

QUETTA VOICE

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Quetta Karachi Highway Blockade Strands Thousands of Passengers

Abdullah Lehri, News Desk:

QUETTA: The repeated blockades of the Karachi-Quetta National Highway have caused severe hardships for passengers, with thousands stranded for hours, including a wedding procession. On Thursday, coaches that departed Karachi in the morning were stuck near Bela for three to four hours due to a roadblock. Later, another blockade in Wadh forced them to halt again, leaving passengers, including women, children, and elderly individuals, in distress. "We have been stuck for hours without food or water. Women and children are suffering the most, and no official has come to help," said Azeem Baloch, a passenger traveling with his sick father for medical treatment in Karachi. Passengers have expressed frustration over the deteriorating situation, saying they have lost confidence in traveling by road. With frequent disruptions, airfare between Karachi and Quetta has surged from Rs. 17,000-18,000 to Rs. 38,000-40,000, making air travel unaffordable for many. "I was traveling with my family for my sister's wedding, but we



are stranded in the middle of nowhere. The delay has ruined our plans," said another passenger, Irfan Ahmed. The highway is a crucial route for

Balochistan's poor, who often travel to Karachi for medical treatment. However, persistent blockades have made their journey unbearable. Despite re-

peated demands, the government has failed to ensure the uninterrupted flow of traffic, leaving travelers at the mercy of uncertain road conditions.

CM Balochistan Orders FIR Against Wall Chalking in Quetta

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, has directed the Deputy Commissioner of Quetta to register an FIR against anyone involved in wall chalking, emphasizing that no one should deface the city's walls. Speaking at the launch of various projects under the Quetta Development and Beautification Plan on Thursday, Bugti criticized political parties and private schools for writing slogans and advertisements on public walls, which he said had tarnished the provincial capital's appearance. "No sane person can support this. Keeping Quetta clean is our

collective responsibility," he stated. The CM also urged citizens to follow traffic rules and respect signals. He shared his own experience of stopping at the city's only traffic signal, calling it a positive sign for law enforcement. "The law must be applied equally to everyone. If I had been allowed to break the signal, it would have made these traffic rules meaningless," he said. The beautification plan aims to restore Quetta's charm by addressing urban issues, including wall chalking, illegal advertising, and traffic violations.



IMF mission to visit Pakistan next week to take forward \$1bn climate fund talks: Aurangzeb

NEWS DESK: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Thursday that a team of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would be in Pakistan for a four-day visit next week to take forward the discussion on a \$1 billion fund for climate resilience. Pakistan has been ranked as the most vulnerable country to climate change in 2022 when it faced devastating monsoon floods that claimed over 1,700 lives, washed away swathes of agricultural land, affected 33 million people, and incurred losses worth \$33bn, according to governmental estimates. The country had requested \$1bn from IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST) in October, the minister had revealed during his visit to Washington then.

"The next IMF mission is [scheduled for] 24th to 28th [February], which will be here to take the climate resiliency fund discussion forward," Aurangzeb said in an informal talk with reporters in Islamabad. He said that for now, discussions would be held on the structure for the amount with an agreement as a goal. Reiterating the government's request, the minister said, "In my view, the RST should be at least a billion dollars." The funding under RST is made available to nations who commit to high-quality reforms to build resilience against climate catastrophes through adaptation. It is repayable over 30 years, including a 10-year grace, and is normally cheaper than terms for an Extended Fund Facility (EFF), such as the \$7bn loan programme with Pakistan which is underway. In October 2024, IMF recommended Pakistan to invest one per cent of its GDP annually — equivalent to over Rs1.24 trillion based on current estimates — in climate resilience and adaptation reforms to be ready to fight increasing cycles of extreme weather conditions.

EOC Balochistan Launches Polio Vaccination Drive in High-Risk Areas

Health Desk:

QUETTA: The Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) Balochistan has launched a special polio vaccination drive to immunize children in high-risk districts from February 20 to 27, 2025. The campaign aims to protect over 400,000 children aged 4 to 59 months with the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) and administer oral polio vaccine (OPV) drops to children up to five years old. This targeted campaign will cover 78 union councils across Quetta, Chaman, Pishin, and Qila Abdullah. **Polio in Balochistan: Addressing an Ongoing Threat** In 2024, 27 polio cases were reported in Balochistan, contributing to 74 nationwide cases — the highest of any province. Despite ongoing immunization efforts, environmental samples from various districts have tested positive for the poliovirus, highlighting a persistent threat to children's health. Health experts emphasize that IPV and OPV together offer enhanced protection, especially for malnourished children or those frequently affected by illnesses.



Urgent Call to Parents EOC Balochistan Coordinator Inam-ul-Haq urged parents to ensure all children within the target age group receive the IPV shot. "This vaccine is crucial for protecting our children against the

devastating effects of polio," he stated. **Security and Media's Role in Polio Eradication** To safeguard vaccination teams, robust security measures have been implemented. A total of 1,625 vaccination teams are participating in the drive, targeting

415,443 children aged 4 to 59 months. Health officials also stressed the role of media and community leaders in dispelling misinformation about polio. A collective effort from parents, community leaders, and healthcare professionals is essential to achieving a polio-free Balochistan.

