

QUETTA VOICE

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428 Government Employees Found Holding Dual Jobs in Balochistan, CM Orders Action

Staff Reporter:
QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti has ordered strict action against 428 government employees found holding dual jobs across 28 departments.

The decision was made during a high-level meeting of the Secretaries Committee, chaired by the CM and attended by Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, Inspector General Police Moazzam Jah Ansari, and all provincial secretaries.

The meeting focused on governance improvements, the implementation of development projects, and challenges hindering progress. The revelation of dual employment led to immediate directives for legal action, including filing FIRs against violators under the BEDA Act.

Crackdown on Misuse of Government Vehicles

The Excise Department secretary presented records of 9,882 government vehicles, highlighting that several officers had not returned official vehicles despite being transferred. Expressing strong discontent, CM Bugti ordered FIRs against those refusing to return state-owned vehicles.

“Bad Governance Fuels Terrorism”: CM Bugti

CM Bugti emphasized that poor governance strengthens terrorism and must be tackled effectively. He stated that restoring



trust between the state and citizens is only possible through good governance.

The resources spent on government officers and employees must be justified by serving the public,” he said, adding that civil servants must uphold integrity and prioritize public welfare.

“No Place for Inefficiency in Government”

The Chief Minister stressed the need for amendments to the Civil Servant Act, arguing that inefficient officers should be dismissed. “Government jobs are a

choice, and those unwilling to serve the people should step aside. The state is not responsible for supporting incompetence until retirement,” he asserted.

He announced that all officials’ performance would be monitored through digital databases, which he would personally oversee. If necessary, the government would consider forced retirement for underperforming employees.

“Terrorists Aim to Dismantle the State”

CM Bugti reiterated that terrorism remains a major challenge

for Balochistan, and all government officials must focus on resolving public issues. “Terrorists want to break the country, and we have concrete evidence of their intentions,” he stated. “Hardcore terrorists will be fought with full force, and no government official should ever bow before them.”

He urged officers to dedicate themselves to public service and support the state’s narrative. “The time has come to give back to the nation by serving its people with full commitment,” he concluded.

Federal Minister Announces Resumption of Train Services in Balochistan from March 27

Manan Mandokhail:
QUETTA: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi has announced the resumption of train services in Balochistan from March 27.

The Jaffer Express will depart from Peshawar to Quetta tomorrow,

while the return journey from Quetta to Peshawar will take place the following day.

Eid Special Train and Passenger Discounts

To facilitate travelers during Eid, a special train will depart from Quetta on March 29.

Additionally, passengers will receive a 20% discount on tickets for the first three days of Eid.

Bolan Express to Operate Daily

The Bolan Express, which

previously operated twice a week, will now run daily to enhance connectivity in the province. Moreover,

the number of passenger trains in Balochistan will be increased from three to nine to improve travel facilities.

Security Measures and Recruitment Drive

Highlighting security concerns at railway stations, Abbasi revealed that 500 new personnel will be recruited into the Railway Police, with 70% of them belonging to Balochistan.

In the next phase, an additional 1,000 individuals will be hired to strengthen railway security.

The resumption of train services is expected to significantly benefit passengers, traders, and businesses in the province.



Prime Minister (PM) hails \$1.3 billion IMF deal as major economic milestone

NEWS DESK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday hailed the successful staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new \$1.3 billion arrangement, calling it a major milestone in Pakistan’s path toward economic stability.

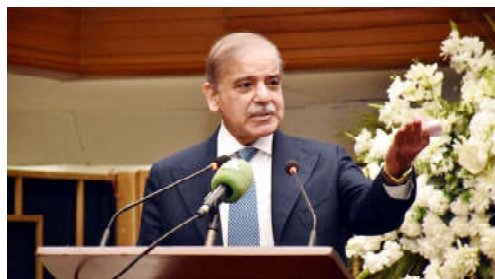
Chairing a Cabinet Committee meeting in Islamabad, the prime minister applauded the efforts of the deputy prime minister, finance minister, planning minister, commerce minister, economic affairs minister, FBR chairman, and other senior officials for securing the deal.

“Despite scepticism and predictions of a mini-budget, we secured this agreement without imposing new taxes,” Shehbaz Sharif said.

He also acknowledged the burden placed on the public during this phase, paying tribute to salaried individuals for their key role in tax contributions.

The agreement will bring \$1.3 billion in IMF funding, raising Pakistan’s foreign reserves to \$8.3 billion, which the prime minister termed a “big achievement.”

Shehbaz Sharif highlighted that tax collection had exceeded IMF expectations, achieving a 10.6% tax-to-GDP ratio, the high-



est in four years, with a 26% year-on-year increase in tax revenue.

He also outlined how Pakistan retained a Rs12.3 trillion tax target for FY2024-25, after resisting IMF recommendations to lower it.

The prime minister said reforms in the sugar sector led to an additional Rs12 billion in tax collection, with the model soon to be applied to the cement, tobacco, and textile sectors.

He added that Rs34 billion had been recovered from pending tax cases after fast-tracking tribunal processes.

To support low-income families, he noted that the Ramadan package this year used a digital wallet system for transparent disbursement. Shehbaz also stressed the link between peace and economic progress,

vowing to continue efforts to eliminate terrorism and ensure

security across the country.

He welcomed the Nishan-i-Pakistan award conferred on Shaheer Zulfikar Iqbal Bhutto by President Asif Ali Zardari, calling it a fitting tribute to a “national icon.”

The meeting concluded with condolences on the death of the mother of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, and a prayer (Fateha) offered in her memory.

Attack on Trailers in Tajaban, Turbat: Four Vehicles Set Ablaze

From Our Correspondent:
TURBAT: Unidentified armed men attacked a trailer on the CPEC Highway near Haptari Kor, Tajaban, Turbat, on Wednesday evening, setting four trailers on fire.

