



### Excise dept reviews CVT and PRM reforms

A high-level meeting was held under the chairmanship of Secretary Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khalid Ilyas, to deliberate on matters related to Capital Value Tax (CVT) and proposed improvements in amendments concerning the Personalized Registration Mark (PRM) system.

Detailed story on Page 2

### Sarfraz announces retirement

Karachi-born wicketkeeper-batter, who made his ODI debut in 2007 before making his Test and T20I debuts in 2010, went on to represent Pakistan in 54 Tests, 117 ODIs and 61 T20Is.

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# The Province

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### Quote



With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.

— Muhammad Ali Jinnah

### News DIGEST

#### Six terrorists killed in Kohat

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOHAT: A major counter-terrorism operation was carried out in the jurisdiction of Laachi Police Station, Kohat, where six terrorists were killed during an exchange of fire with law enforcement agencies.

According to District Police Officer (DPO) Kohat, Shehbaz Elahi, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and Kohat Police launched a joint search and strike operation after receiving credible intelligence about the presence of terrorists in different areas of Laachi. The suspects were reportedly planning a major attack.

As the security forces cordoned off the area, the terrorists opened fire. The CTD and police personnel retaliated effectively, resulting in the killing of six terrorists. Weapons were also recovered from their possession.

The operation is still underway, with the area completely sealed to ensure thorough search and clearance.

#### Aftab Alam to chairs meeting on Radio Pakistan incident today

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretariat has issued a notification regarding the meeting of the Special Committee constituted to review the Radio Pakistan incident. According to the notification, the second meeting of the committee, chaired by Provincial Minister for Law Aftab Alam, will be held on Monday, 16 March 2026 at 11:00 AM in the Conference Room of the Provincial Assembly Secretariat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The special committee was constituted by Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati to ensure transparent investigation and to bring the facts surrounding the incident to light, with the objective of determining responsibility and taking effective measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

During the meeting, the committee members will be briefed on the latest developments and progress in the investigations related to the Radio Pakistan incident that occurred on 9 and 10 May 2023.



RAWALPINDI: Security forces gunned down five India-backed terrorists during an operation conducted in the Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Photo: ISPR

## Five India-backed terrorists killed in Lakki Marwat

IBO conducted on March 15 on reported presence of terrorists, reads ISPR statement

STAFF REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: Security forces gunned down five India-backed terrorists during an operation conducted in the Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, read a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Sunday.

The military's media wing said that the IBO was conducted on March 15 on the reported presence of terrorists.

"During the conduct of operation, our troops effectively engaged the khawarij location and after an intense fire exchange, five khawarij were sent to hell,"

read the communique.

The security forces also recovered weapons and ammunition from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

Following the IBO, security forces began a sanitisation operation to eliminate any other India-sponsored kharij found in the area, the ISPR release said.

The ISPR vowed that the counterterrorism campaign under Operation Azme-Istehkam would continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

Operation Ghazab lil-Haq

Since the Afghan Taliban grabbed power in Afghanistan in 2021, Pakistan has seen a sharp increase in cross-border terrorist incidents, particularly in KP and Balochistan, which share a border with Afghanistan.

Amid the rising terror incidents, Pakistan launched "Operation Ghazab lil-Haq", during which around 684 Afghan Taliban operatives and affiliated militants were killed.

More than 900 Afghan Taliban operatives have also been injured, while Pakistan has destroyed 252 checkposts, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar con-

firmed today.

The two countries, back in October 2025, were also engaged in border clashes after the Afghan Taliban and militants launched unprovoked attacks against Pakistan's border posts.

The resulting clashes led to the killing of over 200 Taliban and affiliated militants, while 23 Pakistani soldiers were martyred defending the motherland.

However, despite many rounds of talks, both countries failed to reach an agreement due to the Afghan Taliban regime's reluctance to take action against terrorist outfits.

## Pakistan rejects India's 'absurd' remarks

FO spokesperson says India has long supported terrorists groups operating from Afghan territory

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Sunday rejected remarks made by India regarding Pakistan's targeted and precise actions against terrorist hideouts and support bases inside Afghanistan, terming the statement "absurd, unwarranted and shamefully hypocritical."

The FO spokesperson's statement came in response to criticism by his Indian counterpart, who accused Pakistan of causing civilian deaths through air strikes in Afghanistan.

Pakistan launched 'Operation Ghazab Lil Haq' over two weeks ago after Afghan Taliban forces fired on multiple locations, prompting swift military retaliation. The neighbours have clashed along the frontier since Afghanistan launched a border offensive in response to Pakistani

air strikes.

Islamabad said its February air strikes that sparked the escalation were targeting terrorists. Islamabad accused Afghanistan of failing to act against terrorist groups that carry out attacks in Pakistan, which the Taliban government rejected.

The border fighting has hit multiple Afghan provinces. The violence of recent days is the worst since the October fighting killed more than 70 people on both sides, with land borders between the neighbours largely shut since.

In a statement issued on X, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Tahir Andrabi responded to media queries about comments made by India's Ministry of External Affairs on counterterrorism actions.

## PM directs plan for surplus food items' export to Gulf states

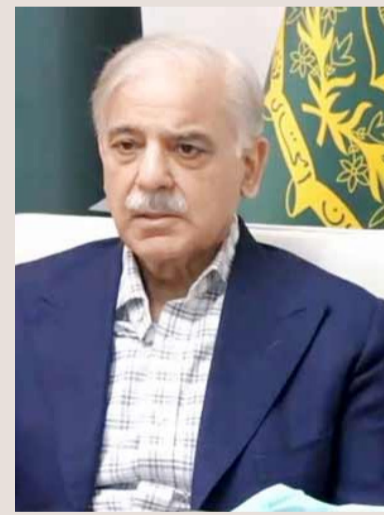
Pakistan's agricultural sector, including crops, meat, poultry, dairy, seafood, has significant export potential: PM

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed officials to formulate a comprehensive action plan for exporting surplus food items to Gulf countries, while ensuring that domestic requirements remain fully satisfied.

At a meeting chaired by the prime minister on Sunday in Lahore, officials reviewed the nation's food security and discussed strategies for exporting surplus food items to Gulf countries, taking into account the shifting regional dynamics.

The development came during the Middle East war, in which prime minister directed complete monitoring of demand and supply to ensure the country's food needs are fully met.



Highlighting regional developments, PM Shehbaz said disruptions in global supply chains have increased the export potential of Pakistani products in the region.

He emphasised that high standards must be maintained for exports to brotherly Gulf countries. He also instructed the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation to take necessary measures to facilitate exports via maritime routes.

The meeting was briefed on the current stocks and production of food items. It was said that Pakistan has ample stocks, with no shortage of essential commodities.

The meeting was informed that Pakistan's agricultural sector, including crops, meat, poultry, dairy, and seafood, has significant export potential.

The prime minister directed the formation of a committee to review the situation on a daily basis and instructed Pakistani ambassadors and trade officers posted in brotherly Gulf countries to remain proactive.

## Chief Minister chairs meeting on governance, reviews performance road-map

STAFF REPORTER

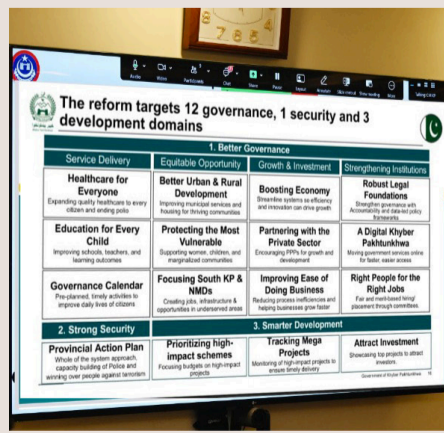
PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi chaired an important meeting via video link on governance and public service delivery in the province. The meeting reviewed progress under the provincial government's Good Governance Roadmap, with a detailed briefing on key milestones and outcomes achieved across multiple sectors.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister stated that the government has strengthened the performance and accountability of public institutions under the Good Governance Roadmap. He emphasized that ensuring the timely and quality delivery of public services remains the government's foremost priority. He noted that improving institutional performance and service delivery mechanisms is central to strengthening public trust in state institutions.

The Chief Minister further stated that

the roadmap is aimed at enhancing transparency, efficiency and responsiveness in the delivery of government services. In this regard, clear institutional targets have been set and a robust monitoring framework has been introduced to ensure effective implementation and performance oversight across departments. During the briefing, it was informed that the Cashless Payment Initiative has been launched in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The provincial cabinet has also approved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Digital Payment Act 2025, the first legislation of its kind in the country, which will soon be presented before the Provincial Assembly for final approval.

The meeting was further informed that over 100 public services have been digitized, including property transfer and issuance of land records. Similarly, with the introduction of e Summary and e Office systems, more than 1,500 summaries and over 600 files have so far been processed digitally. In the health sector, the meeting



was briefed that 150 Basic Health Units and Rural Health Centers have been converted into 24/7 Childbirth Centers to improve maternal and neonatal care.

Recruitment of 700 doctors on a contract basis for BHUs and RHCs is currently underway. In addition, the summary for the recruitment of 2,400 Medical Officers

against vacant posts has been approved and the recruitment process will commence shortly. Furthermore, outsourcing of 72 health facilities will be completed by August this year. In the tourism sector, the meeting was informed that solid waste collection services have been outsourced under the Galiyat Development

Authority, while the preparation of land use and master plans for Kalam, Kaghan, Kumrat and Galiyat has been initiated.

To promote community based tourism and facilitate visitors in tourist areas, interest free loans worth Rs 150 million have been distributed among local communities for community based accommo-

modation facilities. The meeting was also briefed on progress in the agriculture sector, where 150,000 wild olive trees in the merged districts have been successfully converted into European olive varieties through grafting. Additionally, 200 agricultural machines have been provided to farmers to promote mechanized farming. Furthermore, 700 watercourses have been upgraded with community participation to improve irrigation efficiency.

In the social welfare sector, it was informed that 3,177 orphan children and 3,380 widowed women are being provided a monthly stipend of Rs5,000 each, while 20 special education institutions have been revamped to improve services for children with special needs. Regarding the education sector, the meeting was informed that 500 government schools in settled and merged districts have been successfully outsourced to improve service delivery and management.

## The SPACE

### Humayun voices concern over rising inflation

TP REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Muhammad Humayun Khan, has strongly reacted to the Ramadan relief package announced by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, terming it a political move rather than a genuine effort to provide relief to the struggling masses. In a statement, he said that people across the country are already facing severe inflation, and instead of offering meaningful relief, the government has announced a package that lacks transparency and effectiveness. He added that making symbolic announcements during the holy month of Ramadan without delivering practical benefits to the poor is unfair to the public. Muhammad Humayun Khan stated that if the government is truly serious about supporting the poor and deserving segments of society, it should strengthen effective welfare initiatives such as the Benazir Income Support Programme, which has been providing financial assistance to millions of deserving families across Pakistan without political discrimination.