PM Shehbaz visits CJP Afridi, agrees to give input on judicial reforms

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday visited the Chief Justice's House on the invitation of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi to share the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the National Judicial Policymaking Committee. During the meeting, CJP Afridi sought the government's input to improve the existing justice delivery system. The move is part of CJP Afridi's overall reform agenda intending to reduce the pendency and provide speedy justice to the people, said an announcement issued by the Supreme Court office. The CJP informed PM Shehbaz that he would also be taking the opposition parties' input and expressed the desire that the judicial reforms programme get bipartisan support so that the reforms were consistent, sustainable and more impactful. PM Shehbaz, who was accompanied by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, appreciated the reform package and told the CJP that the government would provide its input soon. Minister for Economic Affairs Division Ahmad Cheema and Attorney

General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan were also present. Supreme Court registrar Salim Khan and Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan secretary Tanzeela Sabahat assisted CJP Afridi during the meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting, the CJP presented a shield of the apex court to the premier.



While talking to a parliamentary delegation from Bahrain, led by Speaker of Council of Representatives of Bahrain, Ahmed bin Salman Al-Musallam, the premier expressed the desire to increase the trade volume between the two

countries. On the other hand, PM Shehbaz invited businessmen from Bahrain to tap the huge potential of business activities in Pakistan and invest in various sectors. He conveyed his best wishes to the King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa and emphasised that the



exchange of the parliamentary delegations was important to cement bilateral ties. "The brotherly relations between Pakistan and Bahrain are very strong and based on the shared beliefs, history and cul-

ture," he said. He highlighted that the Pakistanis living in Bahrain were rendering key services in the country. He also stressed that Pakistan, Bahrain, and the entire Muslim Ummah should intensify the relief efforts for their Palestinian brothers and sisters. NA Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi and senior government officers were present on the occasion. In his message on International Social Justice Day, PM Shehbaz said the day called for action to address key issues such as poverty, gender inequality, and discrimination.

"On Feb 20, we celebrate the International Day for Social Justice to champion equality, fairness, and the inherent dignity of all people across the globe. This day is a reminder of the critical role that governments, organisations, and individuals play in advancing social justice and equality," he said, adding that the Constitution, in alignment with Islamic principles, guaranteed social justice and equality for all, without discrimination. NEWS DESK.

Tarar warns legal action over campaign against army chief's UK visit

NEWS DESK: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, has warned of legal action against those protesting and running social media campaigns against the Chief of Army Staff's (COAS) visit to the United Kingdom. Speaking to Express News on Thursday, Tarar said the army chief received a warm welcome in the UK, which enhanced Pakistan's international standing. "The world acknowledges the professional capabilities of Pakistan's armed forces," he stated. He accused the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of being unable to accept the respect given to the army chief abroad. "A handful of miscreants launched a social media campaign and

staged protests, but patriotic Pakistanis have rejected their actions," he added. The minister vowed action against those involved in the campaign. "Anyone who harms Pakistan's integrity and interests will face legal consequences," he warned. Tarar claimed that Pakistan's economy was improving, with a 32% increase in remittances. He criticised PTI, saying, "While overseas Pakistanis contribute positively, a group of instigators leaves no opportunity to harm the country's reputation." He accused PTI of inciting violence, stating, "They attacked Jinnah House and desecrated martyrs' memorials. They have no regard for Pakistan's security."

Quetta's Air Quality: A Beacon of Hope in Pakistan's Pollution Crisis

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Police finalize arrangements to ensure foolproof security for Champions Trophy matches

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Sindh gov't launches crackdown on unfit commercial vehicles

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OPINION VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Quetta's Air Quality: A Beacon of Hope in Pakistan's Pollution Crisis

Quetta has earned recognition as the city with the best air quality in Pakistan, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 31, marking it as "good" and healthy...

While Quetta's clear skies owe much to its geographical location, lower population density, and fewer industrial emissions...

Green Initiatives Must Be Long-Term The Forest Department and local NGOs have launched tree plantation drives to beautify Quetta and improve its air quality...

Sustainable afforestation: Ensure saplings are planted in suitable areas and looked after until maturity.

Community involvement: Engage citizens in green initiatives to create awareness and responsibility.

A Call to Action Quetta's achievement is a reminder that clean air is possible, even in challenging conditions. However, it requires a committed and focused approach...

Eternal corruption

most plans that many civil servants make to apparently maximise personal benefits...

Will the IMF demand prove an exercise in futility? A recent example is the plan to purchase vehicles worth billions of rupees by the Federal Board of Revenue.

It should be simple to figure out that not coming clean about your assets is a lot easier for an individual who has already sold his conscience.

It is pertinent to point out that any international organisation would be living in a fool's paradise if it believed that it can achieve through legislation what internal controls cannot.

If the plan is to catch tax evaders by sitting around in shops and counting the number of glasses the Lassi wallah sells every morning...

So, the stuffing of files almost always gives the impression of an approving need for approval, while the reality is that the 'justifications' are provided for

Pakistan's rising population: a neglected emergency

By Durdana Najam:

Pakistan's population crisis has reached an alarming stage, yet the issue remains neglected by successive governments. With over 240 million people and an annual growth rate of around 2%, the country is struggling to provide even the most basic services to its citizens.

