures across the country.

The meeting was attended by senior officials of the federal and provincial governments, who presented detailed briefings on procurement preparedness, stock positions, and supply management strategies ahead of the upcoming harvesting season.

During the meeting, provinces shared updates on their respective procurement strategies. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has adopted a hybrid wheat procurement model comprising 75 percent public sector participation and 25 percent private sector involvement to enhance efficiency and market responsiveness.

The Government of Sindh informed the Committee that wheat procurement will be carried out through the public sector to ensure stable supply and price management.

The Committee was further informed that the illustrative wheat procurement price has been fixed at Rs 3,500 per 40 kilograms, and provinces have been sensitized to ensure smooth implementation of procurement operations.

The Federal Minister emphasized that the current procurement framework will remain applicable for one year. He stated that the Federal Government is working on a comprehensive long-term wheat policy

for the period 2026-2030, aimed at strengthening national food security through modern reforms.

He highlighted that the upcoming policy will focus on digital traceability mechanisms, improved supply chain monitoring, enhanced transparency, and sustained price stability, enabling better coordination between the federal and provincial governments.

Special emphasis was also placed on consumer protection during the holy month of Ramadan. The Federal Minister directed all provinces to ensure strict market monitoring and take effective administrative measures to prevent any unnecessary increase in flour prices.

Reaffirming the Government's commitment to safeguarding food security, Rana Tanveer Hussain stated that coordinated federal-provincial efforts will continue to ensure stable wheat availability, protect farmers' interests, and maintain affordable prices for consumers across the country.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain chairs the 6th meeting of the National Wheat Oversight Committee to review wheat procurement arrangements, stock availability, and price stability measures across the country.

ICCI for adopting proactive trade diplomacy to boost exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has urged the government to formulate a comprehensive National Export Strategy coupled with proactive trade diplomacy to enhance Pakistan's global competitiveness, diversify export destinations, and strengthen value-added manufacturing.

Talking to a delegation of exporters here on Saturday, he stated that Pakistan's export sector possesses immense untapped potential; however, structural bottlenecks, high production

costs, inconsistent policies, and limited market access continue to hamper sustainable growth.

The ICCI President stressed that trade diplomacy must become a central pillar of Pakistan's economic policy.

Pakistani embassies and commercial attachés, he said, should play a more dynamic role in identifying market opportunities, removing non-tariff barriers, facilitating B2B linkages, and promoting Pakistani products abroad.

He urged the government to align foreign policy priorities with economic objectives to secure greater market access and prefer-

ential trade arrangements. He noted that regional economies are aggressively pursuing export-led growth models supported by competitive energy tariffs, export rebates, innovation incentives, and strong diplomatic engagement.

Pakistan must adopt a similar strategic approach to safeguard and expand its global trade footprint.

He further emphasized that Pakistan should actively explore non-traditional and emerging markets in Africa, ASEAN, Central Asia, and the Middle East while consolidating its presence in traditional markets.

Khurram says: Govt tackling poverty through social protection

ISLAMABAD (INP): Advisor to the Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad has said the government is tackling poverty through social protection, targeted development projects and provincial spending.

In a statement, he said these efforts are part of a broader reform agenda to protect vulnerable communities and reduce poverty.

The Advisor provided a detailed explanation of the statistics released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics on

poverty. He emphasized that global commodity inflation, Covid-19 and geopolitical tensions impacted Pakistan's economy. He highlighted that floods of 2022 and 2025 caused significant damage to rural employment, agriculture and infrastructure.

The Advisor said Pakistan has implemented three reform programs in cooperation with the IMF, which, while resulting in short-term pressure, aim to bring long-term benefits.

Gold jumps Rs 7,100 per tola; settles at Rs 533,562

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs 7,100 and was sold at Rs 533,562 on Saturday against its sale at Rs 526,462 the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 6,087 to Rs 457,443 from Rs 451,356 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up by Rs 5,579 to Rs 419,337 from Rs 413,758. The rates of per tola silver increased by Rs 374 to Rs 8,948 from Rs 8,574 whereas that of 10 gram silver rose by Rs 321 to Rs 7,671 from Rs 7,350.



Former President of Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sardar Musa Khan Kakar and Dr. Sohail Khan attend inauguration of Arya Pharmacy and Lab Airport Road Branch in Quetta.

Baidarie, LPDI signs MoU to train 50 women in Sialkot's leather sector

SIALKOT (APP): In a move aimed at strengthening women's economic participation in Sialkot's export-driven leather sector, Baidarie on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Leather Products Development Institute (LPDI) to deliver certified technical training for women.

The agreement was signed under the project "Catalyzing Growth for Women Economic Empowerment in District Sialkot (Punjab) Pakistan," supported by UN Women Pakistan.

The initiative will provide a two-month certified training program in Gloves Stitching and Pattern Designing to 50 women and girls in the district.

Officials said the training was designed to

align with market demands and industry standards of Sialkot's globally recognized leather and gloves sector.

The program aims to enhance participants' employability, strengthen their technical skills and create pathways for entrepreneurship and sustainable income generation.

The MoU signing ceremony was attended by Hina Nooreen, Vice President (VP) of Baidarie; Matloob Ahmed Qureshi, Senior Vice Chairman of the Pakistan Gloves Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PGMEA) and LPDI; Rana Amjad Hussain, Programme Manager at LPDI; Asif Raza, Project Manager at Baidarie; and Usman Ismail Butt, Secretary General of PGMEA.