According to reports, the attack did not cause any casu-

alties. Police have confirmed the incident and launched an investigation.

The attack raises concerns over security on major trade routes, particularly along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).



Journalists Panel Sweeps Quetta Press Club Elections 2025-27

Manan Mandokhail:
Quetta: The Journalists Panel secured a landslide victory in the Quetta Press Club elections for the 2025-27 term, with Irfan Saeed elected as President and Ayub Tareen as General Secretary.

The elections were held on Wednesday under the supervision of Election Committee Chairman Nadr Chahalgani. Advocates, along with members Khalil-ur-Rehman Advocate and Bilal Mohsin Advocate. Polling continued from 11 AM to 5 PM, followed by the announcement of results.

Election Results:

• President: Irfan Saeed (75 votes)

• General Secretary: Ayub Tareen (79 votes)

• Senior Vice President: Muhammad Afzal Mughal (60 votes)

• Vice President: Habibullah Qalandrani (78 votes)

• Joint Secretary: Atiya Akram



(63 votes)

• Finance Secretary: Abdullah Zehri (71 votes)

• Senior Joint Secretary: Bilal Awam (Unopposed)

The Governing Body Members elected include Abdul Khaliq Rind, Hamzadullah Siyapad, Haji Khalid Gujar,

Naseer Ahmed Kakar, Majeedullah Achakzai, Javed

Langa, Shahid Mukhtar, and Abdul Basit.

The elections saw a contest between two panels, but the Progressive Panel failed to secure any position, as the Journalists Panel swept the polls.

Post-Election Celebration

Following the elections, a

grand Iftar dinner was hosted at Quetta Press Club, attended by:

• Director General Public Relations Balochistan, Muhammad Noor Khetran

• Vice Chairman Balochistan Bar Council, Rahib Baloch

• CM’s Press Secretary, Sheikh Abdul Razzaq

• Senior journalists: Noor Khan Muhammad Hasni, Waheed Zaheer, and Afzal Murad, along with many others.

Speaking on the occasion, newly elected President Irfan Saeed expressed gratitude to the serving press club members and enhancing the club’s role in media development.

They pledged to continue serving the press club members and enhancing the club’s role in media development.

This decisive victory reaffirms the Journalists Panel’s strong position and its commitment to press freedom in Balochistan.

Tuberculosis (TB) Awareness: Causes, Symptoms, Prevention, and Treatment – Experts Highlight Key Measures

Riaz Baloch

DALBANDIN: Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious yet treatable infectious disease, and timely diagnosis and complete treatment can help eradicate it, stated Dr. Iqbal at a TB awareness seminar organized under the IRC Partnerships Project in observance of World TB Day.

Dr. Iqbal emphasized that TB spreads due to poor hygiene, incomplete treatment, and weakened immunity, particularly in underprivileged communities. He explained that TB is caused by the Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacterium, primarily affecting the lungs but potentially damaging other parts of the body. The most common symptoms of TB include:

• Persistent cough

• Blood in phlegm

• Fever

• Weight loss

• Night sweats

• Key TB Prevention and Control Measures:

• BCG Vaccination: Essential for

protecting children from TB at an early age.

• Early Diagnosis & Treatment:

Consult a doctor immediately if TB symptoms appear and complete the full treatment to prevent complications.

• Hygiene & Precautionary Measures: Cover the mouth while coughing/sneezing, consume a balanced diet, and stay in well-ventilated areas to limit disease transmission.

• Special Care for TB Patients: TB-infected individuals should be isolated and provided proper medical care to prevent further spread.

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A Century of Neglect: The Grim Reality of Coal Mining in Balochistan

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FM Aurangzeb calls for inclusive, equitable globalization at Boao Forum for Asia 2025

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Prime Minister (PM) hails successful conclusion of staff-level agreement with IMF

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EDITORIAL

Editor: Asim Khan

A Century of Neglect: The Grim Reality of Coal Mining in Balochistan

Editorial:

The collapse of the coal mine in Sandji, near Quetta, once again exposes the glaring lack of safety measures in Balochistan's mining sector.

Despite the tragic loss of four miners and the ongoing desperate rescue operation for eight others trapped underground, this incident is not an isolated event. It reflects the systematic failure to enforce basic safety standards and the callous disregard for the lives of the workers.

Accountability Must Extend Beyond Mine Owners

While the coal mine owner must be held accountable for failing to provide safe working conditions, the responsibility does not end there.

Officials in the Mines and Minerals Department, tasked with ensuring miners' safety, must also face scrutiny. If found negligent, they too should be punished. Accountability should be broad and systemic, targeting all those complicit in ignoring safety protocols and risking human lives for profit.

The Mines Act of 1923: A Century of Neglect

The Mines Act of 1923 was enacted under British rule to safeguard miners' lives. A century later, its provisions remain largely ignored. The Act mandates strict safety standards, periodic inspections, and the establishment of safeguards against hazards like gas buildup. Yet, successive governments have failed to implement it in letter and spirit, leaving miners vulnerable to deadly accidents.

A Call for Immediate Reforms

The Sandji tragedy must serve as a wake-up call for comprehensive reforms in Balochistan's mining sector. Authorities should:

• **Enforce the Mines Act of 1923:** Conduct regular inspections and impose strict penalties for non-compliance.

• **Hold Officials Accountable:** Investigate Mines Department officials for negligence and prosecute if found guilty.

• **Introduce Modern Safety Standards:** Equip mines with advanced safety systems, including gas detectors and reinforced structures.

• **Empower Workers:** Establish grievance mechanisms for miners to report unsafe conditions without fear of retaliation.

Lip Service Must End

The repeated assurances from provincial ministers and officials mean little when no tangible action follows. The fact that no senior official visited the Sandji mine even 24 hours after the collapse underscores the ruling class's indifference toward the working class. Coal miners, driven by poverty and unemployment, risk their lives daily in unsafe conditions, only to be forgotten in times of tragedy.