One of the biggest reasons behind this crisis is the absence of a coherent and sustained policy for population control. Since independence, Pakistan has treated population planning as a peripheral issue...

Ignoring population control has historically led to economic and social turmoil. Countries that failed to manage their population growth have faced food shortages, environmental degradation and political instability.

Moreover, unchecked population growth has worsened gender inequality, putting women at the brunt of poverty and deprivation.

Several Muslim-majority nations have demonstrated that effective population control is possible without conflicting with religious values.

Expanding access to free and easily available contraceptives, particularly in rural and low-income areas, is another critical step.

Investment in female education and employment opportunities is essential, as educated and financially independent women are more likely to make informed family planning decisions.

Healthcare infrastructure must also be strengthened so that family planning services are integrated into primary healthcare centres.

Further, and given the trained female health workers in communities can ensure direct outreach and effective implementation.

Introducing incentives for smaller families, such as financial aid and educational support, can encourage more people to adopt family planning measures.

Pakistan is at a crossroads. If decisive action is not taken now, the country will face an economic and social implosion driven by an unsustainable population.

The time for complacency is over. Pakistan must shed its outdated mindset and follow the examples set by other Muslim nations.

Only through serious policy intervention, widespread awareness and political commitment can the country secure a stable and prosperous future for its citizens.

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Saudi role in strategic conflict resolution

By Adeela Naureen:

As reported by Arab News, "US President Donald Trump will see his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Saudi Arabia for their first meeting since taking office in January 2025."

The visit symbolised a significant thaw in the Saudi-Russia relations, which had been strained for decades due to Cold War rivalries, differences over Syria and competition in global energy markets.

The visit highlighted a pragmatic shift in Saudi foreign policy under King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who sought to balance relations with major world powers - the US, China and Russia - amid the perceived US tilt under Trump.

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close ties with Trump through high-profile arms deals and strategic partnerships. This rapport allowed him to suggest diplomatic overtures to Putin, leveraging Trump's preference for personal diplomacy.

Saudi Arabia's neutral stance in the US-Russia tensions enabled MBS to act as a discreet mediator.

Saudi investments in American and Russian markets also provided leverage. MBS could facilitate cooperation by aligning economic interests with diplomatic goals, such as energy market stability or arms sales.

There is also a humanitarian angle to the Saudi role in strategic conflict resolution, especially the casualties of the war in Ukraine and the massive displacement of women and children from the country.

This war has led to almost half a million soldiers killed so far. Over 100 million Ukrainians have fled the country, with the majority to Europe. Millions suffer from displacement, infrastructure and economic collapse.

Trump's announcement of KSA to be the venue of his meeting with Putin has drawn a mixed response from the Muslim countries like EU and Western allies.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas has criticised the deal, stating that the backdrop deal will be a dirty deal, while Lithuania's Defence Minister has threatened that in case Europe and Ukraine were kept out of this deal, then Europe will stop providing its own economic, diplomatic and military alliance.

Although the three cited energy projects seem 'critically attractive', these are plagued with geopolitics and economic pitfalls and lack cooperative regional framework.

With the moneys needed for TAPI, CASA and TAP projects, Pakistan can and should upgrade its dated electricity distribution system, the main bottleneck in electricity transmission to consumers.

With completion of CPEC power projects, Pakistan's current production capacity, at 49,270 MW, already outstrips the demand around 29,000 MW in summers.

The is not withstanding the solar power generation, which is currently 10-15 GW and is projected to reach up to 60% in the electricity generation mix by 2030.

With abundant and cheaper electricity, aggressive exploration and development of oil, gas fields and LNG imports gas shortages can be overcome.

Therefore, it is time to look dispassionately at the whole gamut of

and fascination with, CAR trade potential. This is not to say that exploring and expanding ties with these brotherly nations has been halted. Contrarily, such links be deepened, while keeping expectations aligned to realities.

From geopolitical standpoint, India can and should upgrade its investment in CPP and Chinese-led megaprojects, perceptively at least, a sense of "strategic encirclement". China draws encirclement by the US, India by China, and Pakistan by India.

This, according to scholars like Haid Pedakone, prompts 'containment strategies'. India cloaks its anti-Pakistan, anti-China maneuvers, as trade with Central Asia, access to Afghanistan's Hajjag Iron ore and Afghanistan's natural resources.

In the long run, the India's pipeline-to-road-to-rail-to-sea-to-road shipment costs through CPP would be prohibitively expensive, compared to direct transit through Pakistan. One more compelling reason for Modi to relent!

The myth of Central Asia's trade potential

By Inam Ul Haque:

This write-up analyses the much-touted 'trade potential of Central Asia'. But first an AI Overview of Gwadar Port (GP) and Chabahar Port (CP) and Chabahar (CP), GP, by 2045, is designed to handle 400 million metric ton (mt) cargo annually, through 160 berths.