Crackdown against overpricing continued in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): The Karachi administration's crackdown against overpricing continued on the third day of the holy month of Ramadan, with fines exceeding Rs 26 lakh 27 thousand imposed on shopkeepers for violating official prices.

According to Deputy Commissioners' reports, officials checked prices at 768 locations and issued warnings at 129 places.

On the directives of Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi, Assistant Commissioners auctioned fruits and other items at official rates.

Export of sport goods increases over 14% to \$249.442 mln

ISLAMABAD (APP): The export of sports goods from the country witnessed an increase of 14.21 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the export of corresponding months of last year.

The country exported sports goods worth US\$ 249.442 million during July-January (2025-26) as opposed to the export of US\$ 218.399 million during July-January (2024-25), showing a growth of 14.21 percent, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).



BAHAWALPUR: Regional Police Officer Bahawalpur, Ghazi Muhammad Salahuddin (PPM), visits a Ramadan Facilitation Bazaar during a surprise inspection to review public facilities, security arrangements, and the availability of affordable quality groceries.

Unconfirmed possession reports trigger surge in plot prices in Sector I-12

ISLAMABAD (APP): The plot prices in Sector I-12 have risen sharply despite incomplete infrastructure and the absence of any formal public announcement by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) regarding possession of residential plots, according to allottees and property market observers.

The sudden increase in prices is being attributed largely to speculation linked to an internal CDA letter dated Jan 29, 2020. The communication, reportedly sent by the director general (works) to the director general of land and rehabilitation, suggested that the process of handing over possession in Sectors I-12 and C-14 "may be initiated."

However, the letter did not constitute a formal approval or public notification. Despite this, some property dealers and investors have been claiming that possession has been officially announced. The CDA has so far issued no public clarification on the matter.

Market data indicates a significant price jump within days. A 25x50 plot, previously priced around Rs 8.5 to Rs 9 million, is now reportedly being offered for up to Rs 13 million, depending on location. Simi-

larly, a 30x60 plot that earlier cost about Rs 13 million has crossed Rs 20 million in the open market.

Several allottees said certain individuals were circulating information that possession had already been approved and that plot owners should immediately submit possession applications along with pay orders and required documents at the CDA Facilitation Centre. Acting on these claims, some owners reportedly rushed to file applications in anticipation of securing early possession.

The lack of an official statement from the CDA has contributed to uncertainty among allottees.

Ali, an allottee in Sector I-12, told APP that substantial development work was still incomplete. "Although streets have been cut and levelled, most remain muddy. There is no proper water supply system, while electricity, gas connections and sewerage works are still pending in several areas," he said, questioning the practicality of handing over possession under current conditions.

Real estate analysts believe the recent surge is largely speculative, driven more by anticipated possession than actual development progress.

315,000-acre cotton target for Multan division; 16,000 acres sown

MULTAN (APP): Punjab has set a target of 315,000 acres for early cotton cultivation in Multan Division for 2026-27.

This was informed in a meeting chaired by Commissioner Multan Division Aamir Kareem Khan and attended by officials from agriculture department. According to the briefing, 16,000 acres have already been sown, while 20,244 farmers have been registered so far. A total of 97,564 acres has also been registered across the division.

The district-wise targets include 62,811 acres for Multan, 87,791 acres for Khanewal, 71,914 acres for Lodhran, and 92,484 acres for Vehari.

Director Agriculture (Extension) Shehzad Sabir gave a detailed briefing on the current situation of cotton and the future strategy. The Commissioner directed the Agriculture Department's field staff to remain fully active to resolve farmers' issues. He emphasized timely monitoring of whitefly, jassid, thrips, and weeds to prevent crop losses.

He further instructed officials to accelerate pest scouting and surveillance to immediately control any attack of harmful insects.

Lakhodair Landfill site set to reduce 175,000-250,000 tonnes of carbon emissions

LAHORE (APP): A stakeholder consultative meeting was held at the Lakhodair Landfill Site regarding the collection and effective utilization of landfill gas under the Lakhodair Valorization Project.

According to a press release, issued here on Saturday, the meeting brought together representatives from Supporting Preparedness for Article 6 Cooperation (SPAR6C), Global Sustainability UK, carbon credit experts, universities' environmental departments, non-governmental organizations, local traders and researchers.

Suthra Punjab Authority DG Babar Sahib Din joined the session via video link. Participants reviewed prospects for compressed gas production, biomethane generation and the production of electricity and thermal energy from methane captured at the landfill.

The feasibility study examined mechanisms for methane gas collection and its conversion into usable energy, marking a significant step towards sustainable waste-to-energy solutions.

According to estimates, the Lakhodair Valorization Project is expected to reduce carbon emissions

by approximately 175,000 to 275,000 tons annually.

Detailed discussions were also held on aligning the project with Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement, enabling integration into international carbon market mechanisms.

Waste-to-Value General Manager Dr Ayesha Pervaiz briefed participants on the project framework and compliance requirements under Article 6.4.

The project would receive feasibility study support under the international donor programme SPAR6C.

The Global Green Growth Institute would serve as consortium lead, while the UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre would head the Pakistan work package under the program.

Officials emphasized that a transparent contractual framework would be ensured for equitable distribution of revenue and carbon credits generated through the project.