A Moral and Legal Imperative

Protecting coal miners is not just a legal obligation but a moral imperative. The government must prioritize the safety and dignity of those who fuel the economy at the cost of their own lives. The Sandji disaster should not become just another statistic but a turning point in ensuring justice and reform.

The time for action is now. Anything less than full accountability and the strict implementation of safety laws would be a betrayal of the miners and their families who continue to suffer in silence.

Quantum apocalypse – Is Pakistan ready?

News Desk:

Imagine waking up in a world where all the private data, chats, banking transactions, and even state secrets suddenly get exposed. Such an event is ominously called the 'Quantum Apocalypse' or 'Q-Day'.

With recent developments in the field of quantum computing, including the launch of Microsoft's Mojana 1 chip or China's Zuchongzhi 3.0, the world might rapidly be approaching Q-Day.

Quantum computers are already warning that the quantum apocalypse is coming. Such an event could occur when quantum computers become powerful enough to break all existing encryption methods. The current encryption methods like Rivest, Shamir, and Adleman (RSA), Elliptic Curve Cryptography (ECC) and Digital Signature Algorithm (DSA) rely on complex mathematical patterns that are unsolvable for classical computers.

However, quantum computers would be

able to solve these problems within hours using quantum algorithms such as Shor's algorithm. Traditional computing processes information in binary bits, which either represent 1 or 0 at one point.

However, quantum computing processes information by using quantum bits, also known as qubits. These qubits simultaneously exist in multiple states, a phenomenon called superposition. As a result, quantum computers have an exponentially faster computing speed than classical computers.

However, for the past three decades, quantum computing suffered from a major problem - errors. Measuring quantum data is particularly challenging as it is inherently unstable. However, last year, Google solved that problem with Project Willow. Such breakthroughs in quantum computing could have revolutionary applications for every field, including medicine, finance, Artificial Intelligence (AI), climate modelling etc. However, advancements in quantum computing could also bring the world closer to Q-Day. In 2023, governmental agencies in the United States issued a warning about the possibility of a quantum apocalypse and called for 'quantum readiness'.

So, the big question is - is the world ready for Q-Day? Or more importantly, where do countries in the developing world, such as Pakistan, stand in terms of quantum readiness?

Pakistan follows international cryptographic standards and protocols related to encryption methods. In this regard, National Telecommunication and Information Technology Security Board (NTISB) plays a central role. On 14 June 2023, NTISB issued Pakistan Security Standard (PSS) for Cryptographic & IT Security (ITSec) Devices, which includes specific cryptographic requirements for adoption and evaluation, including secure algorithms like Advanced Encryption Standard (AES).

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Asghar Harifal:

The beleaguered public offices have come under a new wave of employee associations broadening the turf war.

The new rallying point is to assert the right for the coveted packages in wages given to the provincial secretariat. Guided by the tools employed by secretariat employees to secure bloated wages in comparison with the attached department, the number of associations has multiplied and the pre-existing ones have coalesced into a broader alliance.

They have further asserted to arrogate the positions of head of attached departments claimed by provincial secretariat employees. A few days back Balochistan Secretariat Employees Association announced its withdrawal from a grand alliance of employees' associations. The alliance was formed to put pressure on the government for the implementation of all shared, which included the rise in pay and allowances and to address the discrepancies.

By Talat Masood:

Currently, the world is facing a serious moral crisis, and universal values carry hardly any weightage. Leaders of several countries are violating these values instead of strictly adhering to them, and it has become the norm.

Recently, President Donald Trump publicly addressed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Gaza and against Hamas. The implication of giving the Israeli prime minister a free reign to kill, maim, murder or starve the Palestinians and America's support will continue further emboldens him to commit atrocities.

It is unfortunate, but not surprising, that President Trump made such a callous statement against Hamas and the people of Gaza continue to experience worst suffering with acute shortage of food and water and mass exodus during the holy month of Ramadan.

It was however encouraging that there were protests and demonstrations in certain parts of the world on the state of Muslims in Gaza. In the US, despite the looming threat of deportation, many participated in demonstrations. In several universities, especially Columbia University in the City of New York, many students were arrested who were protesting against the treatment meted out to

With little educational or skills development programmes, workers from merged districts find it difficult to compete for higher skilled jobs that are now available in these Middle Eastern countries. Many families' livelihoods were dependent on these funds and remittances with KP there is now also increasing pressure to finish

enforcement of a stricter visa regime with Afghanistan, greatly reduce for cross-border trade and commerce between the populace living on either side of the border.

While a few big players in cahoots with officials may have remained active in smuggling, many of the smaller players for whom this was a means of supporting daily expenses, lost their jobs.

With the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, grants and international aid to the merged areas has all but stopped. Simultaneously, two key developments in the Middle East have also had a significant impact on the economic condition of these districts.

A growing number of employees adding public grievances

The growing number of employee associations, in the name of their welfare, underscores the growing utility of forming pressure groups to protect spheres of influence. Taking a cue from the past, the growing trend will bring serious pressure on the frail institutional framework adding to public grievances.

One of the phenomena, generated by growing pressure groups in the public, is written writ large that institutions have exponentially grown in size, while at the same time turned into pathetically ossified entities, foretelling their imminent fall. The eventualities will not only bring about suffering for all employees associated with these institutions but it will also add to the flight of the public at large. The bleeding of size of public departments in association with their age-old calculation of employees' dues turned into a self-serving

powers, checks and balances and equal treatment of citizens irrespective of colour, creed or religion.

Moreover, it is to be seen if the Congress and the Supreme Court will exercise their authority to prevent the President from becoming too powerful. There are already doubts in this direction but it is not clear if these will pick up momentum.