### Hafiz Daniyal completes Holy Quran in Taraweeh ceremony

OUR CORRESPONDENT

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Hafiz Muhammad Daniyal Hafiz, son of SDEO Dr. Abdul Hafiz of the Education Department, has achieved the distinguished honor of completing the Holy Quran during Taraweeh prayers in the holy month of Ramadan.

A large number of scholars from different schools of thought, local dignitaries, and citizens attended the completion ceremony held on this occasion.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Abdul Hafiz said that the teachings of the Holy Quran represent the true spirit and essence of a Muslim's life. He stated that the Quranic teachings are a precious guide for humanity, and by following them, a person can attain the pleasure of Almighty Allah and achieve success in this world and the hereafter.

## Grant approval expected soon for TMAs' salaries

OUR CORRESPONDENT

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The Local Government Employees Federation Registered Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is striving to ensure the release of funds for the timely payment of salaries and pensions to employees and pensioners of local government institutions, especially ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to details, following the federation's request to ensure advance payment of salaries and pensions in line with government instructions before Eid, Secretary Local Government and Rural Development Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zafarul Islam Khattak, took immediate action by obtaining financial reports from all Tehsil Municipal Administrations (TMAs) across the province within three days.

After reviewing the financial position and receiving recommendations from the relevant committee, a formal summary was forwarded to the Finance



Department for approval of a special grant to facilitate payment of salaries and pensions to employees and pensioners of financially weak TMAs.

The Secretary has also called for the early release of UIP tax collected by the Excise Department

during the last financial year to support financial requirements.

Meanwhile, a high-level committee comprising officials from the Local Government Department has been convened to address objections raised by the Law and Finance Departments regarding the summary, ensuring the payment of pensions from Account-IV. The committee has been tasked with responding to

these objections within two days.

According to sources, approval of the grant from the Finance Department is expected soon.

The federation has also written to the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly to ensure implementation of the Service Structure Regulations 2023 in their true spirit. Reports suggest that members of the Provincial Assembly are being approached to raise related matters in the House, including proposals to align the working hours of local body watchmen with those of the Education Department.

In a joint statement, office bearers of the federation — Patron-in-Chief Shaukat Kayani, President Haji Anwar Kamal Khan Marwat, Chairman Mehboobullah, General Secretary Suleman Khan Hoti, along with representatives of the Pakistan Workers Federation — appreciated the efforts of the Secretary Local Government and the entire team for initiating urgent steps to secure a special grant for Eid payments.

### PDMA issues weather advisory for KP districts



TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has issued a weather update forecasting partly cloudy conditions across most districts of the province during the next 24 hours, while colder temperatures are expected in upper districts during night hours.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, rain accompanied by wind and thunderstorms, along with snowfall over high mountains and isolated hailstorms, may occur in several districts including Chitral, Upper and Lower Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Upper and Lower Kohistan, Kolai-Palpas, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Battagram and Torghar.

Similar weather conditions are also expected in Mohmand, Bajaur, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Charsadda, Peshawar, Khyber, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Karak, Hangu, Kurram, Orakzai and North Waziristan.

During the last 24 hours, Malam Jabba recorded the highest rainfall with 7 mm, followed by Chitral and Dir with 4 mm each. Peshawar Airport recorded 3 mm rainfall while the city received 2 mm. Saidu Sharif and Mirkhani recorded 2 mm each, while Drosh, Bannu and Cherat received 1 mm rainfall each. A trace of rain was also reported in Takht Bhai.

The highest maximum temperature recorded yesterday was 34°C in Dera Ismail Khan, while the lowest minimum temperature today was recorded in Kalam and Malam Jabba at 3°C each.

According to air quality data from IQAir, Peshawar recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 81, Abbottabad 69, Baffa 79, Haripur 53 and Malam Jabba 38.

PDMA has advised citizens to remain cautious, particularly in mountainous areas, and contact the PDMA KP helpline (1700) in case of emergencies.

### DG Usman Mehsud welcomes Ramadan package for artists



PESHAWAR: In a welcome step for the welfare of the artistic community, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has started distributing a special Ramadan package among artists in Peshawar. According to officials, a total amount of Rs 6.85 million has been distributed among artists so far. Under the initiative, Rs 12,500 has been provided to each of 500 artists as financial support during the holy month of Ramadan. The initiative was taken after a formal request was submitted for the provision of a special Ramadan relief package for artists of Peshawar. The proposal was forwarded through a letter to the Secretary Social Welfare, Director

General Tourism Authority Usman Mehsud, Director Culture Halima Iqbal, and Deputy Director Hasena Shaukat played a role in facilitating the process. Artists have been informed that the distribution of the Ramadan package has now started as per routine. Those facing any issue regarding their artist identity card or registration number have been advised to contact the office of the Deputy Commissioner Peshawar for assistance. Officials described the initiative as an important step toward supporting the artist community and ensuring financial relief during the blessed month of Ramadan. TP REPORT

## Excise department reviews CVT and PRM reforms

TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting was held under the chairmanship of Secretary Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khalid Ilyas, to deliberate on matters related to Capital Value Tax (CVT) and proposed improvements in amendments concerning the Personalized Registration Mark (PRM) system. The meeting was convened in light of the vision of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi and the directives of Provincial Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Syed Fakhar Jahan. Director General Excise Abdul Halim Khan along with other senior officials of the department attended.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on various proposals aimed at making the Capital Value Tax and Personalized Registration Mark systems more transparent, efficient, and citizen-friendly. Emphasis was placed on aligning the tax system with modern requirements to facilitate citizens while also enhancing government revenue.

Addressing the meeting, Secretary



Excise Khalid Ilyas stated that, in line with the vision of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the reform process within the Excise Department is ongoing to ensure good governance, transparency, and public facilitation.

He said that the proposed amendments related to CVT and PRM primarily aim to make the system simple, transparent and easily accessible to the public.

Director General Excise Abdul Halim Khan, while briefing the participants, said that the department is taking practical steps to provide improved services to citizens through modern technology and digital systems. He added that the proposed reforms will not only increase

government revenue but will also ensure faster and more convenient services for the public.

The meeting also agreed that all measures will be taken keeping public interest in view to promote ease, transparency and trust in the tax system. Officials stated that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa aims to establish a system that provides maximum facilities to citizens in minimum time.

According to the relevant authorities, the final recommendations regarding the proposed amendments will be compiled and forwarded to the concerned forums so that necessary actions can be taken at the earliest.

## Plantation drive expanded to sports grounds

TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: Assistant Commissioner Matni, Saeed Manan, has called upon citizens, athletes, and people from all walks of life to actively participate in tree plantation activities at homes, neighborhoods, educational institutions, and sports facilities to promote a greener and healthier environment.

He expressed these views while speaking to the media during a tree plantation ceremony held at Malik International Cricket Academy in the Pishtakhara area of Peshawar. On the occasion, he planted a sapling within the academy premises and described the plantation campaign as a positive and commendable initiative.

Saeed Manan said that trees not only enhance the beauty of surroundings but also contribute to a clean and healthy environment for future generations. He noted that climate change has become a major global challenge and emphasized that tree plantation is one of the most effective and practical measures to address its impacts.

He added that if every citizen plants at least one tree in their home or neighborhood, it could significantly improve the city's environment, help reduce rising temperatures, and control air pollution.

The Assistant Commissioner further



stated that plantation campaigns should be expanded to sports grounds, educational institutions, and public spaces to raise environmental awareness among the younger generation. He appreciated initiatives taken by institutions like cricket academies, saying they not only promote sports but also encourage positive social activities.

Among those present on the occasion were Malik Farman Ali, Additional Assistant Commissioner Matni Ismatullah, and Tehsildar Matni Bawar, along with a large number of young cricketers and participants.

The participants pledged to actively support the plantation campaign and contribute to making Peshawar greener and more beautiful.

### DC Bannu reviews Law and Order plan for Eid

TP REPORT

BANNU: In compliance with directives from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, Deputy Commissioner Bannu Muhammad Fahim chaired a high-level meeting to review preparations for Eid al-Fitr. The meeting was attended by district administration Officers and officials, police, Rescue 1122, health authorities, TMA representatives, and other concerned departments.

During the session, detailed discussions were held on ensuring law and order, traffic management, and public amenities for the festival. The Deputy Commissioner instructed that all arrangements at Eidgahs, mosques, and Imambargahs be completed before March 18 to avoid any inconvenience to worshippers. Police were directed to remain vigilant to maintain peace, while Rescue 1122 was asked to stay prepared for any emergencies.

The Deputy Commissioner also issued directives to ban aerial firing and use of firecrackers, and to manage traffic and parking efficiently.

### Power theft crackdown

## PESCO suspends officials, registers hundreds of cases in DI Khan

MUHAMMAD REHAN

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: A major crackdown against electricity theft, corruption and negligence of duties has been launched in the Dera Circle of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO), leading to the suspension of several officials and the registration of hundreds of cases against electricity thieves.

According to details, the action was taken on the instructions of PESCO Headquarters Peshawar following a report submitted by SE PESCO Dera Circle Engineer Hizbullah Mehsud. The move created a stir across the circle as strict disciplinary measures were implemented.

Sources in PESCO said that those suspended include eight meter readers, two line superintendents, an acting meter reader supervisor and a lineman. The officials have been accused of mismanagement, corruption, patronage of

electricity theft and negligence in performing their duties.

Under the orders issued, the suspended officials have been directed to report their attendance daily to the Confidential Section at the PESCO Headquarters in Peshawar during the suspension period.

SE PESCO Dera Circle Engineer Hizbullah Mehsud said that a zero-tolerance policy has been adopted against individuals who damage the national institution or facilitate electricity theft. He added that such elements not only cause financial losses to the institution but also

lead to unjustified fines, increased burden and unnecessary load shedding for honest consumers.

He further stated that hundreds of FIRs have already been registered against electricity thieves, while departmental action has also been taken against PESCO officials found involved in or facilitating power theft.

After Eid, special intelligence teams from PESCO Headquarters Peshawar will visit Dera Ismail Khan to identify individuals involved in electricity theft and their facilitators, and to take stricter legal action against them.

PESCO officials have appealed to consumers to cooperate with the institution in eliminating electricity theft by reporting such activities in their areas. They said timely information from the public can play a key role in curbing power theft, reducing losses to the national institution, shortening load-shedding hours and providing relief to honest consumers.

## Food Authority discards over 8,000 kg substandard food items in Peshawar and Swat

Raids on spice units on tip-off; 1,200 kg bran, used oil and non-food grade colour recovered; substandard beverages and other items discarded

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa against Adulteration media in the province, the Food Safety and Halal Food Authority, carried out major operations against substandard and hazardous food in Peshawar and Swat, confiscating and destroying more than 8,000 kilograms of various food items.

