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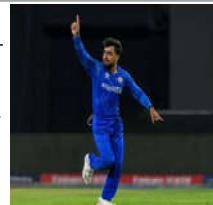


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Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti express compassion and affection for the son of Shaheed Major Anwar Kakar during their visit to the martyr's family in Quetta.: Photo Provided By DGPR

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi Says "The Blood of Martyrs Is the Guarantee of Pakistan's Security"

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Thursday visited the residence of Shaheed Major Anwar Kakar in Quetta, where they met the martyr's mother, brothers, and young sons, and offered heartfelt condolences.

Paying rich tribute to Ma-

ior Anwar Kakar, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said the officer attained the highest honor of martyrdom by sacrificing his life for the defense of the country.

He emphasized that martyrs are the pride of the nation and their sacrifices will never be forgotten.

The chief minister offered Fateha for the departed soul and praised the courage and resilience of the martyr's

mother, calling such brave mothers the true strength and pride of the nation.

He announced that the martyr's brother, Khudaiddad Khan, would be provided a government job, while a government school would be named after Shaheed Major Anwar Kakar to keep his sacrifice alive in public memory.

Speaking on the occasion, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said the entire nation is proud

of the martyr and his family. Addressing the martyr's mother, he said she is the mother of a brave son of Pakistan and that the courage of such parents is the real power of the nation.

He also expressed affection for the martyr's young sons, consoling them and offering his support.

Both leaders saluted the supreme sacrifice of Shaheed Major Anwar Kakar and

stated that every drop of martyrs' blood serves as a guarantee for the protection of the homeland.

They prayed for patience and strength for the bereaved family and for the elevation of the martyr's ranks.

Provincial ministers, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, and Inspector General of Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir Khan were also present on the occasion.

Social media posts case: Court cancels bail of Imaan, Hadi after non-appearances, tensions in courtroom

NEWS DESK:

A district court on Thursday cancelled the bail of lawyer and activist Imaan Mazari-Hazri and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha in the controversial social media posts case, following repeated non-appearances and heated scenes in the courtroom.

In the case, registered under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (Peca), the two have been accused of inciting divisions on linguistic grounds through social media posts and creating the impression that the armed forces were engaged in terrorism within the country.

The hearing on Thursday was conducted by Additional District and Sessions Judge Mohammed Afzal Majoka, with Prosecutor Rana Usman representing the state.

At the outset, neither Mazari nor Chattha appeared before the court. An assistant counsel sought an exemption from appearance for Mazari, submitting that Chattha was engaged in proceedings relating to a contempt case before the high court.

The court expressed displeasure over the absence of the accused and observed that the request for exemption would be considered later.

Judge Majoka warned that if the accused failed to appear, their right to cross-examination would be revoked. The hearing was initially adjourned until 12 noon.

When proceedings resumed, Chattha appeared in court and informed the judge that Mazari wished to cross-examine the prosecution witness Shahroz personally, reiterating that she intended to ask questions herself.

Majoka directed the defence to complete the cross-examination, warning that failure to do so would result in termination of that right.

During the hearing, Islamabad District Bar Association President Chaudhry Naeem Gujjar appeared in court and requested that the matter be fixed for Monday, assuring the court that no adjournment would be sought thereafter. He informed the court that Mazari was unwell but still wished to conduct the cross-examination herself.

The prosecution opposed any adjournment, and the prosecutor urged the court to administer an oath to the witness and commence cross-examination immediately.

JCP recommends making 11 ad hoc LHC judges permanent

NEWS DESK:

The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on Thursday recommended the confirmation of 11 additional judges for the Lahore High Court (LHC) out of a total list of 13.

Presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi, the JCP met at the Supreme Court (SC), a press release issued by the SC said.

After due consideration of the relevant data forms, ant-eccedents and evaluation material placed before it, the JCP, by a majority, recommended the confirmation of 11 additional judges of the LHC as permanent judges.

These were Justices Hassan Nawaz Makhdoom, Malik Waqar Haider Awan,

Sardar Akbar Ali, Syed Ahsan Raza Kazmi, Malik Javed Iqbal Wains, Muhammad Jawad Zafar, Khalid Ishaq, Malik Muhammad Awais Khalid, Chaudhry Sultan Mahmood, Tanveer Ahmad Sheikh, and a female judge, Abher Gul Khan.

The JCP, by a majority, recommended the extension of Additional Judge Tariq Mahmood Bajwa for another six months.

Talks held on defence pact with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, broader regional trust needed: Turkish FM

NEWS DESK:

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Thursday that talks have been held on a possible defence pact with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but no agreement has been signed.

Responding at a press conference in Istanbul to a question about whether there might be such an alliance, Fidan pointed to what he said was a need for broader regional cooperation and trust.

He added that regional issues could be resolved if the relevant countries would "be sure of each other".