It is not surprising that there is hardly any reaction by the Muslim leadership on the harsh comments being made by President Trump. It is probably the fear of retaliation and reservations about Hamas's policies that could stir and promote opposition to their regime and damage their interests.

Meanwhile the people of Gaza continue to experience worst suffering with acute shortage of food and water and mass exodus during the holy month of Ramadan.

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superstructure and lost relevance to the common man.

A department created for the general public turned into a service provider for employees only

A department created for the service of the general public has turned into a service provider for their respective employees. All the offices at district, divisional or provincial levels have more affairs related to clerical staff positions than the ones for whose welfare the same are created.

The resources placed at the disposal of these institutions with the aim to alleviate the issues of citizens, are arrogated to themselves and have turned into a bone of contention for members of the institutions. Speaking of personal experience of a department, with district and divisional level offices, it was noted that 90% of the correspondence made with that office was related to the personal working of that department.

Hamas and the Palestinians in general. Despite the protests and opposition of Muslims it is unlikely that there will be any change in President Trump's policies towards Muslims. In the recent presidential election, he won with a significant margin implying that the majority of Americans endorse his policies. A travel ban on several countries, including many with significant Muslim populations, means being placed under restrictive categories and placing it on a more solid foundation.

It is equally critical that a high priority is accorded to Pakistan's intensive background checks. Even if in future, some of the US policies are reversed or modified, a lingering prejudice and discrimination is likely to prevail.

The plight and treatment of Muslims in European countries is not very different either with many being deported back due to lack of job opportunities.

A positive impact of this crisis is that relatively more talent will be available here in the country, promoting economic growth. The talent provided the talent is prudently utilised.

It is also expected that the continued increase in the number of migrations to other destinations like the Middle East or even New Zealand and Australia.

Meanwhile, it is critical that the national leadership seriously focuses on human and

this time and a change in the policy towards the jihadists, destroyed the arms and ammunition industry in ex-Fata and disassociate themselves from their past image as supporters of terrorism. The illicit trade in drugs and narcotics took and plantation also took a major hit in these military operations. While a few years ago Pakistan finally did develop a help and medical cannabis policy in 2021, realistically the details of this legislation make it clear that it was done more for growth in mainstream Pakistan in mind, rather than helping to legalise produce of the merged areas. As a result, there is now increasing pressure from the government to disassociate hemp production in these districts.

Following Fata's merger with KP there is now also increasing pressure to finish

ment. It is the case with every public sector institution. Their raison d'être is service unto self.

Element of powers keep their opponents at bay

The element of powers among employees' associations also include larger size, the more nuisance value to keep the opponent at bay. At the provincial secretariat with the aim to enlarge its own size decades-old clerical staff positions are exponentially expanded leading to a 'one size fits all' structure.

Despite specialization in every field turning into a norm, the public sector is stuck in an age-old management model. The information technology development has turned the public sector structure into an obsolete entity. The manpower and the machine have found no compatibility. The only change in the last 75 years is that number of positions has shifted from one service group to another. Mutual

infrastructureal development to increase its inherent potential. The private sector needs to be facilitated and encouraged to play a more significant role in boosting the national economy.

Moreover, it should ensure that the talent and experience of the Pakistani citizens returning to the country are properly utilised to fasten the pace of development and placing it on a more solid foundation.

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gaining among the service groups is termed reform in the system. A third-body assessment guided only by the public interest has never taken place.

The resistance to change has not only left the public sector unworkable, the private sector has overtaken it in the market. When private sector services are required from the market, the public sector functionalities are found to lack classes other than the market. Resultantly, the public sector is uniformly characterized by sub-standard quality.

The public sector has still not parted from the role, long performed by it but is now overtaken by the private sector with better performance. A role swap from a player to a regulator has still not taken place. The role of regulator, which should have been taken by the public sector, is distasteful for it.

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Adjusting to a changing world

cant percentage of population has fallen prey to indoctrination and is risking their lives to promote a dubious cause.

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), finding a safe sanctuary in Afghanistan, continues to pose a major threat to the border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, whilst the Afghan government looks the other way determining its long-term national interests and relations with Pakistan.

The Kashmiri TTP and anti-Pakistan elements in Afghanistan is supposed to be a counter to Pakistan's support to the Kashmiri Mujahadeen for the just cause of liberating the Kashmir from Indian yoke. Although it is clearly in the long-term interest of the region to have a cooperative relationship among these two neighbours that promotes trade, commerce and tourism.

Increased tensions between India and Pakistan since the middle of 2019 have created the urgency for normalising relations but the prospects for that seem remote in the light of intransigence; and Pakistan cannot achieve this alone.

Pakistan's relations with Iran are affected due to its adverse relations with the US, and also with the serious focus on human and

these people's livelihoods with the provision of any viable alternative or support, and to believe that locals won't be lured by militants providing them a financial lifeline for them to feed their families, is a grave fallacy. Patronage is a luxury not affordable by starving families.

By Ghazan Jamal:

THE former Fata districts of Pakistan have some of the worst economic indicators and highest unemployment rates of any region in the country. Historically, these areas have never been very wealthy, relying on subsistence farming. These areas produce or remittances from family members working in cities across Pakistan or in the Middle East to sustain their livelihood.

Some also engaged in trade, both cross-border and local, and were heavily involved in the transport sector.

However, in the 1980s, the economic landscape in these Fata drastically started changing. These changes were a direct, and in some cases a deliberate, consequence of the Afghan war that began in 1979 and then was fully underway in the neighbouring na-

tion. An entire arms and ammunition industry took birth, both in terms of trade and manufacturing of weapons. The trade and then plantation of illicit drugs and narcotics started around this time as well.

Over the next couple of decades, as globalisation took effect and world trade astronomically expanded from less than \$2 trillion in the mid-1980s to over \$16tr in the mid-2000s, smuggling and related work started becoming a key source of livelihood for the residents of then Fata.