Officials expressed confidence that the Lakhodair Valorization Project would serve as a replicable environmental and energy model for landfill sites across the country.



RAWALPINDI: A vendor displaying traditional food stuff for iftar during Holy fasting month of Ramadan at Mubarakat Saidpur road.

Govt plans advanced dates processing plant in Khairpur

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Industries and Production (MoI&P) has planned the establishment of a state-of-the-art dates processing, storage, and packaging facility in Khairpur district of Sindh.

According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the project is estimated to cost a total of Rs 998.97 million. The proposed allocation for the financial year 2026-27 is Rs 250 million.

The project will be executed soon after approval from the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives.

The Technology Upgradation and Skill Development Company (TUSDEC) of the MoI&P will supervise the project.

Under the project, advanced technologies will be introduced for cleaning, grading, pitting, processing, packaging, and cold storage of the fruit, thus significantly reducing the post-harvest losses, ensuring fruit quality, creating new

job opportunities for local growers, and enabling the fruit to compete in the high-end international markets.

The project is likely to encourage small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to process date by-products such as paste, syrup, and confectionery items. In addition, capacity building and technical training for local farmers and workers will enhance productivity and quality standards.

Speaking to Wealth Pakistan, Mahreen Razzaq Bhutto, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Khairpur, said the proposed project will play a significant role in adding value to the date industry, particularly in Sindh, where Khairpur is a major hub for date production.

"By establishing modern processing, storage, and packing facilities, the post-harvest losses will be reduced, and date quality will improve in line with international standards," she said.



HYDERABAD: People purchasing fruits from hand cart vendors at Tower Market for iftar during holy month of Ramadan.

PFA seals sweets unit, fines 7 outlets during Ramadan inspections

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Saturday sealed a renowned sweets production unit, imposed fines worth Rs 282,000 on seven food outlets and discarded 100 kilograms of fungus-infected murabba along with a large quantity of prohibited items and mayonnaise during inspections of Ramadan Nighban Dastarkhwan points in Lahore.

According to a spokesperson, the sealed sweets unit was found violating food safety regulations. Several outlets were fined over poor sanitation conditions, while inspection teams also detected insect infestation and the use of tap water in food preparation at certain units. In some cases, food handlers were found without complete training and valid medical certificates.

A total of 38 iftar points and food units were inspected as part of the ongoing Ramadan Nighban drive to ensure the provision of safe and hygienic meals to citizens during the holy month.

Acting on the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javaid visited Dastarkhwan sites at Mian Mir, Children's Hospital and Liberty Chowk, where he reviewed arrangements for



ISLAMABAD: Motorcyclists wait in a queue for M-Tag installation at Kachnar Park after the Islamabad administration made M-Tag registration mandatory for all motorcycles from February 20, 2026, under the second phase of the capital's vehicle tagging drive.

Pezeshkian says Iran will not bow to pressure amid US nuclear talks

Monitoring Desk

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Saturday that his country would not bow to its head to pressure from world powers amid nuclear talks with the United States.

"World powers are lining up to force us to bow our heads... but we will not bow our heads despite all the problems that they are creating for us," Pezeshkian said in a speech carried live by state TV.

The comments come after US President Donald Trump said he was considering a limited strike on Iran after ordering a major naval build-up in the Middle East aimed at pressuring Tehran to reach a deal to curb its nuclear programme.

The latest warning came after Iran's foreign

minister said a draft proposal for an agreement with Washington would be ready within 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, a deadline he later extended to 15 days.

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

As part of the military build-up, the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford was seen entering the Mediterranean Sea on Friday, transiting the Strait of Gibraltar, after being ordered to the region by Trump. Washington had

already deployed the USS Abraham Lincoln and escort warships to the Gulf in January.

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.



US President Donald Trump, flanked by Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick and Solicitor General D. John Sauer, holds a press briefing at the White House, following the Supreme Court's ruling that Trump had exceeded his authority when he imposed tariffs, in Washington, DC, US.

Trump announces hike in US global tariff rate from 10pc to 15pc

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he is raising the worldwide tariffs on goods entering the United States from 10 per cent to 15pc "effective immediately," a day after the Supreme Court largely struck down his sweeping duties.

Trump had immediately announced a 10pc across-the-board tariff on Friday after the court's decision, which found the president had exceeded his

authority when he imposed an array of higher rates under an economic emergency law.

The new levies are grounded in a separate law, known as Section 122, that allows tariffs up to 15pc but requires congressional approval to extend them after 150 days.

Trump said on his Truth Social platform that after a thorough review of Friday's "extraordinarily anti-American decision" by the court to rein in his tariff

programme, the administration was hiking the import levies "to the fully allowed, and legally tested, 15pc level".

"During the next short number of months, the Trump Administration will determine and issue the new and legally permissible Tariffs, which will continue our extraordinarily successful process of Making America Great Again — GREATER THAN EVER BEFORE," he said in his post.



A heavily-damaged building is pictured in the village of Ali al-Nahri in the centre of Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley region.

33rd International Holy Quran Exhibition kicks off in Tehran

TEHRAN (IRNA/APP): The 33rd International Holy Quran Exhibition officially opened on Saturday at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla, with Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Saleh Shariati attending the inauguration ceremony.

Although the exhibition doors opened to the public a day earlier, the formal launch marks the start of the country's largest annual Quranic event, featuring 11 exhibition sections and three sales halls with 70 specialized booths.