According to a spokesperson for the Food Authority, the Peshawar food safety team carried out raids on several spice manufacturing units after receiving a tip-off. During the operation, officials recovered and confiscated 1,200 kilograms of bran, 100 kilograms of used oil and 30 kilograms of non-food grade colour from one of the units.

The food authority team imposed fines on the owners for violations and initiated further legal action under the Food Safety Act. The spokesperson added that in a separate operation in Swat, the food safety team discarded more than 8,000 kilograms of substandard and confiscated food items.

During the operation, over 3,654 litres of substandard beverages and 1,880 kilograms of spices were also discarded. Additionally, 158 kilograms of chat masala, 423 kilograms of China salt and 251 kilograms of gutka were destroyed.

Similarly, 843 kilograms of substandard packaging material, 160 kilograms of bakery items and 60 kilograms of pops were also disposed of.

The Authority officials further stated



that 25 kilograms of non-food grade colour along with 749 kilograms of various grocery items were also destroyed during the operation.

Director General of the Food Authority, Kashif Iqbal Jillani, said that operations against the adulteration mafia were con-

tinuing across the province on the directives of the Chief Minister. He added that eliminating the adulteration mafia from the province was the mission of the Food Authority, and ensuring the provision of safe and quality food to the public remained its top priority.

## Food safety conducts operation in DI Khan

MUHAMMAD REHAN

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: On the instructions of the Director General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority and the Deputy Commissioner Dera, the Food Safety Team in Dera Ismail Khan carried out a joint operation along with the district administration and other relevant line departments to ensure the provision of safe and quality food to the public.

According to details, during the operation milk tankers supplying milk from Punjab were inspected and samples were collected and tested on the spot. A total of six milk samples were examined and all were found satisfactory.

Bakery and fast food units were also inspected during the operation. Officials checked the quality of cooking oil used in these outlets, and where oil samples failed the quality test, the oil was destroyed on the spot and fines were imposed on the respective owners.

During the inspection, shopkeepers



were directed to strictly follow food safety laws while conducting their businesses. In addition, expired licenses of several outlets were also renewed during the campaign.

Deputy Director Sajjad Ahmed said that such operations will continue during the holy month of Ramadan to ensure the availability of safe and hygienic food for the public.

## News BRIEFS

## ANF recovers 156.7Kg drugs in nationwide operations

TP REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) conducted six successful operations across different cities of the country, arresting seven suspects and recovering 156.7 kilograms of drugs worth over Rs. 145 million.

**Educational Institutions Drug Interdiction**

Near Sakhi Sarwar Road, Dera Ghazi Khan, 2 kg ice was recovered from an accused. Near Dry Port Chowk, Sialkot, 300 grams of hashish were seized from two suspects. Near Karakoram Highway, Haripur, 500 grams of hashish were recovered from an accused.

The arrested individuals reportedly confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions.

**Inter-Provincial Drug Interdiction**

Near Kot Abdul Malik Toll Plaza, Sheikhpura, 114 kg hashish and 37 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle, and the accused was arrested.

**Domestic Drug Interdiction**

Near Gulyana Road, Gujrat, 1.2 kg hashish and 500 grams opium were recovered from a motorcycle rider.

Near Railway Line Road, Peshawar, 1 kg hashish was seized from an accused.

All cases have been registered under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act (CNSA) 1997, and further investigations are underway.

## Gulzar-e-Madina Trust Hosts Eid Ceremony in District Jail



MAKHDoom HUSSAIN

JHELUM: Gulzar-e-Madina Welfare Trust Germany organized a grand ceremony for the prisoners of District Jail Jhelum on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, in which the chairman of the trust, Haji Chaudhry Tikka Khan and Hassan Butt, distributed pairs of clothes as Eid to about 300 prisoners.

The special guest of the ceremony was Deputy Commissioner Jhelum Mir Raza Ozgun, while Superintendent Yasir Khan welcomed the distinguished guests. Renowned social figure Hassan Butt, DO Literacy Maimuna Anjum and journalist Muhammad Raheel Khalil also attended the ceremony. It was informed on this occasion that Gulzar-e-Madina Welfare Trust has previously completed several welfare projects in the jail such as installing a water pump, providing 25 ceiling and exhaust fans, constructing a separate meeting shed for female prisoners and installing 25 benches.

The representatives of the Trust expressed their determination to continue playing their full role in the welfare of the prisoners and providing facilities as per the jail manual in the future so that this series of service to humanity continues.

The participants appreciated these humanitarian services of the Trust and said that such measures promote compassion and brotherhood in the society and provide an opportunity for the prisoners to participate in the joys of Eid.

Deputy Commissioner Jhelum Mir Raza Ozgun, while praising the efforts of the Trust, said that the participation of philanthropists in welfare works in prisons is a good deed which helps in the reformation of the prisoners and bringing positive changes in their lives.



ISLAMABAD: Children are watching dancing fountain at a local park along Faisal Avenue in the Federal Capital. — PHOTO: ONLINE

## IG FC North graces 36th Basic Military Training Passing Out Parade

TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: A grand passing out parade of the 36th Basic Military Training Course was held at the Frontier Corps Center (North), Warsak.

A total of 1,350 recruits successfully completed their training under the course. Out of them, 500 recruits joined the Special Operations Force after completing specialized training.

During the ceremony, 29 brave Frontier Corps personnel demonstrated exceptional and high-level skills using three-not-three rifles for 15 minutes, showcasing their professional capabilities.

Inspector General Frontier Corps North, Major General Rao Imran Sartaj, attended the ceremony as the chief guest. He inspected the parade and awarded shields and honorary swords to the recruits who showed outstanding performance during the training.



Recruit Jamiluddin secured first position in overall performance across all disciplines and was awarded the IGFC honorary sword.

The impressive passing out parade ceremony was attended by senior civil and military officials, families of the graduating recruits, and guests from various walks of life.

## 20kg of Ice seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT

DI KHAN: In a major blow to narcotics smuggling, the Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa seized 20 kilograms of crystal meth (ice) worth millions of rupees during a successful operation in Dera Ismail Khan, arresting a suspected drug trafficker and foiling an attempt to transport the contraband.

The operation was carried out in line with the zero-tolerance policy against narcotics of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi and directives of Provincial Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Syed Fakhar

Jehan. According to official details received from the Excise Department, the action was conducted by the Excise Intelligence Squad D.I. Khan under the supervision of Saud Khan Gandapur, Provincial In-charge Excise Intelligence Bureau and Majid Khan, Excise and Taxation Officer (Narcotics Control).

Acting on credible intelligence, Inspector Saifullah Burki, in-charge of the Excise Intelligence Squad, along with his team intercepted a car near the D.I. Khan Toll Plaza on Dera-Daraband Road. During the search, the team recovered 20,000 grams (20kg) of ice concealed in the vehicle's spare tyre and a specially constructed hidden compartment.

## Pakistan-Palestine Forum announces peaceful march for Gaza on March 29

TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: The head of the Pakistan-Palestine Forum and Chairman of the Pakistan Rights Movement, former Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan, has announced a peaceful march scheduled for March 29, starting from Khyber and proceeding to Karachi, with plans to continue toward Gaza.

Addressing a press conference at the Peshawar Press Club on Saturday along with members of the Pakistan-Palestine Forum, he outlined the objectives of the march and called for public participation.

Mushtaq Ahmad Khan urged the Government of Pakistan to reconsider certain foreign policy decisions, including what he described as close alignment with U.S. policy, and called for withdrawal from the Gaza Peace Forum. He also made several political and international policy-related demands during the briefing.

He expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza, stating that the crisis has worsened, with widespread destruction and severe shortages of food, clean water, and essential supplies. He claimed that restrictions on humanitar-



ian aid have further aggravated the conditions of civilians.

The former senator stated that Palestinians have demonstrated willingness for peace, but ongoing developments have continued to undermine stability in the region. He emphasized that the defense cooperation agreements involving Pakistan are intended for the protection of sacred sites and not for external military objectives.

He also announced that in April, the Pakistan-Palestine Forum will participate in an international flotilla initiative moving from Karachi toward Gaza.

At the conclusion of the press conference, he appealed to the public, including doctors, traders, students, women, and youth, to actively participate in the "Pakistan March for Gaza" on March 29 and help make it successful.

## Glaucoma awareness event draws strong participation

TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: A Glaucoma Awareness Walk was organized at Hayatabad Medical Complex to promote public awareness regarding glaucoma and its prevention.

The walk was arranged under the supervision of Incharge PICO Prof. Sana Ullah Jan, with active participation from faculty members and students.

The ceremony was graced by the Guest of Honour, Chairman Board of Governors (BOG) Dr. Noor ul Iman. On the occasion, Medical Director Prof. Dr. Mushtaq Khattak, Dean Khyber Girls Medical College Prof. Shahzad Akbar, Hospital Director Gulzar Ahmad, and other administrative officials of the hospital were also present.

During the event, the Director PICO, along with the distinguished guests and participants, organized an awareness walk around the hospital premises to educate patients and their attendants about glaucoma, its symptoms, and the importance of early diagnosis and timely treatment to prevent vision loss.

On this occasion, the Medical Director, Chairman BOG, Dean KGMC Prof.



Shahzad Akbar, Director PICO, and other participants also planted commemorative trees within the hospital premises as a symbolic gesture to promote a greener and healthier hospital environment.

At the conclusion of the walk, shields were presented to the Director PICO by the Chairman Board of Governors in recognition of his services in promoting

glaucoma awareness, while the Chairman BOG was also presented with a commemorative shield as the Guest of Honour.

The event reflected the commitment of the hospital administration and medical community to raise public awareness about eye health and to promote timely diagnosis and preventive measures against glaucoma.

## Begging: A Curse, A Business, or A Cry for Help?

FIZZA QAISAR



Beggars spread across society like a contagious illness. Professional beggars overrun every street, signal, and market. They expertly strike their mark and cunningly bring in the desired cash. They break the harmony and stow people in vex. It is like the Business, and beggars are brutally honest with their profession. In beggars' empire, to keep an eye

on their organizational and employee activities, they have monitoring staff for bookkeeping of daily income. They endowment to several havoc ventures, including prostitution, buying and selling human organs, cutting children's hands and feet, trafficking narcotic supplies, and abduction. They inject the venom of drugs into our young generation.

Fakir, Gadagir, or Gadagar, they have different names. But they come into your life suddenly for a few moments and leave a very big question mark: whether you should have helped them or not. Now the question is, how do these beggars become beggars? Extreme poverty, mafia systems, disability or health issues, refuge, addiction, and charity organizations, not all of them, but some of them.

There are such people whom we give money to, but where do they go? Nobody knows about it. In Pakistan, a laborer is

earning a daily wage of around Rs. 1500. If he is earning Rs. 1000 to Rs. 3000, and even on weekends he is earning around Rs. 5000 or more, then whose fault is it? The beggars' or ours? Or are they really deserving people?

You will not find this creature on empty streets. In fact, you will find it on busy streets, at signals, in smiling places, shopping malls, outside mosques, temples, and such places where people come and go a lot.