The porous border with Afghanistan and tribal affinities and kinship was key in fostering these changes. Then, there were a lot of donations coming into the area — in the beginning in the form of donations for establish-

ing and supporting madrassahs to promote the jihadist cause in Afghanistan but then later, after the advent of the 'war on terror' in the aftermath of 9/11, in the form of aid from the Western countries.

Fast forward to the mid-2010s. The US had increasingly started to grow weary with its presence and was pushing for an exit from the region, physically and resource-wise.

Even for Pakistan, Fata had served its purpose as a buffer zone between Afghanistan and mainstream Pakistan, and it was now felt that it was important to take steps to secure this border in preparation for whatever government in Afghanistan took shape once the Americans left. In 2017, Pakistan took on the ambitious task of fencing the 2,400-kilometre-long border with Afghanistan. This, coupled with the

enforcement of a stricter visa regime with Afghanistan, greatly reduce for cross-border trade and commerce between the populace living on either side of the border.

While a few big players in cahoots with officials may have remained active in smuggling, many of the smaller players for whom this was a means of supporting daily expenses, lost their jobs.

With the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, grants and international aid to the merged areas has all but stopped. Simultaneously, two key developments in the Middle East have also had a significant impact on the economic condition of these districts.

With little educational or skills development programmes, workers from merged districts find it difficult to compete for higher skilled jobs that are now available in these Middle Eastern countries. Many families' livelihoods were dependent on these funds and remittances with KP there is now also increasing pressure to finish

China, Pakistan strengthen castor industry cooperation

BEIJING (INP): Pakistan's Roomi Agriculture Company and China's Zibo Academy of Agricultural Sciences signed a Cooperation Framework Agreement focused on the castor industry, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday.

The agreement outlines their collaboration in scientific breeding, planting technology, deep processing, and marketing of castor products.

Castor seed cultivation is highly sensitive to environmental factors, particularly water availability. Under the agreement, a Shandong-based agricultural company will oversee seed production, provide technical support, develop digital cultivation technologies, and research and manufacture

digital water-fertilizer equipment. Additionally, they will design digital models for the pre-planting, mid-planting, and post-harvest stages.

Zibo Academy of Agricultural Sciences has developed castor germplasm resources that are resistant to herbicides and tolerant of salt and alkali through field hybridization, biotechnology, and molecular breeding. The academy will oversee variety selection, cultivation techniques, and provide support for industry chain information.

Roomi Agriculture will promote large-scale castor bean cultivation on its own farms as well as on partner farms.

According to World Bank data, India accounts for over 80% of global castor oil produc-

tion, playing a crucial role in the supply chain.

Data from China's General Administration of Customs indicates that in 2024, China imported castor oil and chemically unmodified derivatives valued at RMB 3.75 billion, with India supplying RMB 3.74 billion of that total.

The demand for castor oil is anticipated to remain strong, especially in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries. This reliance renders global markets susceptible to price fluctuations caused by supply constraints, according to industry experts.

Industry experts note that innovations in breeding and improved irrigation techniques could alleviate supply constraints, however, castor oil prices are likely to remain elevated due

to persistent demand outpacing supply.

Consequently, companies are exploring alternative growing regions beyond India to reduce their reliance on a single-source supply chain.

The climate and soil conditions in Pakistan, especially in the rain-fed Pothwar region, are highly conducive to castor cultivation, presenting significant potential for expansion, according to Ghulam Shabbir, an expert from Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University.

In 2023, Pakistan exported castor seeds valued at USD 2.69 million, making it the country's 66th largest export product. The primary buyers were China, which imported USD 2.69 million worth, and the UAE, which imported USD 2.03 million.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Junaid Anwar Chaudhry chairing a meeting regarding Various Development Plans of the Port Qasim.

FM Aurangzeb calls for inclusive, equitable globalization at Boao Forum for Asia 2025

BOAO, China (INP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has emphasized the urgent need for an inclusive approach to globalization, one that benefits all nations, particularly the developing economies.

He made this call while attending a high-level session titled "Inclusive Globalization That Benefits All - Pathways and Actions" at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025, held in Boao, Hainan Province, China.

Highlighting the growing inequalities within the global economic system, the Minister stated that while globalization has lifted over one billion people out of poverty, it remains fundamentally unequal, disproportionately benefiting devel-

oped economies while marginalizing the Global South.

The risks of rising protectionism, unilateralism, and trade wars are exacerbating global divisions, threatening to disrupt supply chains and weaken international cooperation. For globalization to survive, it must be rebalanced to allow fairer participation for all nations, particularly those currently disadvantaged by restrictive trade rules and limited financial access.

Senator Aurangzeb underscored that the time for rhetoric has passed, and decisive action is needed.

Pakistan, like many developing nations, advocates for a more balanced model of globalization—one that promotes fair trade, sustainable growth, and equitable financial systems. This

model must be multilateral, innovation-driven, and inclusive, to foster development and prosperity across all regions.

One of the key challenges facing inclusive globalization, according to the Minister, is the widening wealth and opportunity gap.

Developed nations continue to gain from high-tech sectors, digital trade, and broad financial access, while developing nations are held back by high tariffs, restrictive investment policies, and limited infrastructure.

In response, Pakistan has consistently called for greater regional connectivity, stronger multilateral cooperation, citing initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Special Investment Facilita-

tion Council (SIFC) as steps in the right direction.

The Minister also called for a global coalition among developing nations to collectively demand fairer trade rules and greater representation in international financial institutions. These alliances are necessary to combat the disproportionate

tariffs and trade restrictions that hinder the integration of developing economies into global markets. He pointed out that Pakistan's textile and agricultural sectors—key drivers of its economy—face significant challenges due to protectionist policies in developed countries and non-tariff barriers that limit their access to Western markets.