This year's exhibition covers a wide range of themes, including the Holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), social hope and vitality, national unity, Islamic Revolution values, contemporary sciences, mosque-centered culture,

ethical consumption, modesty and hijab, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, and the lives of prophets and imams.

According to exhibition organizers, special emphasis has been placed on new technologies, artificial intelligence, creative industries, media productions, children and youth activities, and Quran-based research and education. A section also highlights martyred commanders and scientists, presenting a blend of art and modern technology.

Nightly Quran recitation gatherings featuring leading Iranian reciters will be held throughout the event. Organizers have also arranged services for donating and restoring damaged Qurans, including copies with historical value.

Takaichi says fiscal policy not 'reckless', will lower debt ratio

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said Friday that her fiscal policies will not be "reckless", as investors worry that her efforts to boost growth and help consumers with inflation will swell the country's debts.

"We are not going to pursue a reckless fiscal policy that would undermine the market's confidence," Takaichi told parliament following her election landslide on February 8.

"We will keep the growth rate of outstanding debt within the range of the economic growth rate and steadily bring down the government debt-to-GDP ratio," she said in a policy address.

Takaichi said she wanted to make "the Japanese archipelago strong and prosperous".

Germany's Merz seeks second wind at party congress

STUTTGART (AFP/APP): A year after his election win, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz faces a congress of his conservative party Friday, bruised by low popularity ratings, unmet campaign promises and pressure from the far right.

Among the high-profile guests at the CDU party congress for the first time in years will be his predecessor and long-time party rival Angela Merkel.

Merz, 70, has made it his mission to steer their Christian Democratic Union back to its conservative roots and undo the more liberal legacy of Merkel, especially her welcome to more than a million migrants a decade ago.

But the party congress comes as Merz faces pressure over a limping economy, poor personal

approval ratings and the sustained threat of the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) ahead of several regional elections.

A barometer of the party's mood at the national congress in the southern city of Stuttgart will be whether Merz gets re-elected as party chief with the customary result in the 90 per cent range, or less.

Merz, after his party's February 2025 election win, took office last May at the helm of a coalition with the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) of ex-chancellor Olaf Scholz.

At the time, Merz boldly vowed to revitalise the stagnating economy, limit irregular migration, re-arm Germany to deter Russia, and strengthen Germany's role in the world.

Syria launches debris removal campaign in Idlib province

IDLIB (SANA/APP): Syria's Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management launched a debris removal campaign in parts of Idlib province aimed at accelerating recovery efforts and reopening key roads the other day.

The project, carried out in coordination with the Idlib governorate, targets the towns of Khan Sheikhoun, Maaret al-Numan and Jisr al-Shughour, areas that sustained significant damage during years of war. Emergency Minister Raed al-Saleh said in a post on X that the initiative will focus on clearing rubble and reopening main and secondary roads to improve basic services and facilitate the return of residents. The operation is expected to take eight months and will be implemented by specialized contractors.

Attacks on Sudan health care facilities killed 69 this year: WHO

Monitoring Desk

CAIRO: Five attacks on health care facilities have killed dozens of people in Sudan since the beginning of the year, the WHO said Saturday, as the war nears the start of its fourth year.

The fighting between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has dismantled an already fragile medical system, with more than a third of facilities currently out of service. "During the first 50 days of 2026, five attacks on health care have already been recorded in Sudan, killing 69 people and injuring 49," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X.

On Sunday a hospital was targeted in the south-eastern state of Sennar, leaving three patients dead and seven people wounded, including an employee, Tedros said.

In three other attacks early this month, more than 30 people were killed when medical centers were targeted in South Kordofan, a vast region south of the capital Khartoum that is currently a focus of the fighting.

The WHO has confirmed at least 206 attacks on health care facilities since the start of the war in April 2023, resulting in the deaths of around 2,000 people and injuries to several hundred.

Playground gun attack in Mexico kills two, wounds eight

SAN FRANCISCO DEL RINCON (AFP/APP): Gunfire tore through a busy playground in central Mexico, killing two people and wounding eight, authorities said Wednesday, as witnesses recounted a horrifying scene of mothers screaming and children fleeing in panic.

The shooting started shortly after dinner time Tuesday in the small town of San Francisco del Rincon, with round after round rifling into a park filled with playing kids.

A 36-year-old man died during the attack, and a 24-year-old man later died at a hospital, according to Guanajuato state governor Libia Dennis Garcia.



India's Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw delivers a speech during the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi.

Syrian Civil Defense rescues child from 30-meter well in Raqqa

RAQQA (SANA/APP): Syrian Civil Defense teams rescued a three-and-a-half-year-old child who had fallen into a 30-meter-deep well measuring approximately 35 centimeters in diameter near al-Tabqa in Raqqa province. According to the Civil Defense's Telegram channel, the rescue operation lasted more than six hours and required precise, continuous work. The child is in stable condition and under medical observation at a hospital.

Earlier, Raed al-Saleh, Minister of Emergency and Disaster Management, an-

nounced on X that specialized reinforcement teams from Aleppo had been dispatched, equipped with advanced excavation equipment and specialized cameras to support the operation. Al-Saleh also said a team from Jisr al-Shughour in Idlib, including a small-statured Civil Defense member experienced in well rescues, was sent to assist in reaching the child. The minister said rescue teams in Raqqa supplied the child with oxygen continuously and maintained communication while attempting the rescue through the well opening.