In addition, the beggar is an abhorrent burden on society. People now value begging because it is smooth and non-demanding, starting with zero investment. Begging is a curse and may vanquish self-esteem. How do we get rid of this curse? How do we restore the balance? Because a beggar is a real threat to self-respect. Government and non-government organizations need to take serious initia-



tives to keep the nation apart from this incurable disease. Punish all the culprits and restore the balance.

Begging is not only about poverty; it is about the system that silently allows it to grow. When people continue giving money without thinking, and when authorities ignore the organized networks behind it, this curse keeps spreading in society. True help is not encouraging begging but creating opportunities for dignity and honest work. Society must realize that compassion should not turn into support for exploitation. Only when people, government, and organizations work together to break this cycle can we restore balance, protect human dignity, and build a society where no one has to choose begging as a way of life.

Indeed, Real beggars also exist in society, and their stories are often hidden behind the crowd of professional beg-

gars. Some people are forced into begging because of extreme poverty, disability, old age, or the loss of family support. These individuals are not part of any organized system; they are simply victims of harsh circumstances. A disabled person sitting quietly on the roadside, an old woman outside a mosque or a refugee who has lost everything may have no other way to survive. For them, begging is not a profession but a desperate attempt to stay alive. Ignoring such people completely would mean ignoring humanity itself. Therefore, society must learn to distinguish between organized begging networks and truly needy individuals so that compassion reaches the right hands.

The Writer is a journalist who writes about social issues and human struggles.

**Billions, Blood and Arms Industry Secrets**

SALEEM BUKHARI



In a single day, \$25 to \$30 billion in profits were made, over 1,850 lives were lost, 16 countries were plunged into fear and chaos, oil prices soared to \$119 per barrel, citizens had to pay \$3.50 per gallon for gas and stock markets were completely shattered. These are not just numbers; they represent a deliberate game in which politicians, military officials and major corporate groups held the lives of ordinary people hostage to satisfy their greed. This game was never about justice or protection, it was played solely for money, power and profit.

In November 2025, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu set a target to assassinate Iran's Supreme Leader. This was not a military decision but it was a meticulously planned operation rooted in the financial and political interests of global powers. In December 2025, U.S defense giant Lockheed Martin immediately ramped up weapons production. This was no coincidence; at the same time, U.S Senators Boozman and Mullin purchased shares in RTX Corporation. In other words, first the plan, then the profit and finally, the bloodshed. This was the moment when politics, investment and blood were inextricably linked.

By January 2026, Lockheed had quadrupled the production of THAAD missiles, while Republican Representative Cisneros also purchased RTX shares. The U.S opened a joint missile defense center at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, not for defense, but to escalate regional tensions and prepare the market for future weapons. Every move was premeditated, every purchase and production was part of a bloody game.

On February 27, 2026, the Omani Foreign Minister announced a breakthrough in the Iranian nuclear deal, saying peace was within reach. Yet the very next day, February 28, Iran was struck. This was not the result of failed negotiations but it was a deliberate sabotage of peace, because the weapons were ready, the shares had been purchased and it was time for blood to be spilled.

On March 1, 2026, defense company stocks reached record highs, generating \$25 to \$30 billion in profits while thousands of people died. The world once again witnessed soaring prices, economic collapse and countless human lives cut short. The profits of these defense corporations were literally blood money earned from human suffering.

On March 6, Donald Trump met with the CEOs of the seven largest weapons manufacturers, and production was agreed to triple. This war was not about protecting the people but it was about maximizing profit. Meanwhile, ordinary citizens were left to face crashing global energy markets, oil prices at \$119 per barrel and over 1,850 deaths across 16 countries. This was the price that the corporate and political elites exploited for their own gain.

The U.S Congress ostensibly voted against limiting war powers, yet these were the same members who attended every secret briefing and immediately purchased defense stocks. Peace negotiations were deliberately abandoned because they threatened the financial interests of the politicians and weapons manufacturers. The cost to ordinary citizens was not merely economic, it was profoundly human. Inflation, ruined stock markets, expensive fuel and casualties were the prices forcibly extracted from the public. This war was never about justice, security, or national protection. It was a pre-meditated game of financial and political destruction, in which politicians ensured the continuation of their blood-soaked business while ordinary citizens were sacrificed. Ordinary people paid with their lives, wealth and future, while politicians and weapons corporations grew fabulously rich. Every missile, every airstrike, every transaction, every political decision and every devastated market was predetermined. This game will continue as long as the powerful continue to sell the lives of ordinary people for their own wealth and personal gain.

# The Price of Religious Hatred

Pakistan has consistently raised its voice against Islamophobia at int'l forums

JUNAID QAISER



**The escalating cost of religious hatred is evident in the conflicts that mar our world, the social unrest that disrupts communities, and the poverty that often follows in the aftermath of violence.**

Hatred rarely stays just as words. When prejudice against faith takes hold, it gradually eats away at the very foundations of society, eventually leading to violence, division, and conflict. Today, we can see the effects of religious hatred more clearly than ever. What might start as intolerance or discrimination can quickly spiral into something much more harmful—wars, social unrest, civil strife, and worsening poverty. In many ways, humanity is paying a steep price for not honoring religious diversity.

The International Day to Combat Islamophobia, which falls on March 15, serves as a poignant reminder of this concerning reality. This day shines a light on the discrimination and hostility that Muslim communities face in various parts of the world. However, its importance goes beyond just the experiences of Muslims. It underscores a larger truth: hatred aimed at any religion ultimately threatens the peace and stability of societies everywhere.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, in his statement, reaffirmed that Pakistan has consistently raised its voice against Islamophobia at international forums. His message stressed that social intolerance weakens the universal values of religious freedom, mutual respect, and unity among nations. These principles are not merely ideals; they are the pillars upon which peaceful societies are built.

History has shown us time and again that when religious hatred is allowed to fester, the fallout can be catastrophic. Across various parts of the globe, we've seen conflicts driven by religious intolerance tear communities apart and destabilize entire nations. Civil wars, sectarian strife, and ongoing conflicts often bear the marks of religious divisions that have been exploited for political or ideological gain.

The human toll of these struggles is staggering—lives lost, cities in ruins, families uprooted, and generations trapped in poverty. But the impact of religious hatred extends far beyond the battlefield. In our daily lives, we witness the effects through hate speech aimed at religious groups, discrimination in jobs and education, and attacks on places of worship, all of which have become alarmingly common. These actions not only endanger individuals but also undermine the social fabric that allows diverse societies to thrive in harmony.

The tragic attack in Christchurch remains a stark example of how dangerous such hatred can become. A single act of violence driven by prejudice shook the conscience of the world and reminded humanity that intolerance can quickly escalate into tragedy. But similar incidents have occurred in many parts of the world—mosques vandalized, synagogues attacked, churches targeted. Each of these acts carries the same underlying message of exclusion and

hostility. The United Nations has recognized the seriousness of the issue. The resolution establishing the International Day to Combat Islamophobia calls upon the international community to confront discrimination and prejudice directed at Muslims. But combating Islamophobia, or any form of religious hatred, requires more than symbolic gestures. It demands a collective commitment to protect the principle that every individual has the right to practice their faith without fear.

President Asif Ali Zardari, in his message on the occasion, emphasized that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This principle, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, remains the moral foundation of a just global order. Freedom of expression is essential in democratic societies, but it cannot be misused to spread hatred or incite violence against religious communities.

Pakistan has also sought to strengthen the culture of tolerance within its own borders. Policies promoting inter-faith harmony and legal frameworks designed to protect minority rights reflect an understanding that religious tolerance must begin at home. Societies that respect diversity internally are better positioned to advocate for it globally.

The PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on this day called for collective global efforts to confront prejudice against Muslims, emphasizing that Islamophobia threatens not only Muslims but also the universal values of coexistence and mutual respect. His message underscores a powerful truth: intolerance against one community ultimately threatens all communities.

In an increasingly interconnected world, religious diversity is not an exception—it is a reality of modern societies. Millions of people live, work, and study in environments where different faiths coexist side by side. Peaceful coexistence, therefore, is not merely a moral aspiration; it is a practical necessity for stability and prosperity.

The escalating cost of religious hatred is evident in the conflicts that mar our world, the social unrest that disrupts communities, and the poverty that often follows in the aftermath of violence. Each act of intolerance deepens the divides that separate societies, while every attempt at dialogue and understanding works to bridge those gaps. Humanity finds itself at a pivotal moment. One direction leads to increased suspicion and division, where religion is wielded as a weapon for exclusion and conflict. The other direction fosters mutual respect, where diversity is celebrated as a strength rather than seen as a threat.

Opting for the latter isn't just a kind gesture—it's crucial for a peaceful future. Religious freedom, tolerance, and coexistence aren't just nice ideas; they are the very foundations upon which a stable and thriving world relies.

# Field Marshal's Bold Diplomacy

ABDUL BASIT ALVI



After the assassination of Ali Khamenei in a U.S.–Israeli strike pushed the Middle East toward a major war between Iran and the Arab world, Tehran retaliated with Operation True Promise, launching missiles and drones at U.S. bases across the Gulf on Arab soil, drawing Saudi Arabia into the conflict as sites like Prince Sultan Air Base were struck and the China-brokered détente collapsed, while Iran targeted U.S. military infrastructure across the Gulf and warned it would not distinguish between the United States and host states, putting Saudi energy and military sites at risk as mediation by the United Nations and China failed; Pakistan then intervened with military leadership under Asim Munir and diplomacy led by Ishaq Dar, who conducted shuttle talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, warning that Pakistan's September 2025 Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement obligated it to defend Saudi Arabia while offering mediation by securing a Saudi guarantee that its territory would not be used for U.S. or Israeli attacks on Iran, which Tehran accepted, limiting strikes on Saudi Arabia despite another attack on Prince Sultan Air Base; Munir then traveled to Riyadh for high-level talks

with Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman under the Joint Strategic Defense Agreement—formalizing decades of cooperation and effectively extending Pakistan's nuclear umbrella to the kingdom—while a carefully balanced statement acknowledged Iranian attacks but called Iran a brotherly nation and urged prudence as Pakistan coordinated de-escalation measures, and continued Pakistan-Iran military communication soon led Tehran to apologize formally to Saudi Arabia and pledge no further strikes, resetting Iran-Saudi relations and averting a wider war, with Saudi Arabia viewing the apology as validation of trust in Pakistan and Iran gaining space to avoid a multi-front war, while Munir's personal intervention—combining military credibility, strategic vision, and trusted ties with both sides—was credited with converting diplomacy into a binding agreement and elevating Pakistan's role as a uniquely credible mediator capable of balancing deterrence, assurances, and trust where other actors like the United Nations, the United States, China, and the Gulf Cooperation Council failed.