By comparison, CPP - once fully operationalised - will have 82 mtmt cargo handling capability. China's Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) operates GP. Gwadar even presently handles containerised and bulk cargo. The nationally deep Gwadar seaport, with 20-meter-deep approach channel, will eventually handle vessels of up to 50,000 DWT weight tonnage (DWT), container ships, of 100,000 DWT, and bulk carriers of up to 20,000 DWT. It is the only port in the region that would handle 200,000 DWT super-tankers, compared to Chabahar's 20,000 tons. GP's natural depth equals annual maintenance costs in dredging, etc. Iran's geo-strategic ambitions, especially in con-

tinuance with India, which is developing it as a commercial hub for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia. However, Indian trade via CPP bypassing Gwadar Master Plan (GMP), partly executed under CPEC, includes development of Gwadar, the Port, airport, corresponding transport systems, East Bay Expressway, besides economic and social development in Gwadar Free Zone. GMP has many sub-projects i.e. transport connectivity, daily power, needs extensive design, 21st Century Maritime Silk Road under CPEC, connecting Central Eurasia, North Sea, Mediterranean Sea and the Chinese coast.

And now Central Asia's trade potential. Pakistan's trade with Central Asian Republics (CARs) is roughly between \$400 and \$500 million annually. Pakistan's bilateral trade with Uzbekistan was \$145 million in 2020-21, crossed \$28 million (2022) with Azerbaijan and was al-

most \$91 million for the first eight months in 2024; recorded at \$7 million with Kyrgyzstan for the same period in 2024; was \$0.75 million with Turkmenistan for the same period; remained \$36.46 million (2023) with Tajikistan; and was over \$139 million with Kazakhstan during 2022-23. In 1995, Pakistan was the top trade partner of Turkmenistan for the same period. Traffic in Transit Agreement (TTTA) with China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to facilitate transit trade through Gwadar.

CPP's cited connectivity is presently better than GP in restive Balochistan. However, WPIs are to commence 21st Century Maritime Silk Road under CPEC, connecting Central Eurasia, North Sea, Mediterranean Sea and the Chinese coast.

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the assessed true trade potential of CAR? During 2022, the intra-regional trade among CARs was nearly \$10 billion, expounding 2.5 times during the last ten years, with Kazakhstan emerging as the lead trading partner.

By comparison, Pakistan's trade with China only, in 2022, was \$1.7 billion, with the United States \$6.1 billion, with Saudi Arabia over \$5 billion; and with the UK over \$2 billion. Pakistan's total international trade in 2023 was \$35.8 billion.

Secondly, in the energy sector, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Project to import gas from the Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan is touted as the bedrock of Pakistan's energy security. TAPI will yearly transport up to 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas, for 30 years. Once monetised at today's value, this makes \$1.84 billion, if the pipeline, costing \$10 billion is developed.

TAPI is marketed as critical for gas availability, given Pakistan's depleting reserves. Thirdly, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAP) Project for 500 KV power transmission to Pakistan is still on the drawing board. CASA (Central Asia South Asia) - 1000 Project, a joint venture between the main gas-producing countries, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, costing \$1.2 billion, to transport 1,000 MW surplus electricity from Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan/Afghanistan through a near 1,000 km pipeline, stands suspended after Taliban assumed power in Afghanistan.

If you put it all this together, the CAR trade potential (\$10 billion globally) and their bilateral trade with Pakistan (\$400-\$500 million) is not disproportionately lucrative given their smaller populations, not very developed industrial output, and their historic orientation towards Russia/Turkey and global trade.

Therefore, it is time to look dispassionately at the whole gamut of

and fascination with, CAR trade potential. This is not to say that exploring and expanding ties with these brotherly nations has been halted. Contrarily, such links be deepened, while keeping expectations aligned to realities.

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Police finalize arrangements to ensure foolproof security for Champions Trophy matches

RAWALPINDI (INP): Rawalpindi district police had finalized arrangements to ensure the foolproof security for Champions Trophy matches, said City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani here on Thursday. Chairing a meeting held at CPO office to review security arrangements, Syed Khalid Hamdani said that more than 5000 police personnel would perform duties for the security of the matches. Over 350 City Traffic Police (CTP) personnel would also perform duties to ensure traffic arrangements. A comprehensive plan has been prepared for the security of the route and Rawalpindi cricket stadium, he said adding, best possible arrangements would be made with the cooperation of all the institutions to provide the best environment for the cricket fans. Extraordinary security arrangements have been put in place for the Champions Trophy matches to be played at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. The cricket fans would be allowed entry in the cricket stadium through walk-through gates, and body searches would also be at the entry points. The prohibited items including hands-free, power banks, AirPods, food and drink would not be allowed, he informed. The police teams, dolphins and elite force would perform patrol duties in and around the stadium, Syed Khalid Hamdani said and informed that on the rooftops the expert snipers would also be deployed. Best traffic arrangements would be ensured for the convenience of the citizens. Eight cricket series were successfully organized during last 2 years, he added. Foolproof security arrangements would be ensured in collaboration with Pakistan Army, Rangers and other security agencies, the CPO said. The CPO reviewed all security arrangements and gave important instructions to the officers. The meeting was attended by SSP Operations, SSP Investigation, Chief Traffic Officer, SP Security, Divisional SPS, SPSCIA, SDPOs and other officers.



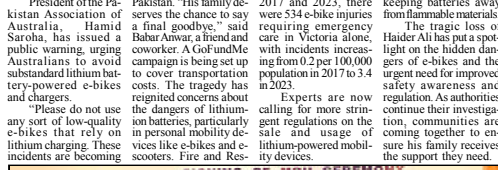
QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti meeting Speaker Balochistan Assembly Captain (R) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai.