Spanish police arrest 3 men for shipping dried opium poppy by mail

Monitoring Desk

MADRID: Spanish police announced Saturday they arrested three men on suspicion of shipping dried opium poppy capsules by mail across Spain and abroad, including to the United States.

The three were arrested in January and have remained in custody since then, the Civil Guard said in a statement. They were charged with crimes against public health for drug trafficking.

The investigation began in September 2025 after the interception of four postal shipments contain-

ing almost 7 kilograms (15.4 pounds) of plant-based substances at the Alicante-Elche Miguel Hernandez Airport, the gateway to Alicante and the Costa Blanca area in southeastern Spain. Analysis determined that the substance was "Papaver somniferum," also known as opium poppy, a plant directly linked to the production of opium and its derivatives, the statement said.

Investigators noted that the same surname was used on all the shipments, both for the senders and recipients.

NASA conducts successful rehearsal of Artemis 2 lunar launch

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): NASA on Thursday said it successfully rehearsed the launch of its massive SLS rocket, which will send astronauts around the Moon for the first time in over 50 years.

Technical problems in early February cut short an earlier so-called wet dress rehearsal of the launch of the Artemis 2 mission.

But on Thursday, the US space agency reported that things proceeded as planned, concluding at "T-29 seconds" in the countdown.

NASA is now expected to set a firm date for the mission. The agency said it would brief media on Friday.

The wet dress rehearsal is conducted under real conditions—with full rocket tanks and technical checks—at Cape Canaveral in Florida, with engineers practicing the maneuvers needed to carry out an actual launch.

The setback in February, which included a liquid hydrogen leak, dashed hopes of a lift-off this month, pushing the earliest possible launch date back to March 6.

Israeli strikes in Lebanon kill at least 12 people, intensifying rising regional tensions

Monitoring Desk

BEIRUT: At least 10 people were killed and 24 wounded—including three children—in Israeli strikes in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley Friday, the Lebanese Health Ministry reported. Another two people were killed by an Israeli strike on a Palestinian refugee camp earlier in the day.

Israel said it had hit "command centers" of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah in Bekaa Valley. There was no immediate statement from Hezbollah.

Local television footage from the scene of one of the strikes in the Bekaa Valley showed the targeted site appeared to be an apartment building, and emergency crews were fighting a fire and searching in the rubble for survivors.

Earlier Friday, another Israeli strike had hit a Palestinian refugee camp in the port city of Sidon, killing

two people.

The Israeli military said it hit a "Hamas command center" in the Ein el-Hilweh camp. Hamas acknowledged that two of its members had been killed in the strike but called the claim that a command center was struck a "flimsy pretext." It said the targeted building belonged to a joint security force made up of various Palestinian factions that is tasked with maintaining security in the camp. After the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on Gaza, Hezbollah began firing rockets from Lebanon into Israel in support of Hamas and the Palestinians. Israel responded with airstrikes and shelling. The low-level conflict escalated into full-scale war in September 2024, later reined in but not fully stopped by a US-brokered ceasefire two months later.

At least 38 killed in armed attack in north-west Nigeria

Monitoring Desk

ABUJA: Armed men killed at least 38 people in the village of Dutsen Dan Ajiya in Nigeria's northwestern Zamfara State, local police and authorities told AFP Saturday. Zamfara State, like many northern states, is plagued by insecurity from many sources, including armed gangs locally called "bandits" who loot villages and kidnap residents, and a spreading militant threat, with groups in the northwest extending their reach southward.

The latest attack occurred in the night of Thursday into Friday in the remote village, which had "few access routes," said Yazid Abubakar, spokesperson for the Zamfara police, adding: "Right now, normalcy has been restored in the area." According to Hamisu Fanu, a local legislator, who reported 50 deaths from the

attack, "the bandits came from Gando forest. They laid siege on Dutsen Dan Ajiya and opened indiscriminate fire, killing any resident who tried to flee."

Armed gangs are based in the forests straddling the states of Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Niger, from where they launch attacks on villages. The Nigerian army has been beefing up its deployment to the region for several years to combat these groups, but the violence continues. The rising violence by militant groups and bandits in Nigeria has drawn the attention of the United States in recent months. US President Donald Trump, who frames much of the violence as "persecution" or even "genocide" of Christians, ordered surprise airstrikes in coordination with Nigerian authorities on Christmas Day in Sokoto State in the north.

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Cuban opposition figure Ferrer supports Maduro-like US operation for Cuba

MIAMI (AFP/APP): Cuban opposition leader Jose Daniel Ferrer supports a US operation in his country akin to the one that ousted Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro should the communist leadership refuse to give up power, he told AFP in an interview Wednesday.

"Cubans keep dying of hunger in prisons and on the streets, and they remain in power, oppressing and repressing the majority of the population," Ferrer, 55, said. "Therefore, if there's a Venezuela-style operation to be celebrated, I will do so, as will many other Cubans, with great pleasure."

Ferrer, who has been living in exile in Miami since last October, welcomes any negotiations between the Cuban government and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio—himself a descendant of Cuban immigrants.

The founding leader of the Patriotic Union of Cuba dissident group—who has spent more than 13 years in prison—said that the

talks are Washington's way of giving opportunities to Cuban authorities to transition to democracy without having to take "more forceful actions."