For the people of Pakistan, this triumph is a source of immense and justifiable pride. It is a validation of the sacrifices the nation has made in the war against terrorism and a demonstration that their country matters on the world stage in ways that transcend simplistic measures. In a region where great powers have historically treated smaller nations as pawns, Pakistan has asserted its agency and demonstrated that it can shape events rather than merely react to them. This is the essence of strategic autonomy: the capacity to navigate between competing powers while maintaining one's own direction and purpose. The vision that guided Field Marshal Munir through this crisis was not of temporary fixes but of a durable



**For the people of Pakistan, this triumph is a source of immense and justifiable pride**



regional order in which Pakistan plays a central stabilizing role. He understands that Pakistan's security is inextricably linked to the security of the Gulf, that instability in the Arab world inevitably spills over, and that by investing in regional peace, Pakistan is simultaneously investing in its own long-term prosperity. The threats facing the Islamic world, from terrorism to foreign intervention to internal division, cannot be solved by any single nation acting alone. They require collective action grounded in mutual respect and shared purpose. By demonstrating that such action is possible, even in a crisis that seemed to foreclose all possibility of cooperation, Field Marshal Munir has not only averted a war but has planted the seeds of a more stable and cooperative regional order for the future.

Iran's formal apology and binding pledge not to

attack Saudi Arabia transformed the Gulf security environment by removing the immediate risk of escalation and creating conditions to rebuild Saudi-Iran relations, with Pakistan acting as mediator, guarantor, and monitor of the agreement so that both sides can rely on Islamabad to intervene if tensions rise, which itself deters future conflict; this diplomatic outcome is credited to the vision and personal intervention of Asim Munir, who recognized that despite missile strikes and hostile rhetoric both countries wanted to avoid war and, by leveraging Pakistan's strategic weight, relationships, and patient diplomacy, positioned Pakistan as intermediary and achieved what many thought impossible—preventing a catastrophic regional war and demonstrating a commitment to principled diplomacy over the assumption that conflict is inevitable.

# Netanyahu posts video in response to dead rumours

*Air raid sirens sound across Israel while Trump says Iran deal terms 'not good enough yet'*

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu posted a video of himself getting a cup of coffee and chatting with his aide on Sunday, after rumours that he was dead or injured were aired by Iranian state media and spread online in Iran.



In the video, taken at a cafe in Jerusalem's outskirts and posted on Netanyahu's Telegram account, his aide asks him about the rumours.

Netanyahu responds with a pun on the word dead — which in Hebrew slang can be used to describe "being crazy about" someone or something — as he reaches for a cup of coffee.

"I'm crazy about coffee. You know what? I'm crazy about my people," Netanyahu tells the aide.

Reuters verified the video's location from file imagery of the cafe, which matched the interiors seen in the video. The date was verified from multiple videos and photos of Netanyahu's visit posted by the cafe on Sunday.

Since the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28, Netanyahu has visited at least two towns hit by Iranian missiles, a hospital, port and military bases, but there was little to no media

access, and videos were distributed by his office.

Netanyahu, who rarely gives interviews to Israeli press or holds news conferences, convened his first press conference since the start of the war via a video link on Thursday, a similar format to the one he used in June during Israel's 12-day war with Iran.

Emergency safety restrictions in Israel since the start of the war ban public gatherings and have kept most people at home or close to shelters and safe rooms, with schools shut across most of the country.

#### IRGC targets three US bases in region

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Sunday they had carried out missile and drone strikes on targets in Israel and three US bases in the region, calling the attacks the first round of retaliation for workers killed in Iran's industrial areas. The Israeli military said it was intercepting incoming launches.

Saudi Arabia intercepted and destroyed 10 drones in Riyadh and the east, the defence ministry said. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had no connection to the attack, semi-official Fars News Agency reported.

## Pope criticizes those who invoke God to wage war

ROME: Pope Leo XIV renewed his appeal Sunday for peace in the Middle East and criticized those who invoke religion to wage war, saying that "God cannot be enlisted by darkness."

"Currently, many of our brothers and sisters in the world are suffering from violent conflicts, caused by the absurd claim that problems and differences can be resolved through war," he said on a pastoral visit to a Rome suburb.

He added: "Some claim to involve the name of God in these deadly decisions, but God cannot be enlisted by darkness."

"It is peace that those who invoke him must seek."

Earlier Sunday, the US pontiff used his weekly Angelus prayer at the Vatican to again pray for the victims of the "atrocious violence of war" in the Middle East and urge dialogue and peace.

"I renew my closeness to all those who have lost loved ones in the attacks that have hit schools, hospitals, and residential areas," the 70-year-old said.

Leo said the situation in Lebanon was a particular cause for concern.

"On behalf of the Christians of the Middle East and of all women and men of goodwill, I address those responsible for this conflict," he said.

"Cease fire! Let paths of dialogue be reopened!"

"Violence can never lead to the justice, stability and peace that people are waiting for."

## Waqar Shehzad meets Sheikh Abdulwahab bin Zain Al-Abidin Al-Shaibi in Madinah



STAFF REPORTER

MADINAH : Renowned lawyer Sardar Waqar Shehzad Advocate held an important and spiritually significant meeting in Madinah with Sheikh Abdulwahab bin Zain Al-Abidin Al-Shaibi, the Custodian of the Holy Mosques, where matters related to the preservation of Islamic heritage and the promotion of religious harmony at the global level were discussed in detail. During the meeting, Sardar Waqar Shehzad appreciated Sheikh Abdulwahab's services in the care and preservation of the sanctity of the Holy Kaaba and the Two Holy Mosques. On this occasion, Sheikh Abdulwahab praised the efforts of Sardar Waqar Shehzad in promoting interfaith understanding, dialogue, and cultural exchange. During the discussion, Sheikh Abdulwahab bin Zain Al-Abidin Al-Shaibi was formally invited to visit Pakistan, particularly the Swat Valley, which he graciously accepted. Haseeb and other friends were also present at the gathering and hosted a memorable Suhoor in honor of the distinguished guest, where informal discussions on spiritual and social matters also took place.

## US, China economic chiefs to meet in Paris to clear path to Trump-Xi summit

Discussions led by Scott Bessent and He Lifeng expected to focus on shifting US tariffs, flow of China's rare earth minerals

PARIS: Top US and Chinese economic officials are set to launch a new round of talks in Paris on Sunday to iron out kinks in their trade truce and clear a smooth path for US President Donald Trump's trip to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the end of March.



The discussions, led by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, are expected to focus on shifting US tariffs, the flow of Chinese-produced rare earth minerals and magnets to US buyers, American high-tech export controls and Chinese purchases of US agricultural products. The two sides will meet at the Paris headquarters of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a source familiar with their planning said. China is not a member of the club of 38 mostly wealthy democracies and considers itself a developing country.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer will also join the talks, which continue a string of meetings in European cities last year aimed at easing tensions that threatened a near collapse of trade be-

tween the world's two largest economies.

US-China trade analysts said that with little time to prepare and Washington's attention focused on the US-Israeli war with Iran, prospects for a major trade breakthrough are limited, in Paris or at the Beijing summit. "Both sides, I think have a minimum goal of having a meeting, which sort of keeps things together and avoids a rupture and re-escalation of tensions," said Scott Kennedy, a China economics expert at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Trump may want to come away from Beijing with major Chinese commitments to order new Boeing aircraft and buy more US liquefied natural gas and soybeans, but to get that he may need to

offer some concessions on US export controls, Kennedy added. Instead, Kennedy said chances were high for a summit that "superficially suggests progress but that really just leaves things about where they've been for the last four months."

Trump and Xi could potentially meet three other times this year, including at a China-hosted APEC summit in November and a US-hosted G20 summit in December that could yield more tangible progress.

#### Iran war and oil concerns

The US-Israeli war on Iran will likely come up at the Paris talks, especially in reference to the spike in oil prices and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which China gets 45% of its oil. Bessent on Thursday night announced a 30-day waiver of sanctions to allow the sale of Russian oil stranded at sea in tankers, a move to raise supplies.

On Saturday, Trump urged other nations to help protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, after Washington bombed military targets on Iran's Kharg Island oil loading hub and Iran threatened to retaliate. "Meaningful" progress in Sino-US economic cooperation could restore confidence to an increasingly fragile global economy, China's state-run Xinhua news agency said in a commentary on Sunday,

## 'Dubai is safe': UAE pushes to contain fallout from Iran onslaught

Roughly 90% of people living in UAE are foreigners, a crucial workforce for diversifying economy away from oil

DUBAI: Dubai is scrambling to preserve its image as a safe haven despite Iran's onslaught, with influencers rallying behind the government's message as authorities crack down on those sharing fake news.

For decades, the Gulf was seen as an oasis of safety in a tumultuous Middle East, with the United Arab Emirates branding itself the safest country in the world and boasting of its very low crime rates.

But that image has now been shattered.

Iran has fired over 1,800 missiles and drones at the Emirates, more than any other country targeted by Tehran in the conflict, upending its aura of tranquillity despite its air defence intercepting a vast majority of the projectiles.

Kuwaiti-American reality star Ebraheem Alsamadi, known from "Dubai Bling", said in a video that he would stay in the UAE despite US consular advice, calling it "the safest country in the world, and nothing can change that".

"This has been my home for the past 16

years and I'm not going to leave it in 16 seconds [...] I will stand by this country as it stood by me," he added.

Dubai's Instagram account shared an emotional song to its 5.8 million followers that says "Dubai is safe, will always be safe". Dubai has long been inseparable from the city's identity.

"Those in charge of that strategy are now debating how to evolve it in the face of this obvious insecurity, but for now are deferring to their habits," said Ryan Bohl, a geopolitical analyst at Rane Network.

The UAE is also, he said, "hoping the war will be short enough that people will not associate war with the country. And one of the best ways to do so is to minimise the impact of the conflict on the UAE itself".

#### Reputation

Roughly 90% of people living in the UAE are foreigners, a crucial workforce for diversifying the economy away from oil towards tourism and services.

Retaining and attracting foreign talent

remains key to that programme.

The tourism sector is acutely susceptible to security issues, but "different tourists from different parts of the world have different risk tolerances," Bohl said.

To combat further fallout, authorities have doubled down on pushing an image of normality during the war.

In the early days of the war, UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan walked with his massive entourage through Dubai Mall.

At flagship tourist sites like Dubai Mall and JBR beach, foot traffic has reduced to a trickle as visitors have fled the country.

Emaar, a major real estate developer that runs famous shopping centres including Dubai Mall, has warned shops and restaurants against closing or operating at reduced hours during the war.

"Such actions undermine public order, create unnecessary concern and adversely affect the reputation and economic standing of the United Arab Emirates," the company said, in a note sent to the shops seen by AFP.

#### Sharing rumours

Footage of drone strikes and smoke billowing above the city has been shared widely, while fleeing tourists recounted tales of escaping Dubai under fire to international media.

## Russia is supplying Iran with Shahed drones: Zelensky



KIYV: Russia is supplying Iran with Shahed drones to use against the US and Israel, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told CNN in an interview excerpt aired on Saturday.