Bloomberg, citing people familiar with the matter, reported last week that Turkey was seeking to join the Pak-Saudi defence pact signed in September 2023.

The report said Turkey viewed the pact "as a way of strengthening security and deterrence when there are questions over the reliability of the US, which has strong military ties with all three countries, and President Donald Trump's commitment" to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato).



Saudi Arabia brings financial clout, Pakistan has nuclear capability, ballistic missiles and military power, while Turkey has the military experience and has developed a defence industry, Bloomberg quoted Nihat Ali Ozcan, a strategist with Ankara-

based think tank TEPAV, as saying.

Asked about reports of Istanbul eyeing such a pact, Defence Production Minister Raza Hayat Harraj told BBC Urdu.

"From a strategic point of view, Turkey, China, Saudi Arabia and Azerbaijan are close friendly countries of Pakistan, and there is a close relationship with them in terms of strategic policy."

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had signed a "Strategic Mutual De-

fence Agreement" in Riyadh, pledging that any attack on either nation would be treated as an act of aggression against both.

Should Turkey ink its membership in the alliance, it would underscore the new era in its relations with Saudi Arabia as well.

After turning the page on years of rancour, the countries are working to develop economic and defence cooperation.

They held their first-ever naval meeting in Ankara this week, according to the Turkish defence ministry.

While they also share longstanding concern over Iran, they prefer engagement with Tehran rather than force. The Turks and Saudis also back a stable Syria and statehood for Palestinians.

With Turkey, defence cooperation remains a key pillar of bilateral relations.

According to the 2023 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report, Turkey was Pakistan's second-largest arms supplier, accounting for 11pc of its total arms imports.

Ankara is building corvette warships for the Pakistan Navy and has upgraded dozens of its F-16s.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

SBKWU Teacher Recruitment Scandal Raises Alarms for Pakistan's Education System



Editorial: Serious questions have emerged over the secondary teachers recruitment process conducted by Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBKWU), triggering widespread concern about merit, transparency, and accountability in Balochistan's education system.

It is essential to clarify a point that has caused public confusion: the advertised posts were NOT for SBKWU itself. The university was only assigned the responsibility of conducting tests and interviews for Secondary School Teacher recruitment across Balochistan.

According to initial findings, hundreds of candidates who had failed were allegedly declared successful, fueling the teacher recruitment process.

Given the scale of the exercise, involving

thousands of applicants for secondary teaching positions across the province, such irregularities cannot reasonably be described as clerical mistakes.

The magnitude strongly suggests organised manipulation, carried out with the involvement or protection of influential individuals rather than the actions of a single official.

This issue strikes at the heart of education governance in Balochistan. Secondary school teachers shape the academic foundation of students, and any compromise on merit directly damages learning outcomes.

In Balochistan, where literacy rates remain among the lowest in the country, flawed teacher recruitment further deepens an already critical education crisis.

Reports that deserving candidates were sidelined only intensify public frustration and mistrust.

All anti-corruption and accountability institutions must take immediate notice.

A transparent, independent, and time-bound investigation is necessary to identify those responsible for manipulating the recruitment process conducted under SBKWU's authority. Accountability must reach every individual involved, regardless of status or influence.

This is not merely an administrative controversy; it is a matter of justice and the future of Balochistan's education system.

If credibility in teacher recruitment collapses, public trust in institutions will collapse with it. Balochistan cannot afford silence where integrity is at stake.

Quetta City, Proposed Master Plan

Abdul Latif Kakar : The mountain-ringed, Quetta city needs a comprehensive master plan to ensure the solution of problems faced by citizens and

drought, and floods, the need for making a comprehensive master plan for Quetta city is growing. Rather, it is now indispensable to make this plan, before

near foothills, the soil consists of sandy loam, mixed with pebbles and rock fragments and is suitable for vegetation. In the Hanna val-

ley, the greater part of the valley floor is covered by barren rock about crops of low relief and dry mala bed. The soil is restricted to the narrow banks and low terraces along the mainstream.

Current and future population trends need to be reviewed.

Transportation, mass transit, and city traffic management and monitoring system,



address the mega question of climate change. Through the proposed plan, scarce resources would be transparently and rationally utilized to make it a better living city in the country. For the first in the history of the province, the Urban Planning Development (UPD) under the leadership of chief minister Balochistan, Jam

Kamal Khan has started the preparation of the master plan.

Geographical location, looming threat of natural calamities including earthquakes,

it is already late.

Geography and Soil

Four main units may describe the soils of Quetta i.e. (1) piedmont plains (very deep and well-drained soil) (2) piedmont basins (3) salinity and alkalinity (4) gravelly piedmont fans and aprons bordering the mountains and plains.