After a US military raid on Caracas saw the capture of Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, on January 3, Maduro's second-in-command Delcy Rodriguez was made interim president on the condition she would comply with Washington's demands—including the end of oil sales to Cuba.

The administration of US President Donald Trump views such moves as a first step toward a democratic transition, something which Ferrer said could potentially work for his home nation as well.

"If it is necessary for Cuba to act in the Venezuelan style and for a figure like Delcy Rodriguez to emerge, and for political prisoners to be immediately released and see an end of repression, I would agree," he said.

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 ski-

ing 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.

Late Thursday, in a statement reported by US media, families of six of the victims identified them as women who were "mothers, wives and friends, all of whom connected through the love of the outdoors."

"They were passionate, skilled skiers who cherished time together in the mountains," the families' statement said, adding "we have many unanswered questions." The statement also noted the women were "experienced backcountry skiers" who were "fully equipped with avalanche safety equipment." 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.



Spanish police announced they arrested three men on suspicion of shipping dried opium poppy capsules by mail across Spain and abroad, including to the United States.

President urges scouts to inspire nation for meaningful change

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari expressed confidence that in the years ahead, Pakistan Boy Scouts Association, affiliated with the World Organization of Scout Movement, will become more progressive and impactful, while bringing a positive trajectory to inspire the nation.

In a message on the World Scout Day 2026, as the Chief Scout of Pakistan, the President said, "I extend my warmest congratulations to more than half a million scouts and leaders of the Pakistan Boy Scouts Association on the World Scout Day, commemorating the birthday of Lord Baden-Powell on 22 February 1857, founder of the Boy Scouts Association."

"This day, celebrated by over 60 million scouts worldwide, pays homage to his vision of making the world a better place through youth empowerment, which has flourished across 176 countries and territories, providing healthy activities for the youth," he added. He said, "Quaid-e-Azam

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the first Chief Scout of Pakistan on 22 December 1947, he observed that scouting can play a very vital role in forming the character of our youth.

Scouts can effectively assist govt in dealing with challenges: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan Scouts can effectively assist the government in dealing with various challenges, natural disasters and any unexpected situation facing the country.

In a message on World Scout Day observed on February 22, he said, "Today, the annual World Scout Day is being celebrated with determination all over the world, including Pakistan."

"This day highlights the importance of the positive and constructive role of youth in society by utilizing their mental, physical and individual abilities," he added.

He recalled, "The Scout Movement, which was started by Lord Baden-Powell in 1907 at the global level, has today become the largest youth organization in the world. The efforts of the 750,000 members of the Pakistan Boy Scouts Association to promote these objectives are commendable."

He said, "It is a matter of pride that the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, took oath as the first Chief Scout of Pakistan on 22 December 1947."



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti offering Fateha on the sad demise of brother in law of Project Director Rafique Baloch.

Pakistan stands firm against permanent UNSC seats expansion, pushes for elected representation

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan Friday reaffirmed its opposition to adding new permanent members to the UN Security Council, arguing it would increase the 15-member body's dysfunction and violate the principle of sovereign equality.

Speaking in a resumed session of the long-running Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) aimed at reforming the Security Council, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said that the demand for individual permanent membership is clearly something that runs counter to the principles of reform.

As part of the Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group, Ambassador Asim Ahmad said Pakistan advocates for expanding only non-permanent, elected seats to enhance democratic representation in order to ensure "REFORM FOR ALL—PRIVILEGE FOR NONE".

Full-scale negotiations to reform the Security Council began in the General Assembly in February 2009 on five key areas—the categories of membership, the question of veto, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Security Council, and working methods of the council and its relationship with the General Assembly. Progress to-

wards restructuring the Security Council remains blocked as G-4 countries—India, Brazil, Germany, and Japan—continue to push for permanent seats in the Council, while the Italy/Pakistan-led UFC group opposes any additional permanent members, arguing it would create "new centers of privilege".

As a compromise, UFC has proposed a new category of members—not permanent members—with a longer duration in terms and a possibility to get re-elected.

The Security Council is currently composed of five permanent members—Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States—and 10 non-permanent members elected to two-year terms.

The IGN framework is geared towards restructuring the Council to make it more representative, effective, and accountable.

In his remarks, the Pakistani envoy emphasized that the campaign for individual permanent membership cannot be a basis for reform governed by those agreed principles.

The overwhelming majority of the United Nations' membership, he said, recognizes that permanent membership and the veto are at the core of the Council's paralysis and inaction seen too often over the years.



QUETTA: Central Secretary General PkMAP and Ex Provincial Minister Abdul Rahim Zertawal addressing on the ceremony to mark Mother Language Day organized by Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party.

Quetta officials review traffic arrangements for smooth Iftar commute in Ramadan

Independent Report QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Mehruallah Badini, accompanied by SSP Traffic Mirza Bilal Hassan, visited various parts of the city to assess and improve traffic management during Iftar hours in the holy month of Ramadan.

The officials inspected major congestion points, including Alamo Chowk, Liaquat Bazar, Prince Road, Kandhari Bazaar, and Meezan Chowk, where they reviewed traffic flow, parking issues, and the movement of citizens during peak hours.