Zelensky told CNN's Fareed Zakaria that it is "100 percent facts" that Iran has used Russian-made Shaheds to attack US bases. Shahed drones have been linked to other attacks on countries in the region, although their manufacturers are not always clear.

Iran pioneered the Shahed drone, a much cheaper alternative to expensive missiles. They first saw mass use in Russia's invasion of

Ukraine, where thousands of them have been launched by Russian forces since fall 2022, according to the Ukrainians.

Although Iran initially provided the drones, Russia now manufactures its own Shaheds. The armed forces of other countries have since adopted Shahed-type drones, including the US military, which has said they are part of the current campaign against Iran. Iran pioneered the Shahed drone, a much cheaper alternative to expensive missiles

Although Iran initially provided the drones, Russia now manufactures its own Shaheds

وَمَنْ أَحْيَا حَا فَمَاتَا نَحْنَا أَحْيَا النَّاسُ جَمِيْعًا "اور جس نے کسی ایک انسان کی زندگی بچائی، تو گویا اس نے پوری انسانیت کو بچایا"

عبادت اس مقام تک نہیں پہنچا سکتی  
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## Beetroot can boost sugar exports: FPCCI Convener

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE: With coherent policy support, sustained investment, and market-driven ambition, the beetroot sugar could emerge as one of Pakistan's most quietly transformative agricultural success stories.

Convener of FPCCI Regional Committee on Food, Shahid Imran stated this in a meeting with progressive farmers delegation led by Ms Sana Abdullah Chaudhry here Sunday

Pakistan's beetroot sugar export, he added, are still small in volume with one percent share in total sugar production of the country, whereas globally, beet is cornerstone of industrial agriculture. Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait have emerged as primary destinations, driven by demand for refined and specialty sugar products. Export prices averaged over USD 3,300 per tonne in 2024, signalling improving quality, packaging, and market acceptance, he mentioned.

Shahid Imran was of view that expanding beetroot sugar can reduce dependence on sugarcane; smooth seasonal supply fluctuations; conserve water resources; and unlock non-traditional export revenues.

"At a time when climate volatility and global price swings threaten agricultural stability, diversification is not simply prudent – it is essential," he remarked.

The Convener said, sugar beet cultivation remains concentrated in regions with favourable temperatures, soil structure, and irrigation access. Farmers in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have beginning to recognise that sugar beet is not merely a substitute crop, but a structural solution to rising water stress, declining soil health, and volatile cane pricing, he added.

## PCMEA demands financial assistance for Intl. carpet exhibition

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE: Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) Sunday urged Trade Development Authority Pakistan (TDAP) and the Export Development Fund (EDF) to provide financial assistance for organizing International Handloom Carpet Exhibition in Lahore this year and restoration of the 80/20 subsidy scheme for participation in international exhibitions abroad.

In this connection, PCMEA Chairman Mian Atiq-ur-Rehman and Vice Chairman Riaz Ahmed co-chaired a meeting here at the Association's office. Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Chairperson Ijaz-ur-Rehman, Senior Member Usman Ashraf, Major (Retd.) Akhtar Nazir, Saeed Khan and others were also present.

The meeting discussed in detail the impact of the tense situation in the region on exports; approval of Cess Tax by Punjab government; disruption in supply of partially finished raw materials required for manufacturing of handloom carpets; and other related issues.

Chairman Mian Atiq-ur-Rehman and Vice Chairman Riaz Ahmed said that planning has been started for organizing Pakistan Carpet Expo 2026, which aims to promote Pakistan's handmade carpets in the global market and increase domestic exports. This exhibition will prove to be an effective platform to present foreign buyers, importers and global traders with quality products of Pakistani carpets.

It is appealed that immediate funding should be announced through TDAP and EDF for organizing the global exhibition so that the preparations can be carried forward effectively.



RAWALPINDI: Women are buying artificial jewellery to preparation upcoming Eid Ul Fitr festival at Sadar area in the city. — PHOTO: ONLINE

## CDNS secure Rs950 billion savings inflows by March 13th in FY 2025-26

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has obtained Rs 950 billion in savings inflows from July 1st to March, 13th of the current fiscal year 2025-26, achieving over 78 Percent its annual target and reflecting steady progress in promoting a savings culture in the country. According to officials, the CDNS has set an overall savings inflows target of Rs1.3 trillion for FY 2025-26. The inflows recorded so far indicate en-

couraging public participation in national savings schemes during the first half of the fiscal year.

Similarly, the CDNS has fixed a target of Rs50 billion for investments in Islamic savings instruments during the current fiscal year to support the growth of the Islamic economy, a senior CDNS official told APP on Thursday.

Sharing details of previous performance, the official said National Savings had set an annual target of Rs1.65 trillion for FY 2024-25, alongside a Rs170 billion

target for Islamic finance investments, both aimed at strengthening the savings culture and expanding Shariah-compliant financial options.

In response to a question, he said the CDNS realised Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds during FY 2023-24, surpassing 100 per cent of the annual target. National Savings had set a target of Rs1.7 trillion for that year, and exceeding it was an encouraging sign of public confidence.

The CDNS had also achieved its target of Rs1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in FY 2022-

23, which was Rs200 billion higher than the Rs1.3 trillion target set for FY 2021-22. The savings target for FY 2021-22 was later reviewed upward to Rs1.4 trillion in view of market trends and the objective of further improving the national savings culture.

The official said institutional reforms were underway in the CDNS, with new initiatives, innovations, and policy measures being introduced to enhance efficiency and expand outreach across the country.

## Employees should receive additional allowance, Eid bonus like Punjab: Baloch

The steps taken by Punjab govt to grant an additional allowance of Rs7,000 along with existing monthly allowance of Rs. 3,000 are commendable

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: President of Anjuman Tajiran Pakistan Ajmal Baloch has demanded that the federal government extend the same relief to Islamabad Social Security registered employees as provided in Punjab, including a monthly allowance, additional allowance, and Eid bonus.

He urged the Federal Interior Minister, the Interior Secretary, and the Chief Commissioner Islamabad to take immediate notice of the matter and address the concerns of the employees.

President of Anjuman Tajiran Pakistan Ajmal Baloch, in an important statement, expressed concern that registered employees of Islamabad Social Security are being deprived of additional allowance and Eid bonus on the occasion of

Eid-ul-Fitr, terming the situation unfair and unacceptable.

He said that the steps taken by the Punjab government on the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz to grant Social Security employees across the province an additional allowance of Rs. 7,000 along with the existing monthly allowance of Rs. 3,000 are commendable.

Ajmal Baloch stated that this initiative will provide significant financial relief to employees. However, he added that it is unfortunate that registered employees of Social Security in the federal capital Islamabad are not being provided with similar facilities.

He further said that registered employees associated with Islamabad Social Security are also performing their duties with dedication and responsibility; therefore, they should also be provided



equal facilities on the pattern of Punjab.

Ajmal Baloch strongly appealed to the Federal Interior Minister, the Interior Secretary, and the Chief Commissioner Islamabad to pay special attention to the matter and issue orders to provide monthly allowance, additional allowance, and Eid bonus to Islamabad Social Security registered employees so that they may also receive financial relief.

## Pakistan's envoy addresses Global Trade Forum in Montreal

TP REPORT

OTTAWA: The High Commissioner of Pakistan to Canada, Muhammad Saleem, participated in the Global Insights event organized by the John Molson International Business Association at Concordia University, Montreal, on March 12, 2026.

The event brought together students, researchers, and academics to discuss contemporary global economic developments under the theme "The New World Order and Trade Implications." During the session, Ambassador Saleem shared Pakistan's perspective on the rapidly evolving international trade environment, highlighting emerging geopolitical shifts, economic realignments, and their implications for developing economies.

He underscored the importance of adapting to changing global dynamics through strategic engagement, innovation, and strengthened international partnerships. The High Commissioner emphasized that constructive dialogue between diplomatic representatives and academic institutions plays a vital role



in fostering mutual understanding and preparing future leaders in the fields of international business, economics, and diplomacy.

Ambassador Saleem also highlighted the significance of engaging with students and young researchers, describing them as the next generation of policymakers and decision-makers who will shape global economic and diplomatic frameworks. He appreciated the initiative taken by Concordia University and the John Molson International Business Association in providing a platform for

meaningful academic exchange.

The session concluded with an interactive discussion, where participants raised questions regarding global trade trends, regional cooperation, and Pakistan's economic outlook in the context of shifting international systems.

The event reflected the continued commitment of Pakistan's diplomatic mission in Canada to strengthening academic collaboration, promoting economic dialogue, and enhancing people-to-people connections between the two countries.

## GAK healthCare hosts iftar dinner for Pakistan Sweet Home Children; announces scholarships, medical support

Yasir Niazi appreciated the services of Zamurrad Khan and acknowledged the role played by Pakistan Sweet Home

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: GAK Healthcare International, in collaboration with its constituent institutions Islamabad Medical & Dental College (IMDC) and Dr. Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital (ANTH), hosted a special iftar dinner in honor of the children of Pakistan Sweet Home.

The event was attended by dignitaries from the fields of healthcare, education, welfare, business, and public life, said a release issued here on Sunday.

Among those present were Chairman GAK HealthCare Dr. Ghulam Akbar Khan Niazi, Group CEO Yasir Khan Niazi, Vice Chancellor of City University Islamabad Maj. Gen. (R) Prof. Dr. Muhammad Aslam, Executive Director GAK Dr. Khurshid Ahmad, Director of ANTH Dr.

Areej Neyazi, principals of all constituent colleges, heads of various departments, faculty members, physicians, staff, and students.

The chief guest of the event was Pakistan Sweet Home CEO Zamurrad Khan, who attended along with members of the organization's administration, staff, and hundreds of children. The presence of the children created a warm and hopeful atmosphere at the event.

The ceremony began with a recitation from the Holy Quran and a naat in praise of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) presented by children of Pakistan Sweet Home. The children later delivered speeches, while a documentary highlighting the journey of Pakistan Sweet Home was also screened.

Speaking on the occasion, Yasir Niazi



appreciated the services of Zamurrad Khan and acknowledged the role played by Pakistan Sweet Home. He said that the core mission of GAK HealthCare is to provide quality healthcare and education to all segments of society. He announced that scholarships will be awarded to high-performing students to pursue their education at GAK HealthCare's academic institutions. He further stated that the institution will provide medical facilities, preventive healthcare initiatives, awareness programs, and mentorship opportunities for these children.

Chairman Ghulam Akbar Khan Niazi also appreciated the services of Zamurrad Khan and his team, stating that institutions like Pakistan Sweet Home represent a beacon of hope for society. He expressed his commitment to continuing collaboration with Pakistan Sweet Home in the fields of education, healthcare, and social development.

Zamurrad Khan thanked the leadership of GAK HealthCare and the institution for inviting the children with such

warmth and respect. He shared that Pakistan Sweet Home began its journey in 2009 with only a few children and has since grown into a well-organized institution working for the education, training, and brighter future of hundreds of children.