Modi in trouble after US federal agency seeks India's help in Adani fraud probe

NEW YORK (INP): Narendra Modi government in India is in hot water, after the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) revealed that it has approached New Delhi under the Hague Service Convention for assistance in investigation against Adani and Sagar Adani in a bribery case. Last year, federal prosecutors in Brooklyn unsealed an indictment accusing Adani of bribing Indian officials to convince them to buy electricity produced by Adani Green Energy, a subsidiary of his Adani Group conglomerate, and then misleading US investors by providing reassuring information about the company's anti-corruption practices. The SEC made this revelation before a federal judge investigating the matter. The SEC submitted a status update on Tuesday to Judge Nicholas Garaufis at the United States District Court, Eastern District of New York regarding its efforts to serve its complaint on Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani. The SEC said that both Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani "are located in India, and the SEC's efforts to serve them there are ongoing, including through a request for assistance to the Indian authorities to effect service under the Hague Service Convention." The SEC staff has contacted Defendants or their counsel (to the extent SEC staff is aware of such counsel) and has sent them Notices of Lawsuit and Requests for Waiver of Service of Summons, including copies of the Complaint. It said that because the "defendants are located in a foreign country, rule 4(f) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP) governs service of the Summons and Complaint. The SEC update, submitted by its Counsel Christopher Colorado, cited a case which notes that service via the Hague Service Convention is one permissible means of serving defendants located in India. "Since the filing of its Complaint, SEC staff has been working to serve Defendants in accordance with FRCP 4(f). SEC staff has contacted Defendants or their counsel (to the extent SEC staff is aware of such counsel) and has sent them Notices of Lawsuit and Requests for Waiver of Service of Summons, including copies of the Complaint.

Pakistani student dies in Australia due to e-Bike battery blast in apartment

SYDNEY (INP): A tragic incident in Western Sydney has raised urgent concerns about the safety of lithium-ion batteries used in e-bikes after a devastating fire claimed the life of a 21-year-old Pakistani student. Haider Ali, a delivery rider for Uber and DoorDash, was asleep in his sharehouse when his e-bike battery exploded in the early hours of Tuesday morning. Fire crews responded to the scene at 5 a.m. and managed to contain the fire to a single bedroom, but Ali was unable to escape. Five other residents survived the incident. President of the Pakistan Association of Australia, Hamid Saroha, has issued a public warning, urging Australians to avoid substandard lithium battery-powered e-bikes and chargers. "Please do not use any sort of low-quality e-bikes that rely on lithium charging. These incidents are becoming more frequent and can have deadly consequences," Saroha emphasized. Neighbors described the harrowing scene. Bruce McPherson, who lives opposite the affected house, recalled hearing a massive explosion before seeing flames consume the room. "There was just a great big plume of smoke pouring out the roof. The neighbor across the street told me there was a guy standing at the front, all on fire," he said. Friends and colleagues of Ali are now focused on raising funds to repatriate his body to Pakistan. "His family deserves the chance to say a final goodbye," said Bahar Anwar, a friend and coworker. A GoFundMe campaign is being set up to cover transportation costs. The tragedy has reignited concerns about the dangers of lithium-ion batteries, particularly in personal mobility devices like e-bikes and e-scooters. Fire and Rescue NSW reported 28 lithium battery-related fires since the start of 2023, with 23 incidents recorded in 2024. According to emergency responders, the fires caused by these batteries are particularly volatile and difficult to extinguish. "Lithium battery fires burn rapidly and emit toxic smoke. Once they ignite, they are extremely difficult to control," said Fire and Rescue NSW Superintendent Adam Dewberry. Data from Monash University's Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit reveals a disturbing rise in e-bike-related injuries, including overnight charging and keeping batteries away from flammable materials. The tragic loss of Haider Ali has put a spotlight on the hidden dangers of e-bikes and the urgent need for improved safety awareness and regulation. As authorities continue their investigation, communities are coming together to ensure his family receives the support they need.



ISLAMABAD: Director NAB Mohammad Imran Butt and CEO Zahir Nasir Ms Qamar Jahan Diagnostics shaking hands after signing of MoU in the presence of Acting Chairman NAB Sohail Nasir, NAB PGA Syed Intsham Qadir Shah and other NAB Senior Officers at NAB Headquarters.



AZERBAIJAN, BAKU: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani in a group photo with President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Heydar Oglu Aliyev.