Deputy Commissioner Mehruallah Badini directed authorities to ensure effective implementation of a special traffic management plan during Iftar timings to minimize inconvenience for commuters. SSP Traffic Mirza Bilal Hassan stated that additional personnel have been deployed in busy commercial areas, while operations against illegal parking are continuing to maintain smooth vehicular movement. The district administration and traffic police reiterated their commitment to coordinated efforts throughout Ramadan to provide better travel facilities and ensure public convenience during rush hours.

PM condoles death of brother of Qamar Kaira

LONDON (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Saturday expressed deep sorrow and grief over the death of Mushtaq Kaira, brother of former federal minister and Pakistan Peoples Party leader Qamar Zaman Kaira.

In a statement, he prayed for the highest ranks of late Mushtaq Kaira in paradise.

He expressed condolences to Qamar Zaman Kaira and the bereaved family.

He said, "May Allah Almighty grant the deceased place in paradise."

Information minister offers condolences on death of Mushtaq Kaira

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Saturday expressed grief over the death of Mushtaq Kaira, brother of senior leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Qamar Zaman Kaira.

In his condolence message, the minister said he was saddened to learn about the passing of Mushtaq Kaira. He conveyed sympathies to the bereaved family and said he stood with them in this time of loss.

The information minister said that Mushtaq Kaira's death had caused sorrow among friends and relatives, and his passing would be felt across the community.

In his message, Attaulah Tarar prayed that Allah Almighty grant the departed soul a place in His mercy and give strength to the family to bear the loss. He reaffirmed solidarity with the grieving family and expressed hope that they find comfort during this period.

Pakistan to provide 500 scholarships to Bangladesh students

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's Higher Education Commission will provide 500 scholarships to Bangladeshi students.

Scholarships will be provided under Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarship Programme. About 73 selected Bangladeshi students reached Pakistan for scholarships.

Students concerned will be provided free education on scholarships in various universities.

According to HEC Chairman Dr. Niaz Ahmad, the program aims to strengthen academic cooperation and people-to-people ties between the two countries.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning Mr Ahsan Iqbal addressing the closing session of "National Seminar on the Role of National at Nisar Fatima Institute for Seerah and Women Studies (NFISW), at Johar Town.

Islam is a religion of peace, Seerah a guiding light in every sphere of life: Ahsan Iqbal

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal said that Islam is a religion of peace and the Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) serves as a beacon in every aspect of life.

He expressed these views while addressing a national seminar as chief guest on the role of HEC Seerah Chairs in intellectual and moral nation-building and the establishment of sustainable peace in society, held at Seerah Centers on Saturday.

The minister said that the ideological foundation of Pakistan rests on the teachings of the Prophet's Seerah. There is no shortage of resources; however, the country must draw guidance from the Seerah in the journey of national reconstruction. He described the Holy Qur'an as a powerful and stressed the urgent need to reconnect with it. The establishment of Seerah Chairs, he said, is not merely an academic step but a serious effort to shape a national narrative. In a civilized society, there

is no room for violence and hatred, and it is essential to train youth in moral leadership and responsible citizenship in the light of the Prophet's teachings. He assured that the government would continue full support for such initiatives in higher education so that the Seerah becomes part of practical national life.

Highlighting the importance of HEC Seerah Chairs, Ahsan Iqbal said the seminar was not a routine academic gathering and congratulated the organizers for arranging it.

Tariq Fazal says Trump's recognition signifies a major milestone in strengthening Pak's diplomatic standing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry Saturday applauded President Trump's recognition of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, underlining that it sends a strong signal to India and the international community about Pakistan's rising influence and its solid, unshakable position in global diplomacy.

In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, the minister stated that President Trump's acknowledgment reflects a key step in elevating Pakistan's global diplomatic influence.

He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan is effectively representing the Muslim Ummah on global forums.

He emphasized that Pakistan's role in advocating for the rights and interests of the Muslim community worldwide has been strengthened, further solidifying its diplomatic influence.

Mohsin Naqvi vows all-out security support for GB elections

ISLAMABAD (INP): Gilgit-Baltistan Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Yar Muhammad Khan met Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Islamabad on Saturday and discussed a variety of issues with him with particular focus on security during GB elections.

Security, law and order, and tourism promotion during elections in Gilgit-Baltistan were discussed during the meeting.

The Caretaker Chief Minister said Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) will be made operational soon in Gilgit-Baltistan.



QUETTA: Inspector General Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir offering Dua after inaugurating newly constructed Fitness Gym at PTC.

IGP Balochistan orders comprehensive security plan for Taraweeh during Ramadan

QUETTA (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Balochistan, Muhammad Tahir, has directed all police ranges across the province to implement a comprehensive security plan for Taraweeh prayers during the holy month of Ramadan.

In directives issued to Range Deputy Inspectors General (DIGs), Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs), and Superintendents of Police (SPs), the IGP emphasized the need to strengthen security and traffic management in light of the prevailing law and order situation, particularly given the large congregations at mosques and other places of worship.

Muhammad Tahir instructed officers to ensure appropriate deployment at entry and exit points of mosques, parking areas, and around sensitive mosques, including open spaces adjacent to worship sites.

He directed that regular patrolling be carried out before, during, and after Taraweeh prayers to

maintain peace and prevent any untoward incidents. Senior officers have been tasked with personally supervising arrangements at mosques, imambargahs, Eidgahs, minority places of worship, and private congregational venues for Taraweeh and Fajr prayers.

The IGP ordered joint security arrangements in coordination with local volunteers at entry and exit points. Participants at sensitive locations will undergo proper checking and screening, while parking facilities are to be established at a safe distance from main congregation areas.