At the call for Maghrib prayer, the children and guests broke their fast together.

Imran Ali Ghouri, Head of Communication GAK HealthCare, said that under the leadership of Group CEO Yasir Khan Niazi, the institution is also viewing social responsibility through the lens of impact investment. According to him, when institutions invest in education, healthcare, and human potential, the results are reflected in stronger communities and capable professionals, while supporting institutions like Pakistan Sweet Home is, in fact, an investment in Pakistan's future.

The iftar dinner brought together individuals from different walks of life and highlighted a shared commitment to cooperation and social responsibility.

# Tanzid century, Taskin four-for give Bangladesh series

Salman Agha's century goes in vain after Men in Green fail to chase 291-run target

Dhaka: Bangladesh clinched the three-match ODI series 2-1 after beating Pakistan by 11 runs in the final game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur, on Sunday.

Chasing a target of 291, the Green Shirts were bundled out for 279 in their allotted 50 overs, struggling from the outset after losing both openers in the first two overs of the innings.

Taskin Ahmed struck on the fifth delivery of the first over, dismissing Sahibzada Farhan for six off five balls after he struck a boundary. Maaz Sadaqat was the next batter to fall as Nahid Rana removed him with a bouncer after he had scored six off five deliveries, including one six, leaving Pakistan reeling at 12-2 in 1.5 overs. Taskin struck again to deal Pakistan another blow as he bowled Mohammad Rizwan with a sharp delivery that rattled the stumps. Rizwan managed four off as many balls, hitting one boundary.

Debutant Ghazi Ghori and Abdul Samad then joined hands to stabilise the innings, putting together a 50-run partnership which also took the team's total past the 50-run mark. Nahid Rana struck on the final delivery of the 14th over to break the stand as Ghori departed after scoring 29 off 39 balls, including three fours and a six, with Pakistan reduced to 67-4. Pakistan felt further pressure when set batter Abdul Samad departed after a fighting knock of 34 off 45 deliveries, which included five fours, as he was dismissed by Mustafizur Rahman.

Salman Ali Agha and debutant Saad Masood then attempted to rebuild the innings, adding some crucial runs and easing the pressure after the early setbacks, taking Pakistan's total past the 100-run mark in the 21st over. The duo then attempted to rebuild the innings, rotating the strike well and scoring at a steady pace to ease the pressure after the early setbacks.

They played sensibly and kept the runs flowing, putting Bangladesh's bowling attack under pressure while bringing up a valuable 50-run partnership.

However, the 79-run stand was broken after Mustafizur Rahman struck and got rid of Saad who played an exceptional knock of 38 runs off 44 deliveries reeling the team at 161-6 in 31.2 overs.

Salman Ali Agha was in fine touch with the bat for Pakistan, keeping the scoreboard ticking with confident strokeplay. The right-hander brought up his 10th ODI half-century during the innings, raising his bat and providing some re-



sistance amid Pakistan's batting struggle. However, Pakistan slipped further into trouble after losing their seventh wicket when Taskin Ahmed struck again, dismissing Faheem Ashraf, who managed nine runs off 20 deliveries.

Salman Ali Agha led a brave fight for the Men in Green, showing no restraint as he steadily accumulated runs, eventually raising his bat to celebrate a well-deserved century in the third ODI.

Agha along side Shaheen Afridi notched up 50-run stand to help Pakistan dominate Bangladesh bowlers with runs coming in quick flow. However, Taskin Ahmed struck once more to claim his fourth wicket, removing Salman Ali Agha, who had played a brilliant innings of 106 off 98 deliveries, including nine fours and four sixes, anchoring Pakistan's response.

Shaheen Afridi was trying to anchor the innings, hitting back-to-back sixes off Mustafizur Rahman's second-to-last over. However, the bowler remained composed and struck again, claiming his third wicket by dismissing Haris Rauf for one, leaving Pakistan needing 14 runs from the final over. Rishad delivered the final over and conceded just two runs concluding the match with Shaheen Afridi stumped out on the final delivery after scoring 37 off

36 deliveries featuring two fours and two sixes while Abrar didn't face a delivery. Batting first, Bangladesh got off to a strong start as openers Saif Hassan and Tanzid Hasan set the tone. Runs flowed freely from the start, putting early pressure on Pakistan's bowling attack.

The pair stitched together a solid 50-run partnership, giving their side a comfortable platform as the visitors struggled to create early breakthroughs.

Tanzid looked in fine touch with the bat, piling on runs and bringing up his sixth ODI half-century, which also helped Bangladesh cross the 100-run mark.

Pakistan finally found the breakthrough when skipper Shaheen Shah Afridi dismissed Saif, ending the 105-run opening stand. Saif contributed 36 off 55 balls, including three fours. Tanzid then found support from Najmul Hossain Shanto, and the duo continued to build momentum with another 50-run partnership, taking the team past 150 runs. Haris Rauf provided Pakistan with the second breakthrough by dismissing Shanto for 27 off 34 deliveries, which included three boundaries, leaving Bangladesh at 158-2 in 29.2 overs.

Unfazed by the wickets around him, Tanzid kept the scoreboard moving and

eventually brought up his maiden ODI century, keeping Bangladesh in a commanding position. However, his impressive innings came to an end when Abrar Ahmed removed him for 107 off 107 balls, an outstanding knock featuring six fours and seven sixes, leaving Bangladesh at 194-3 in 36.2 overs. In the final stages of the innings, Litton Das and Towhid Hridoy batted exceptionally, putting on a 50-run partnership. Their steady scoring helped Bangladesh push the total past 250 in the 45th over, giving the hosts a strong platform heading into the closing overs.

The 68-run partnership was finally broken when Das was dismissed by Haris Rauf for 41 off 51 balls, which included a four and a six, giving Rauf his second wicket of the innings. Rauf continued his fine spell and came close to a hat-trick, clean bowling Rishad Hossain for a duck with a superb inswinger, leaving Bangladesh at 262-5 in 46.4 overs. Bangladesh wrapped up their innings with Towhid Hridoy unbeaten on 48 off 44 balls, which included four boundaries, while Afif Hossain contributed five runs. Faheem Ashraf bowled the final overs, conceding just eight runs, as the hosts finished with a competitive total.

## Sarfraz announces retirement

Former captain thanks teammates, coaches, family and fans for unwavering support throughout his career



KARACHI: Karachi-born wicketkeeper-batter, who made his ODI debut in 2007 before making his Test and T20I debuts in 2010, went on to represent Pakistan in 54 Tests, 117 ODIs and 61 T20Is.

He scored 6,164 runs across formats, including six centuries and 35 half-centuries. Behind the stumps, he grabbed 315 catches and completed 56 stumpings during his international career. Sarfraz captained Pakistan in 100 international matches across formats, including 50 ODIs, 37 T20Is, 13 Tests, and led the side to the No 1 ranking in T20I cricket.

During his captaincy, Pakistan achieved a world-record streak of 11 consecutive T20I series victories and recorded six clean sweeps, which include against West Indies (2016 and 2018), Sri Lanka (2017), Australia (2018), New Zealand (2018) and Scotland (2018). Sarfraz's leadership era also saw the emergence of several future stars, including Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhr Zaman and Shadab Khan, whom he backed at the start of their international careers.

Sarfraz led Pakistan to historic triumph in the ICC Champions Trophy, beating India by 180 runs in the final at the Oval

in England. With that victory, he became the first Pakistan captain to win the Champions Trophy and the only captain till date to win ICC titles at both junior and senior levels, having earlier led Pakistan to win in the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup in 2006 in Sri Lanka. In recognition of his services and the Champions Trophy triumph, Sarfraz was awarded the Pride of Performance in 2018, becoming the youngest Pakistani captain to receive the honour. Sarfraz has the Pakistan record of 10 catches in a Test match, which he took against South Africa in Johannesburg in 2019. He is to date the only Pakistani wicketkeeper-batter to score an ODI century at Lord's, which he scored against England in 2016. Sarfraz, who played his first international match (ODI) in 2007, made his last international appearance in an international match (Test) against Australia in Perth in 2023. "It has been the greatest honour of my life to represent Pakistan. From leading the U19 team to a world title in 2006 to lifting the ICC Champions Trophy in 2017, every moment in Pakistan colours has been special. I am grateful to my teammates, coaches, family and the fans for their unwavering support throughout my career," the former skipper said in a statement.

## AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026

# Australia and China book semi-final berths at Perth

SHAKEEL UR REHMAN

SYDNEY: The knockout stage of the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 intensified on Friday as two thrilling quarter-finals were played in Australia, producing dramatic football and confirming the first two teams for the semi-finals. Host nation Australia women's national football team and Asian giants China women's national football team secured their places in the last four after impressive victories.

Australia edge DPR Korea in dramatic clash

Host nation Australia women's national football team defeated North Korea women's national football team 2-1 in a tense quarter-final played in Perth.

Australia started strongly and took the lead in the ninth minute when defender Alanna Kennedy headed home from a set piece. The early goal lifted the home crowd and gave the Matildas confidence. Early in the second half, captain Sam Kerr doubled the lead with a brilliant finish after breaking through the North Korean defence.

North Korea responded with relentless pressure and pulled one goal back in the 64th minute through Chae Un-Yong, setting up a tense final phase of the match. Despite dominating possession and creating numerous chances, DPR Korea could not find the equaliser as Australia's de-



fence and goalkeeper held firm.

The 2-1 victory not only secured Australia a semi-final place but also confirmed qualification for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup.

In another quarter-final encounter, China women's national football team defeated Chinese Taipei women's national football team to advance to the semi-final stage of the tournament.

China controlled the match with disciplined midfield play and strong attacking moves, while Chinese Taipei fought bravely and created several opportunities on the counter-attack. However, the Chinese side proved more clinical in front of goal and eventually secured the win to progress to the last four of the continental competition.

The victory keeps China's hopes alive of

lifting the Asian title once again.

### Semi-final race intensifies

With these results, Australia and China became the first two teams to reach the semi-finals of the tournament. The remaining quarter-final matches will determine the other two semi-finalists who will join them in the race for the Asian crown.

The tournament, being hosted in Australia, also serves as a major qualification pathway for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup and the 2028 Olympic qualifiers, making every match extremely significant.

Football fans across Asia are now eagerly awaiting the remaining knockout matches as the competition moves closer to the final scheduled in Sydney.

## Fans' passion shows Peshawar's potential for big matches: DG Sports

TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Tashfeen Haider, has said that the enthusiasm of cricket fans during the National T20 Cup clearly reflects the province's passion for the game, adding that Peshawar is fully ready to host national and international cricket matches.

Talking to journalists at the media gallery of Imran Khan Cricket Stadium the other day, he said that the successful organization of the National T20 tournament in Peshawar proves the city's capability to host major cricket events.