Addressing the issue of financial inequality, the Minister also

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia discuss matters related to Hajj, Umrah pilgrims

JEDDAH (INP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yousaf held a meeting with the Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, to discuss matters related to Hajj and Umrah pilgrims from Pakistan.

Dr Al-Rabiah congratulated "Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on assuming the portfolio of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to facilitating Pakistani pilgrimages."

During the meeting,

both ministers discussed enhancing facilities for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims and expanding the Road to Makkah project to Pakistan.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia discuss enhanced Hajj, Umrah facilities; expansion of 'Road to Makkah' project.

Sardar Yousaf said, "I extend my gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for their unwavering commitment to providing excellent services to the pilgrims." He emphasized that Pakistan and Saudi

Arabia share deep-rooted ties based on a common faith, history, and culture.

Dr Al-Rabiah reiterated that serving the large number of Pakistani pilgrims visiting Saudi Arabia each year is an honor for the Kingdom. He assured that the Saudi government remains committed to resolving any challenges faced by Pakistani pilgrims on a priority basis.

Sardar Yousaf also discussed the registration issues faced by Hajj pilgrims, to which Dr Al-Rabiah assured that necessary measures would be taken for their

resolution. "The Saudi government has introduced several new initiatives to enhance services for pilgrims, and we will extend even greater cooperation to Pakistani pilgrims," Dr Al-Rabiah added. Sardar Yousaf appreciated the special attention given by the Saudi minister to improving facilities for Pakistani pilgrims. The meeting was also attended by Saudi Deputy Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Ahsanullah Mashaikh, Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ahmed Farooq, and Director General of Hajj Abdul Wahab Soomro.



QUETTA: The head of Hinglaj Mata Temple, led by Senator Dinesh Kumar, met with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti. Former Prime Minister Anwarul Haq was also present.

Pakistan expresses deep concern over recent violence in Syria's coastal region

UNITED NATIONS (INP): Pakistan has expressed deep concern over the recent violence in Syria's coastal region and urged the country's interim authorities to protect all civilians in line with international law and conduct a credible investigation into the incidents.

"Sectarian strife threatens to undermine peaceful political transition besides exacerbating the humanitarian challenge," Ambassador Hirkesh Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

Since 6 March 2025, the coastal governorates of Hama, Idlib, Latakia and Tartous have experienced a surge in violent attacks, leaving a wave of death, destruction and displacement. Six major

hospitals and several ambulances have been damaged, and many civilians are reported to have been killed, including women and children.

"The resurgence of shocking violence, as has been reported, particularly along Syria's western coast, is deeply concerning," the Pakistani envoy said during a discussion on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria.

"Era of impunity must be in the past...", he said and welcomed the establishment of an independent committee by the Syrian interim authorities.

In this regard, Ambassador Asim said Pakistan remains hopeful that Syria's new leadership will guide the nation toward an inclusive, stable and prosperous future.

"If all there was a right time for the international community to engage and assist with this objective, it is now," he

added. As regards Syrian ongoing humanitarian and economic challenges, the Pakistani envoy called for robust international support for the UN's transitional action plan, aimed at poverty reduction, refugee reintegration and institutional strengthening.

In this regard, he added, lifting of unilateral sanctions was imperative to facilitating reconstruction and aid efforts. While remaining vigilant against entities with known affiliations to terrorist organizations, he said a reassessment and drawdown of the UN sanctions regime is also warranted to ensure that essential economic and humanitarian initiatives are not hindered.

A Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, facilitated by the United Nations, remains the key to sustainable peace, Ambassador Asim said, adding that it is now, "he

sador Asim said, adding that the political, economic, security, and humanitarian challenges facing Syria demanded a holistic and coordinated response.

The Pakistani envoy voiced concern over Israel's continuing incursions and airstrikes into Syrian territory in violation of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, and it's declared intent for an "indefinite" presence, and "full demilitarization of southern Syria." These measures, he said, were unacceptable, as they constitute blatant violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and undermine international law and regional stability. "We echo the UN Special Envoy's condemnation of these illegal actions and Israeli military escalations in Syria, and reaffirm this Council's March Presidential Statement.

Role of business community in national development emphasized

ISLAMABAD, Mar 26 (INP): Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, emphasized the vital role of the business community in national development and economic growth during a ceremony organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Wednesday.

Speaking as the chief guest, Randhawa reiterated CDA's commitment to addressing the genuine concerns of traders and industrialists. He announced that representatives from ICCI and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) would be invited to CDA board meetings to present their issues directly. The chairman also highlighted key initiatives undertaken by CDA, including efforts to improve water supply, road infrastructure, and a large-scale tree plantation campaign aimed at enhancing the city's environment. He urged the business community to collabo-

rate with CDA to maintain a clean, green, and eco-friendly Islamabad.

ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi welcomed Randhawa's proactive approach and raised several concerns, including the need for a dedicated graveyard in Sector H-13 to accommodate the growing population. He also announced ICCI's plan to plant 100,000 saplings to boost the capital's greenery. During the event, Dr Raashid Aftab delivered a presentation on

water conservation, stressing its importance for sustainable development. The ceremony concluded with Randhawa and Qureshi jointly planting a sapling at the ICCI premises, symbolizing their shared commitment to environmental preservation. Prominent business leaders, including former ICCI presidents and senior CDA officials, attended the event. Both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation to resolve issues and foster a business-friendly environment in Islamabad.



JEDDAH: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, meeting with the Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, to discuss matters related to Hajj and Umrah pilgrims from Pakistan.

US religious freedom panel recommends sanctions against India's RAW

WASHINGTON (INP): Minorities in India face deteriorating treatment, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom said, and it recommended targeted sanctions against Sikh activists in the U.S. and Canada has emerged as a wrinkle in U.S.-India ties, with Washington charging an ex-Indian intelligence officer, Vikash Yadav, in a foiled U.S. plot. "In 2024, religious freedom conditions in India continued to deteriorate as attacks and discrimination against religious minorities continued to rise," the U.S. commission said in its recent report.