He stressed the importance of close coordination with district administration officials, religious leaders, and trader associations. Personnel deployed on security and patrol duties have been instructed to remain alert and utilize the bulletproof jackets and helmets provided to them.

Amin Gandapur indicted in audio leak case, arrest warrant cancelled

ISLAMABAD (INP): During the hearing of the audio leak case at the District and Sessions Court in Islamabad, Ali Amin Gandapur appeared in court, leading to the cancellation of his arrest warrant and the termination of proceedings against him as a proclaimed offender.

The hearing was conducted by Additional District and Sessions Judge Nasr Minalallah Baloch. Ali Amin Gandapur, accompanied by his lawyer Raja Zahoor-ul-Hassan, appeared in court, while co-accused Asad Farooq Khan was also present. The court formally charged both Gandapur and Khan in the audio leak case. During the proceedings, the judge remarked that Gandapur had repeatedly failed to appear in court, to which he responded that security concerns, curfews, and road blockages had prevented his earlier appearances. Gandapur told the court that he had been discussing license-related matters over a call and that his mobile phone was seized during raids.

CM Bugti highlights cultural significance of mother languages Day

QUETTA (APP): Marking International Mother Language Day, Chief Minister (CM) Mir Sarfraz Bugti underscored the cultural, intellectual, and historical importance of mother language, describing it as the foundation of collective consciousness and historical continuity.

In his message issued on Saturday, Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that Balochistan's linguistic diversity reflects the province's intellectual breadth and cultural depth. He noted that the rich tapestry of regional languages represents a valuable heritage that must be preserved and promoted.

"Mother languages embody the identity, traditions, and worldview of communities," Bugti said,

adding that safeguarding this linguistic capital is a fundamental responsibility of the government. He highlighted that the provincial government is implementing a comprehensive strategy to promote teaching, research, and documentation of regional languages, ensuring their preservation for future generations while integrating them into modern educational frameworks.

The CM stressed the importance of connecting younger generations with their mother language, describing it as essential for strengthening identity and fostering intellectual confidence. "When young people are rooted in their linguistic heritage, they develop a stronger sense of self and cultural awareness," he remarked.



Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman addresses press conference at Mansoorah in Lahore.

Pak military engineers battle rising South Sudan floods waters to protect people in country's Unity state

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan's Military Engineering Task Force, serving with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), is monitoring the water levels and maintaining the dykes that provide the only barrier between the water and some 300,000 residents of Bentiu, the capital of South Sudan's Unity State, according to a report received in New York. Even though the rainy season is long gone, the stagnant waters that hold the town of Bentiu hostage after years of extraordinary flooding are continuing to rise, the report said, adding that Pakistani engineers are concerned that the current water levels are

only seven centimetres less than at the highest peak, after heavy floods in 2022.

More than 5,400 square kilometres of this low-lying region is now covered by a dirty, brownish lake that has made the town, including a large displacement camp, a veritable island—protected only by massive earthen dykes and berms built and maintained by UNMISS and humanitarian partners.

"Our teams start the day by conducting foot patrols to identify weak spots and we shore them up as soon as they are flagged. It is like a race against time," Major Khizar Dilshad, the lead engineer for the Pakistani Blue Helmets, said.

JJ Chief rejects Sacrificing national dignity to please Trump, announces post-Eid protest drive

Independent Report

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman on Friday strongly rejected any move to compromise Pakistan's national dignity for the sake of pleasing US President Donald Trump, warning that such a policy shift, particularly on Palestine, was unacceptable.

Addressing a press conference at Mansoorah on Saturday, Rehman criticised the prime minister's participation in the so-called peace board meeting on Gaza and the decision to send Pakistani troops, calling it a blow to national honour. He said the Form-47 government was both incompetent and unpopular, and announced

that Jamaat-e-Islami would launch a nationwide protest movement after Eid against unilateral government decisions, unfair Independent Power Producer (IPP) agreements, and the absence of an effective local government system.

The JJ chief also lambasted Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for purchasing a luxury aircraft worth Rs 11 billion at a time when poverty in Punjab had surged to 42 percent. He said the province was facing acute challenges, including rising poverty, farmers' distress, the privatisation of government schools, and a deep governance crisis, yet the ruling elite continued to indulge in extravagance.

MQM files application to become party in Gul Plaza judicial probe

KARACHI (INP): The MQM has filed an application to become a party in Gul Plaza judicial commission probe as Tariq Mansoor advocate submitted advocacy papers on behalf of Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui.

The lawyer in petition said that his client wants to bring key facts on the record of the commission, "which are not being brought in light by the Sindh government".

The plea claimed that the DG Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) in Feb 19 proceedings cover up the facts. "It seems the government wants to cover up its negligence," The

Anti-Corruption Establishment had registered a case 56/2005 against irregularities in construction of Gul Plaza.

"In that case accused builder Gul Muhammad Khanani, then DG SBCA and Controller Buildings were involved," according to the plea.

The court had rejected bail petitions of the accused. "The People's Party government withdrew the case from court to allegedly protect the accused," application read.

An officer Manzoor Kaka, allegedly involved in illegal construction, was later made the head of the SBCA.



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehruallah Badini and SSP Traffic Mirza Bilal Hassan inspecting the traffic in various areas of city according to vision of Balochistan Chief Minister.