He said the government and relevant institutions are taking serious steps to promote cricket in the province. According to the DG Sports, Peshawar has been awarded the hosting rights for one match of Pakistan Super League Season 11, while efforts are underway to secure more matches for the city.

Tashfeen Haider added that he remains in constant contact with officials of the Pakistan Cricket Board and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, expressing hope that Peshawar will receive additional PSL matches.

He further said that steps are being taken to resolve the issue of floodlights at Imran Khan Cricket Stadium, and the contractor has been called to complete the work at the earliest.

Responding to a question, he said that the process of upgrading Hayatabad



Cricket Stadium is also underway. The floodlight project for the stadium has been included in the province's Annual Development Programme (ADP).

Tashfeen Haider expressed hope that with improved facilities and arrangements, Peshawar will be able to host more major cricket events in the future.

## Karachi Blues end group stage with victory

TP REPORT

SIALKOT: Sialkot secured a crucial victory on the eighth day of the ABS Developers National T20 Cup, defeating Abbottabad to confirm their place in the semi-finals, while Karachi Blues won their final group match against Lahore Blues.

With this result, Sialkot finished first in Group B, followed by Multan in second place. Abbottabad stands third and Karachi Blues fourth, while Lahore Blues lost all three of their matches. The top four teams in the group have four points each; however, Sialkot and Multan occupy

the top two positions due to better net run rate. The final Group B matches will be played on Monday, with Abbottabad facing Lahore Blues, while Sialkot will take on Multan.

In the first match, Abbottabad won the toss and elected to field first. Sialkot posted a strong total of 202 for 6 in 20 overs. Abdullah Shafiq played a brilliant innings, scoring 96 runs off 54 balls, hitting seven sixes and four fours. Hassan Nawaz contributed 57 runs off 34 balls, striking six fours and three sixes. The duo shared a magnificent 145-run partnership for the third wicket.

Left-arm fast bowler Shahab Khan claimed five wickets for Abbottabad, marking the third five-wicket haul of his T20 career. In reply, Abbottabad were bowled out for 171 runs in 20 overs. Usama Mir took four wickets, while Muhammad Ali, Shoab Akhtar Jr, and Ahsan Hafeez Bhatti claimed two wickets each. Despite contributions from Sajjad Ali Hashmi (40), Aitzaz Habib Khan (28), and Razaullah (25), Abbottabad fell short.

In the second match, Karachi Blues defeated Lahore Blues by 57 runs. Batting first, Karachi Blues were powered by Saad Baig, who scored an unbeaten 72 off 37



balls, hitting seven fours and four sixes—his first T20 half-century. Mohammad Usman Rahim added 33 runs off 23 balls. The pair formed an unbeaten 89-run partnership for the fourth wicket.

Mohammad Rizwan took two wickets and Ali Razaq claimed one for Lahore Blues. In response, Lahore Blues struggled and were dismissed for 56 runs. Karachi Blues' Shah Nawaz Dhani and Jahandad Khan took four wickets each, while Mehran Mumtaz claimed two wickets.

Upcoming fixtures include Lahore Whites vs Karachi Whites in Group A, followed by Bahawalpur taking on Peshawar.



## Dakota Johnson takes a chill approach after split

ISLAMABAD: Dakota Johnson became relaxed after her split from Chris Martin. According to sources cited in recent reports, actress Dakota Johnson took a relaxed approach towards dating, post her split from Coldplay singer Chris Martin. According to a report by PEOPLE magazine, sources said Johnson is not rushing into another long-term relationship and has instead been exploring dating more casually. One source told the publication that the actor is currently "playing the field at the moment". The insider added that Johnson had previously hoped the relationship might continue, but now appears to be moving forward. The source further added, "And while she always hoped they'd work out, she seems lighter and more at peace now that it's final". Johnson has also reportedly been seen spending time with singer Role Model on multiple occasions. According to reports, the two were spotted together several times in December and again in January. However, a source described their connection as "casual". Alongside developments in her personal life, Johnson is continuing to work on several upcoming film projects. She is set to appear in an adaptation of the novel Verity by author Colleen Hoover, which is expected to be released in cinemas on October 2. Johnson and Martin were first linked romantically in 2017 and maintained an on-and-off relationship for several years before reportedly ending their relationship around June 2025. The pair had been together for approximately eight years. Another insider previously told the outlet in November 2025 that Johnson had begun dating again, gradually following the separation.



KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Syed Mohsin Naqvi and Chairman MQM-Pakistan Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Sunday. — Photo: PID

# President urges 'unity, stronger peace efforts'

According to the Presidency, participants also exchanged views on the overall internal security situation

STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari urged unity and stronger peace efforts during a meeting with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Chairman Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui in Karachi on Sunday. The meeting came in the wake of recent political tension following the removal of Kamran Tessori as Sindh governor. The

federal government appointed Nehal Hashmi as the new governor, who took oath on Friday. Following the announcement, senior MQM-P leader Farooq Sattar criticised the decision and said there was no justification for the party to remain in the federal government after such a unilateral decision, adding that it should immediately withdraw from the federal government. According to a statement issued by the

President's Office on X today, the participants exchanged views on the overall internal security situation, matters relating to law and order, and the evolving regional situation. The situation remained tense between the two parties since the deadly Gul Plaza fire, in which 80 people died. In the aftermath of the incident, Minister for health Mustafa Kamal criticised the Sindh government, alleging that Karachi was being subjected

to "democratic terrorism" and even "genocide", while demanding that the metropolis be declared Pakistan's economic capital and placed under federal control. Controversy also erupted after a meeting held at the Governor House, where legal bodies and political leaders accused Tessori of using the premises for political activities. It was alleged that speeches made after the meeting included calls for a separate province for Karachi.

## Four killed in cross-border shelling in Bajaur

TP REPORT

RAWALPINDI / BAJAUR: Four innocent civilians were martyred when a mortar shell reportedly fired from across the border landed in the Leti (Tari Pasha) area of Salarzai Tehsil in Bajaur, according to local and security sources. Officials stated that the shell struck a residential house, resulting in the immediate death of four brothers identified as Sajid, Ayaz, Riaz, and Moaz. One other person was seriously injured in the incident and was shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Security sources confirmed that mortar shells fell in the Salarzai area and surrounding regions, causing civilian casualties. The injured individual is currently under treatment, hospital sources added. Authorities said that the situation is being closely monitored and necessary measures are underway. Further details will be shared as they become available.



Local residents expressed concern over the incident, while security officials reiterated that appropriate steps are being taken in response to cross-border firing.

## Woman killed in roof collapse in Gadamaar

ANWAR ZADA GULYAR

BAJAUR: A tragic incident of a room collapse in the remote village of Gadamaar in Tehsil Barang resulted in the death of a woman, while one man and three children were injured. The district administration initiated relief measures immediately after the incident to assist and console the affected family. According to official sources, the incident occurred at around 3:30 a.m. in the village of Tangi, where a room suddenly collapsed. As a result, a woman died on the spot, while one man and three children sustained injuries. On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Bajaur Shahid Ali Khan, the Naib Tehsildar of Barang, accompa-



nied by local elders, visited the site of the incident and met with the affected family. He offered prayers for the deceased, inquired about the condition of the injured, and provided immediate relief goods to the family on behalf of the district administration.

According to the administration, the injured man was shifted to the Category-D Hospital for first aid treatment and was later discharged after his condition improved. The three children were not shifted to the hospital as they were reported to be out of danger.

## Saif Ali Khan lands a 'Pyaar Ka Punch' in the acting arena

AMJAD HADI YOUSAFZAI

PESHAWAR: Tamasha reality show winner Saif Ali Khan and actress Naeema Butt are set to appear together in the Eid special drama "Pyaar Ka Punch", which will air on Green Entertainment. Notably, Saif Ali Khan, who rose to fame after winning the reality show Tamasha, is making his official acting debut with this project, marking an exciting new phase in his career. In the drama, Saif Ali Khan's character Aazir is introduced with the line: "Charming Smile, Dangerous Confidence, and a Little Bit of Chaos." The Eid special has been written by Syed Muhammad Ahmad and directed by Azeem Sajjad, who belongs to Peshawar. The project is presented by Multiverse



Entertainment. With a fresh on-screen pairing and a lighthearted Eid storyline, Pyar Ka Punch promises an entertaining experience for

viewers. Fans are eagerly waiting to see the chemistry between Saif Ali Khan and Naeema Butt, as well as Saif Ali Khan's much-anticipated acting debut.

### Spot ON

#### Pakistan Railways to run four Eid special trains

LAHORE: The Pakistan Railways has decided to operate four special trains on the occasion of Eid on the directions of the Minister for Railways to facilitate passengers. According to a notification issued on Sunday, the first Eid special train will depart from Lahore for Karachi on March 16. The second Eid special train will leave Quetta for Rawalpindi on March 17, while the third Eid special train will depart from Karachi for Peshawar on the same day. The fourth Eid special train will run from Karachi to Lahore on March 18.

#### Eid shoppers irked by tailors over charging in KP

PESHAWAR: With Eid al-Fitr approaching and festive preparations in full swing, bustling markets across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are witnessing an unusual mix of excitement and frustration in the wake of overcharging by tailors. While families rush to complete shopping for the joyous occasion, many shoppers complain that soaring tailoring charges and closed booking lists have dampened their Eid spirit. In major cities including Peshawar, Charsadda, Mardan, Kohat, Swabi and Nowshera, tailoring shops are flooded with orders.

#### Rain in several KP districts, roads in Peshawar turn into ponds

PESHAWAR: Intermittent rainfall in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has made the weather pleasant, however, in some areas including Peshawar, problems like water accumulation on roads and drainage problems made it difficult for the locals. Due to the rainwater accumulation on roads in Peshawar with no remedial steps in sight people and traffic flow badly suffered. Complaints were also received about stagnant water in low-lying areas. Meanwhile, rain has also been reported in Mardan, Charsadda, Swabi and Khyber.

#### CM's Ramazan relief funds distribution continues in Abbottabad

STAFF REPORTER

ABBOTTABAD: The district administration Abbottabad on Sunday directed citizens who have received a message from 8558 but whose National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) contains an error of up to three digits to submit a copy of their CNIC along with their mobile phone number written on it at the Deputy Commissioner Office during official working hours.

## Ikramullah Marwat wins National Media Award

TP REPORT

PESHAWAR: Senior Producer Ikramullah Marwat of Radio Pakistan Peshawar secured first position in the Electronic Media category at the All Pakistan Media Coalition Competition organized by UNFPA and the Population Council Pakistan. The achievement is a proud moment for both Radio Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The competition featured more than 60 journalists from across the country in two categories: Electronic Media and Print Media. Notably, journalists from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa won first positions in both categories. Ikramullah Marwat's award-winning



radio feature titled "Impacts of Rapid Population Growth on Human Health and Behavior" highlighted the social, environmental, and health challenges linked to population growth, particularly in Peshawar and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The jury praised the report for its strong research, expert insights, and impactful storytelling.