It said Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) "propagated hateful rhetoric and

disinformation against Muslims and other religious minorities" during last year's election campaign.

Modi in April last year referred to Muslims as "infiltrators" who have "more children."

U.S. State Department reports on human rights and religious freedom have noted minority abuses in recent years. The panel recommended the U.S. government "designate India as a country of particular concern" for religious freedom violations and "impose targeted sanctions" against

Yadav and RAW. Rights advocates, in noting the plight of Indian minorities, point to rising hate speech, a citizenship law the U.N. called "fundamentally discriminatory," anti-conversion legislation, that critics say challenges freedom of belief, the revoking of Muslim majority Kashmir's special status and the demolition of properties owned by Muslims.

The commission is a bipartisan U.S. government advisory body that monitors religious freedom abroad and makes policy recommendations.



QUETTA: Activates of BNP hold protest outside Quetta Press Club (QPC).

Thousands of Books Stolen from Government School

Syed Muhammad Yaseen

PUNJAB: A shocking incident has emerged from Taunsa Sharief, Punjab, where nearly 43,000 books were stolen from a government school. The theft has raised serious concerns about the security of educational institutions and the growing issue of book theft in Pakistan.

Local residents reported seeing loaded rickshaws moving around the school premises during nighttime, which aroused suspicion. Authorities believe that the books were transported in these vehicles.

The incident came to light when school officials discovered a significant portion of the library's collection missing.

Following the reports, law enforcement agencies launched an investigation. Authorities are questioning individuals who were present near the school at the time of the theft. The Deputy Commissioner (DC) DG Khan has assured that strict action will be taken against those responsible, and efforts are underway to recover the stolen books.

The theft has sparked public outrage, with educationists and community leaders condemning the incident. Many are urging the government to improve school security and implement stricter



measures to prevent such incidents in the future. This incident highlights the importance of protecting educational resources and ensuring that students have uninterrupted access to learning materials. Authorities are expected to take swift action to bring those responsible to justice and recover the stolen books.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar chaired a preparatory meeting on the "Pakistan Mining Investment Forum", scheduled for Apr 8-9, at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Pakistan Polio Programme strengthens disease eradication efforts

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Polio Programme has strengthened the disease eradication efforts due to rising cases in the country.

The National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) convened a high-level meeting of the National Polio Management Team (NPMT) to assess progress, address emerging challenges, and refine strategies for the upcoming nationwide immunisation campaigns scheduled to take place in April and May.

Chaired by the Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Eradication, Ms Ayesha Raza Farooq, the meeting brought together national and provincial coordinators, core group members, and key stakeholders, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to eliminating poliovirus.

Emphasizing the urgency of

the moment, the Prime Minister's Focal Person said, "The ongoing outbreak is alarming, with six children already paralyzed in 2025. We must remain vigilant, proactive, and committed to refining our approaches to stay ahead of the virus."

This NPMT meeting is an opportunity for comprehensive reflection and strategic assessment, ensuring our upcoming campaigns are impactful and leave no child unprotected.

Discussions centered on strengthening coordination between national and provincial teams, optimizing resource management, and addressing operational challenges such as population movement, security concerns, vaccine hesitancy and strategies to overcome missed children.

Muhammad Anwar-ul-Haq, the National Coordinator, high-

lighted the critical need for efficient execution of campaigns and stressed provincial teams to double down efforts to improve coverage and overcome gaps in the campaigns.

The meeting also reinforced the importance of gender-inclusive workforce participation, the synergy between Essential Immunization and Polio Eradication efforts, and adherence to the latest Technical Advisory Group (TAG) recommendations.

As Pakistan moves toward its goal of interrupting transmission by the end of 2025, the unwavering support of the government, provincial leadership, and frontline workers remains crucial.

The Pakistan Polio Programme remains steadfast in its mission to ensure that every child, especially in high-risk and underserved areas, receives life-saving vaccines.

CII discusses organ transplantation and other key Islamic rulings

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) on Wednesday convened a meeting in which members deliberated on a total of 19 agenda items.

The session was chaired by Dr. Muhammad Raghib Hussain Naqvi, Chairman of the Council. In the meeting, four experts from the Sindh Institute of Child and Neonatology were invited to present a briefing on the establishment of a human milk bank. They provided detailed responses to 33 queries raised by the council members.

Additional questions from the members were also addressed. The council decided to conduct an in-depth study on the matter and will present its final decision in the next meeting.

The council ruled that organ transplantation, particularly of the kidney and liver, is permissible as long as the donor's life is not endangered.

It was decided that Islamic terms such as Salah (prayer), Ayah (verse), and Masjid (mosque) should be retained in their original Arabic form instead of being

translated into English. The council emphasized that scholars and intellectuals should raise awareness at their respective levels regarding the issue of electricity theft.

The council ruled that newly hired employees can be required to participate in the contributory pension system, but existing employees cannot be compelled to join it. Additionally, it stressed that pension funds must be entirely free from interest-based financial systems.

It was decided that premarital testing for thalassemia or other contagious diseases can be included in the Nikahnama (marriage contract) as an optional provision. However, the decision to marry will remain solely at the discretion of both parties under Islamic law. The council ruled that granting a first wife the right to annul her marriage if her husband remarries without her permission is un-Islamic. Any judicial ruling that permits such annulment contradicts Islamic teachings. The council stressed that Zakat funds should be distributed to deserving

individuals without unnecessary delays. However, if administrative procedures cause delays, these funds can be placed in profit-generating Islamic bank accounts. In the event of any financial losses, the government will be responsible for compensating them.