Karot HPP launches report on China's role in Pakistan's development

The event drew global dignitaries, who commended the contributions of Chinese companies to Pakistan's development. The report details the successful operations of the Chinese hydropower project initiative under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The report was unveiled at the one-day International Conference on 'Regional Connectivity & Pakistan: Emerging Opportunities', hosted by the Pakistan-China Institute in Islamabad. It emphasizes the significant benefits of Foreign Direct Investment in Pakistan. The project plays a crucial role in reducing carbon dioxide emissions by around 35 million tons each year, successfully implementing the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). Additionally, the project has been instrumental in creating jobs, employing nearly 5,000 individuals during its construction phase and sustaining around 150 jobs during operations. This has not only helped reduce unemployment but has also promoted economic growth and skill development within local communities. The report is the Karot Hydropower Project (HPP), which generates approximately 3,206 GWh of clean and renewable energy annually. It further notes that Chinese companies have actively engaged with local communities across Pakistan, fulfilling their corporate social responsibilities and supporting the country's sustainable economic and social development. According to Gwadar Pro, the report emphasizes that Chinese companies have brought over 8,900 megawatts of power capacity and the 660 KV HVDC Matiari-Lahore Transmission line to Pakistan, with an investment of approximately USD 16 billion. These achievements have not only effectively addressed energy shortages but have also spurred technological innovation, increased employment, and boosted economic growth. Their efforts have significantly contributed to modernizing Pakistan's energy infrastructure, laying a robust foundation for the nation's progress. A key highlight of the report is the Karot Hydropower Project (HPP), which generates approximately 3,206 GWh of clean and renewable energy annually. It further notes that Chinese companies have actively engaged with local communities across Pakistan, fulfilling their corporate social responsibilities and supporting the country's sustainable economic and social development. According to Gwadar Pro, the report emphasizes that Chinese companies have brought over 8,900 megawatts of power capacity and the 660 KV HVDC Matiari-Lahore Transmission line to Pakistan, with an investment of approximately USD 16 billion. These achievements have not only effectively addressed energy shortages but have also spurred technological innovation, increased employment, and boosted economic growth. Their efforts have significantly contributed to modernizing Pakistan's energy infrastructure, laying a robust foundation for the nation's progress. A key highlight of the report is the Karot Hydropower Project (HPP), which generates approximately 3,206 GWh of clean and renewable energy annually.

APHC urges UN chief to address Kashmir dispute

SRINAGAR (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has called for intervention by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, on urgent basis to resolve the Kashmir dispute. According to Kashmir Media Service, on the World Day of Social Justice, today, APHC spokesman Abdul Rashid Minhas, in a memorandum addressed to the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, urged him to use his good offices to stop political injustice and atrocities by BJP-led Indian government in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He said that all fundamental rights have been snatched from the subjugated people of Kashmir and deployed that continued control and search operation, arbitrary arrests under black laws, extrajudicial killings, physical and mental violence, corruption, degradation of human values. He also denounced the BJP regime's local representative IG Manoj Sinha for suspending employees, attaching properties of Kashmiris and operations against the Islamic book and literature which are the fresh examples how Kashmir have been deprived of their social rights. He said the "World Day of Social Justice" is being celebrated all over the world but Kashmiris including its leadership and thousands in jails have been deprived of the social justice.



ISLAMABAD: UN Women Delegation, led by Country Representative Jamshed Kazi, Meets Federal Minister for Law & Justice and Human Rights Senator Azam Naezer Tarar to Strengthen Efforts for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Pakistan.

International Mother Language Day to be observed tomorrow

ISLAMABAD (INP): Like other parts of the world, the "International Mother Language Day" (Maan Bol Ki Awaaz Din) will be observed on February 21 (tomorrow) with the theme "Silver Jubilee Celebration of International Mother Language Day". On this occasion, different events and seminars would be held to commemorate this day. In this regard, the Indus Culture Forum also schedules an event from 21-23 February in the Pakistan National Council of Arts' auditorium with the title "Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival 2025". An inaugural ceremony of the festival will be held at 6:00 p.m. at the PNCA.

Advertisement for 'Matlab & others' featuring a table with various items and prices. The table lists items like 'Matlab', 'Others', 'Mineral Water', etc., with their respective prices. Below the table is contact information for 'DPR' including website, phone, and social media links.

Pak-Sino air transport and infrastructure co-op in full swing

ISLAMABAD (INP): Like roadways and seaways, Pakistan-China airway cooperation has shifted into high gear following the start of a major construction project to build a new terminal at the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore.

In collaboration with the Civil Aviation Authority, Pakistan Airports Authority, and China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC), work on the new terminal at the Allama Iqbal International Airport is well underway. The initiative aims to enhance the passenger experience and reduce growing congestion at one of Pakistan's busiest airports.

After the upgrade, it will further expand Pakistan's external connections, create local employment opportunities, and boost regional development—an important addition to Lahore Airport's infrastructure and operational capacity.

Expected to be completed by September 2026, the project will significantly improve the airport's capabilities.

This includes a sixfold increase in immigration counters and a threefold expansion in baggage handling capacity.

Other key features will be increasing departure immigration counters from 10 to 64, arrival immigration counters from 18 to 80, and security

checks from 4 to 8.

According to details, check-in counters will rise from 25 to 67, customs inspection points from 12 to 24, passenger boarding bridges from 4 to 6, and baggage conveyor belts from 2 to 6.

Once completed, a CCECC official said, the terminal will be able to handle over 12 million passengers annually, significantly easing congestion and reducing long wait times.

The official added that the terminal expansion plan aims to accommodate rising travel demand for the next 15 to 20 years, according to a report published news Gwadar Pro on Thursday.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Exports Development Roadmap.

Seniority row: 5 judges urge SC to restrain Justice Dogar from duties as acting IHC CJ

NEWS DESK: Five judges of the Lahore High Court (LHC) petitioned the Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday to restrain Justice Sardar Mohammad Sarfraz Dogar from carrying out his duties as the acting IHC chief justice.