The council reaffirmed its previous stance that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Transgender Bill contains the same un-Islamic elements as the Transgender Act of 2018, which had been declared inconsistent with Islamic principles by the council and the Federal Shariat Court. Additionally, the council expressed concerns over the bill's inclusion of the Guru-Chela (mentor-disciple) concept, deeming it un-Islamic.

At the conclusion of the meeting, prayers were offered for the late mother of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir.

The following members participated in the meeting: Dr. Muhammad Raghib Hussain Naqvi, Zafar Iqbal Chaudhry, Dr. Abdul Ghaffoor Rashid, Pr Khalid Sultan Qadri.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry meeting with Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu in his office.



Cabinet postpones approval of net metering policy for solar energy-users

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal cabinet has postponed the approval of the net metering policy for solar energy users, halting the imposition of additional taxes on solar energy consumers.

During the cabinet meeting, the Prime Minister instructed Energy Minister Owais Leghari to review the policy, citing concerns over its impact on clean energy adoption.

The Economic Coordina-

tion Committee (ECC) recently approved amendments to the net metering regulations, reducing the buyback rate for solar-generated electricity from Rs. 27 to Rs. 10 per unit.

This decision aimed to alleviate financial pressure on grid consumers but sparked backlash from solar users and industry stakeholders.

The revised net metering policy for solar energy users also proposed higher electricity rates for solar consumers,

with off-peak rates set at Rs. 42 per unit and peak-hour rates at Rs. 48 per unit, alongside an 18% tax and additional duties.

The government clarified that the revised framework would not apply to existing net-metering consumers until their seven-year agreements expire.

However, the policy's im-

plementations have raised concerns about discouraging solar energy adoption, particularly in urban areas where 80% of net-metering users reside.

Power division officials briefs Senate standing committee on power

ISLAMABAD (INP): The power division officials briefed the Senate's standing committee on power, about the talks with the independent power producers (IPPs) on Wednesday.

Officials told the committee that the talks underway with the wind and solar IPPs. The government is also initiating negotiations with the IPPs of 2015, power division officials said.

"What is the producing ca-

capacity of the IPPs with whom the negotiations have been completed," committee's chairman questioned. "Agreements have been finalized with 29 IPPs, while 75 remaining."

"The government's talks have been completed with four LNG power plants, talks have also been finalized with two government power plants," CPPA officials said.

"Still, most of the wind and solar plants remaining," officials

said.

Chairman committee said that the IPPs installed in Pakistan have already did over-invoicing. "Why the people not getting relief of the negotiations with IPPs," he asked.

"We have concerns over it," Power Minister Awais Leghari said that there will be no more time in extending relief to people.

"How the talks ongoing with IPPs, under some pressure or on the basis of facts based on figures," Senator Shibli Faraz asked.

Denmark's \$2b investment in Pakistan's port sector moving forward with Danish investors actively: Minister

KARACHI (INP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwaar Chaudhry on Wednesday re-

vealed that Denmark's \$2 billion investment in Pakistan's port sector was moving forward, with Danish investors actively collaborating with the government to accelerate the process.

Talking to media during his introductory visit to Port Qasim, he highlighted that Port Qasim's land will be allocated strictly for industrial purposes and will be sold transparently to genuine investors.

Real estate dealings on the port's land will be discontinued, and any allottees failing to establish industries within the allotted time will have their al-

lotments cancelled. A new assessment of Port Qasim's land will be carried out according to regulations.

Junaid Anwaar Chaudhry further invited investors and the Sindh government to join hands with the Ministry of Maritime Affairs in improving Karachi's infrastructure.

He emphasized that the Ministry is committed to enhancing the city's infrastructure but stressed that such projects require the collaboration of the Sindh government.

The Minister promised to expedite and improve the ministry's projects and progress reviews scheduled. Additionally, a special cell will be set up to fast-track maritime affairs related to Islamabad.

Promotion opportunities will be provided for lower-grade officers in the ministry, and external expertise will only be brought in when absolutely necessary.

He also confirmed that PNSC ships, having completed their operational life, were sold and are now being replaced with relatively newer ships through better deals.

The inclusion of these new ships is expected to enhance PNSC's competitiveness.

Chaudhry added that the ministry has sought plans from its subsidiaries, with monthly progress reviews scheduled. Additionally, a special cell will be set up to fast-track maritime affairs related to Islamabad.



QUETTA: Federal Minister for Railway Hanif Abbasi addressing a press conference.

Food authority intensified crackdown on substandard, poor-quality sweets

PESHAWAR (INP): On the special directives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, the KP Food Safety & Halal Food Authority has intensified its crackdown on substandard and poor-quality sweets as Eid-ul-Fitr approaches.

During the province-wide operation, several bakery and production units were inspected, with strict action taken against those found violating hygiene standards and using hazardous ingredients.

Sharing details of the crackdown, the Food Authority's spokesperson on Wednesday stated that late-night inspections were carried out across various districts, in-

cluding Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, D.I. Khan, and Lower Chitral. In Peshawar, two bakery units located on Charsadda Road, Dilazak Road, and Gulbahar were sealed due to poor hygiene conditions, while 20 liters of substandard oil was disposed of on the spot.

The spokesperson further mentioned that heavy fines were imposed in Abbottabad, Chitral, D.I. Khan, Upper Dir, and Hangu for violations of food safety standards.

Improvement notices were also issued to several units, instructing them to upgrade their hygiene practices.

According to additional details, three bakery and pro-

duction units in Abbottabad, along with several units in Katlang (Mardan), Hangu, D.I. Khan,

Upper Dir, and Chitral, were fined for selling substandard sweets. They were also served improvement notices to ensure better compliance with hygiene standards.

Director General of Food Authority Wasif Saqeb, commended the inspection teams for their successful operations and reiterated that ensuring the provision of safe and high-quality food to the public remains the authority's top priority.

He vowed that the crackdown on substandard sweets would continue without compromise.