The development is the latest in the row affecting the IHC after the transfers of new judges to the high court that led to a shakeup of the seniority list. The matter arose after the Ministry of Law and Justice issued a notification on February 1, transferring three sitting judges — Justice Dogar, Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro and Justice Muhammad Asif — from their respective high courts to the IHC.

Justice Dogar was transferred from the Balochistan High Court (BHC). The controversy centered around the alteration of the seniority list following these transfers.

Five IHC judges — Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kasayni, Justice

Tarq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Aftab, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan and Justice Saman Rafiq Intiaz — had filed a representation, contending that under the Constitution, a high court judge must take a new oath upon transfer to a different high court, which should affect their seniority ranking.

The five judges also did not attend Justice Dogar's oath-taking ceremony as the acting IHC chief justice.

The five judges filed a petition in the Supreme Court today under Article 184(3) of the Constitution and mentioned the president, Federation of Pakistan through the law secretary, secretary of the Judicial Commission for the Bar, and the registrars of the SC and four high courts, Justice Dogar, Justice Soomro and Justice Asif as respondents.

Article 184(3) of the Constitution sets out the SC's original jurisdiction and enables it to assume jurisdiction in matters involving a question of "public im-

portance" with reference to the "enforcement of any of the fundamental rights" of Pakistan's citizens.

The petition pleaded the apex court to restrain Justice Dogar from performing functions as the acting IHC chief justice and to also restrain the other transferred judges from performing any of their judicial and administrative functions as IHC judges.

The judges also urged the apex court to declare that the president did not have the "unfettered and unbridled discretion" to transfer judges from one high court to another under Article 200(1) of the Constitution without a manifest public interest, and in a manner that "hampers the principles of independence of judiciary and separation of powers". They further urged the SC to declare that the president's exercise of powers under Article 200(1) was to be read alongside Article 175A, without subsuming the powers of the JCP to appoint judges to a particular high court.



Peshawar to host meeting of Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee for Ramadan moon sighting

PESHAWAR (INP): In a significant move aimed at achieving uniformity in the start of Ramadan across Pakistan, the federal government has convened a meeting of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee in Peshawar.

The moon-sighting event for Ramadan 1446 AH will take place on February 28, 2025, in the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The meeting will be chaired by Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Chairman of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee.

The meeting will see Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committees holding separate sessions at their respective locations, with the final announcement regarding the sighting or non-sighting of the Ramadan moon to be made by the central committee based on evidence gathered from all regions.

Efforts are underway to finalize the arrangements for the event, and consultations are ongoing with religious scholars and relevant institutions to ensure harmony in the beginning of Ramadan throughout the country.

In a related development, the government is also preparing to roll out the largest-ever Ramadan Relief Package in the country's history.

The Prime Minister has directed that the summary of the package be presented to the federal cabinet for approval.

Under consideration is a proposal to provide cash assistance to 3.9 million deserving families across the nation. A one-time cash assistance of Rs. 5,000 per family is being discussed, with the total budget for the Ramadan package estimated at Rs. 20.5 billion.

Funding for the package is being sourced from multiple government departments, with Rs. 10 billion from the Ministry of Industries and Production, Rs. 2 billion from the Benazir Income Support Program, and Rs. 8.5 billion from the Ministry of Finance.

This year's Ramadan Relief Package will include expenses for the media campaign, charges from financial institutions, NADRA fees, and other operational costs. Notably, the package will not be provided through utility stores this time, signaling a shift in the government's approach to providing relief during the holy month.

The government is committed to ensuring that Ramadan begins with unity and that all vulnerable families receive vital financial assistance during this time of need.

Sindh govt launches crackdown on unfit commercial vehicles

NEWS DESK: Sindh's transport department has launched a province-wide crackdown on unfit commercial vehicles in a bid to reduce road accidents and improve safety, local media sources reported on Thursday.

Transport Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon was quoted as saying that many commercial vehicles, registered in other provinces, were permanently operating in Sindh using fitness certificates issued elsewhere.

He questioned the authenticity of these certificates, as the vehicles were not inspected at the time of issuance.

Memon stressed that mechanical faults in vehicles contribute to rising traffic accidents, putting both drivers and pedestrians at risk. Under the new policy, all commercial vehicles in Sindh must obtain fitness certificates from the province's Motor Vehicle Inspection (MVI) centres.

These certificates will feature QR codes and modern security measures. Commercial vehicles from other provinces operating in

Sindh must also obtain local fitness certificates to secure route permits or renewals.

Additionally, a valid driving licence will be mandatory for all commercial drivers.

The government has also announced the establishment of new MVI centres to regulate licensing and inspections of heavy vehicles. The initiative aligns with broader efforts to curb road accidents and enhance public safety.

Last week, during an impromptu meeting held with Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah in the chair, decision to take immediate action regarding the fitness and registration of all vehicles. This was announced by Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon during a press conference.

He said, "It is mandatory for all heavy and small vehicles, including motorcycles, to have a valid fitness certificate. Vehicles without fitness certificate will not be allowed on the roads. Our first priority in this regard is heavy vehicles, he said.

The Water Board has implemented a barcode system for all registered water tankers operating from the authorised hydrants. These barcodes are issued to vehicles that meet fitness standards.

He stated that a 30-day grace period has been given for all vehicles to obtain fitness certificates.

Vehicles entering Sindh from other provinces will also be required to obtain a fitness certificate from Sindh authorities.

Certificates issued by Punjab, Balochistan, or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will not be considered valid in Sindh. Sharjeel stated that showroom owners have already barred from giving delivery of unregistered vehicles. Any vehicle purchased from a showroom must be registered before leaving the premises. The senior minister stated that the Sindh government is committed to ensuring road safety and proper vehicle regulation. If someone purchases ten cars from a company for investment purposes, it will be mandatory to transport the vehicles using a trailer or car carrier.

Jl chief blasts Centre, Balochistan govts for failure to maintain peace

LAHORE (INP): Liaquat Baloch, the Deputy Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami and Secretary General of the Milli Yakehti Council, has strongly condemned the recent gruesome murder of poor laborers in Barkhan, Balochistan.

Speaking at the Tamaal-e-Pakistan Conference in Mansoura, Baloch described the act as the "worst form of terrorism" and a national tragedy. He emphasized that the killers of innocent lives are enemies of the nation and urged national leadership, state institutions, and security agencies to unite and create a national action plan to combat terrorism.

Addressing delegations of political leaders from Dir, Chitral, Buner, and Balochistan, Baloch expressed concern over the nominal state of governance in the country.

He criticized the ruling elite for being subservient to the establishment and the IMF, accusing them of prioritizing

their own interests by increasing extortion while ignoring the needs of the people.

According to Baloch, the governments at both the provincial and central levels have failed to address the country's deep-rooted issues. Baloch highlighted the dire state of the economy, pointing to the closure of 33% of textile mills, the collapse of agriculture, and rising conflicts between the federation and provinces. He lamented that inflation has tripled in the past three years, questioning the government's claims of economic development. Furthermore, Baloch argued that the lack of local government empowerment and unfair distribution of resources is exacerbating the public's dissatisfaction. He stated that the ruling classes' behavior is pushing the nation toward rebellion and anarchy.

The Jamaat-e-Islami leader called for "immediate and serious measures to address the people's concerns,

stating that flashy announcements and hollow claims will no longer suffice. He advocated for an empowered local government system and a fair distribution of resources to protect civil rights. On a positive note, Baloch praised Pakistan's successful hosting of the Champions Trophy, calling it a significant honor for the country. He also lauded the government's efforts in foiling Indian conspiracies to hinder the event. In this context, Baloch urged Pakistan to adopt a courageous stance against India's illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir and to support the Kashmiris' right to self-determination.

Finally, Baloch expressed his condolences over the death of PPP Sindh leader and MNA Nawab Yousaf Talpur, describing him as a capable political leader and a staunch advocate of democratic values. Baloch noted Talpur's unwavering political loyalty to the PPP throughout his life.



ISLAMABAD: Ghasan Al Amoudi, CEO of Asyad holding KSA&C, speaking with the delegation of Asyad Group led by Ghasan Al Amoudi CEO of Asyad holding KSA&C Chairman of Wafi Energy Pakistan Limited.

PIA direct flights from Islamabad to Paris marks major step forward in France-Pakistan ties'

ISLAMABAD (INP): French Ambassador to Pakistan Nicolas Galey has said that the resumption of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) direct flights between Islamabad and Paris on January 10, this year marks a major step forward in strengthening ties between France and Pakistan.

The ambassador said resumption of flights is a testament to the strong relationship between the two countries, reflecting their commitment to enhancing connectivity and cooperation.

He said the PIA's decision to choose Paris as its first European destination for resumed operations underscores the importance of this partnership.

Nicolas said the flights will

operate twice a week, offering convenient travel options for passengers. PIA has also partnered with Air France-KLM, providing connections to 21 European destinations with streamlined check-in and baggage handling.

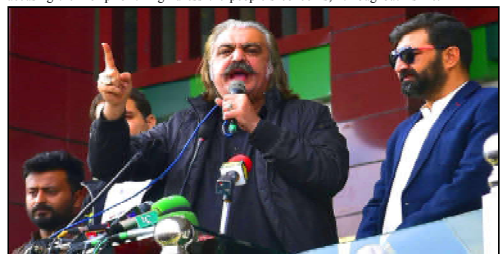
He highlighted this new route is expected to boost economic and cultural exchange between Pakistan, Europe, and beyond. With reduced travel times and competitive pricing, passengers will benefit from increased convenience and affordability.

He further stated the resumption of direct flights follows a sustained effort by PIA, the Pakistani government, and the civil aviation sector to meet European Union Aviation

Safety Agency (EASA) standards. This achievement demonstrates Pakistan's commitment to ensuring the highest safety standards in its aviation industry.

The ambassador said that as PIA expands its European operations, it is likely to require additional aircraft. European manufacturers, such as Airbus and ATR, are well-represented in PIA's fleet and are poised to support the airline's future growth.

In concluding remarks he said the resumed direct flights between Islamabad and Paris mark a significant milestone in the strengthening of France-Pakistan ties, fostering greater cooperation and exchange in the years to come.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ahsan Ghaib Khan addressing the opening ceremony of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games arranged by Sports Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at Qayyum Stadium.