The central part of the Quetta valley is covered by a soil that ranges from sandy loam to silt loam. This type of soil is good for crop production. At the margin of the valley

ley, the greater part of the valley floor is covered by barren rock about crops of low relief and dry mala bed. The soil is restricted to the narrow banks and low terraces along the mainstream.

However, the nature of the soil in Belli is silty clay which is not suitable for cultivation. Similarly, the Chiltan surface has soils that are predominantly gravelly loams. The vegetation on these soils is mainly Haloxylon which provides poor grazing for livestock.

Soil erosion As far as soil erosion is concerned, both stream erosion of soil and wind erosion is occurring in the district. The stream ero-

sion takes place in the piedmont plain along the banks and beds of streams.

Such streams are Sariah Lora, Hanna river, Habib Nallah near Hudda. Wind erosion occurs in the valley.

This all requires a review of the existing plans and documents and preparation of the digitized base map of Quetta with a protocol for its updating. A review of existing policies, procedures, plans studies conducted by donor agencies, and other relevant data

housing commercial, and industrial land use evaluation of the existing condition of buildings and housing schemes should be thoroughly reviewed. To be precise, the city needs a master plan on an emergency basis to address the looming threat of climate change and natural disasters.

Quetta City: Proposed Master Plan

The author is currently serving as the secretary urban planning and development department government of Balochistan

Quetta has a better environment, rich culture, manageable population

Amjad Rashid

Quetta is not a case of deprivation related to lack of resources, not a case of unemployment, not a case of climate change, and not even a case of poverty. It's a true and real case of the richness of culture, environment, climate, natural resources, and manageable human population. Unfortunately our planners, thinkers, decision-makers proved to be very selfish and greedy.

In Quetta, we had municipal water posts (I wish I can get the pictures). Quetta was a natural habitat with a small population of trees, flowers. The city had few streets with few vehicles and dynamic socio-political harmony.

We did establish universities but abandoned knowledge

Unfortunately, global and regional influences badly affected the capital with less modernization and more adversity. We did establish a university, but abandoned consciousness, we did build plazas, but without building codes. If we look back at the pictures of Quetta of the sixties. It was like Zurich but evolved as little Karachi or Mumbai. Transformed from little London to huge slums (full of garbage and filth). Bad governance, poor education, corruption, and poor planning converted Quetta into an ugly place.

We don't see green Koh e Mur Daar a multi-lingual culture which was its beauty and uniqueness has vanished and replaced by the prac-

tion. Every day in the morning when I look at the sleeping beauty of Quetta I feel that the mother of Quetta (sleeping beauty) has become

bricks and cement which after few more years will look like a dumping place of garbage. We must listen and learn from our heroes like Rehman

its true beauty and culture.

Climate change poses a serious threat to the developing world Environment, Cli-

Now we from Adams to twenty-first-century experienced, slavery, the industrial revolution, conflict of ideologies, various version of world orders

chambeli, bitakh, surkahi and places like hama, thandi Sarak, and associated culture of art and poetry. Masses of

motherland is demanding the attention of all irrespective of our international commitments. It's a matter of our survival. We need a green economy,



tees influenced by regional inhuman and unnatural drama. We lost our green Quetta with wild roses which was its aroma and identity.

Balochistan and Quetta need our attention

Balochistan in general and Quetta, in particular, need our at-

sick and looking toward her siblings for help and cure.

Our water level reduced, our population increased, our poor justice system, and our greed for material gain will never make it a little London but will change its fate like the city full of garbage supported/fixed by

Baba, Atta shad, Asher Jalili and take their vision as guiding torch. Quetta does not need more engineers but needs Thinkers, guides who should work to replace the current citizenry struggling for self-interest with the soil power and values of Quetta, which can bring back

mate change, global warming, deforestation and desertification, and many such terms were alien to humanity and especially to developing world like Pakistan. We were used to singing and telling stories to our siblings (young generation) about the kindness of nature.

driving to save and benefit humanity. But all our efforts to take humanity to its peak are being ended up as a disaster. The temperature of the motherland is increasing. habitat of Balochistan and our piece of Heaven (once called as "mix it's jangly Gulab, chakore,

Balochistan facing a host of issues

First time after seventy-two years and since the establishment of Balochistan Province, its habitats are frequently faced by challenges like conservation.

In the context of the above-mentioned scenario, our beloved

green industry, green employment, green politics, and above all green development.

This situation calls for a committed social, political and religious commitment to rebuild and reclaim of our title. Quetta has a better environment, rich culture, manageable population

Opposition demands joint sitting on Iran situation

NEWS DESK: The opposition alliance comprising the PTI and other parties has demanded a joint session of parliament to discuss the tensions in the Middle East, particularly Iran, besides urging the government to convene a meeting of "neighbouring countries" to formulate a "joint and coordinated strategy". The Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) held a meeting in the federal capital under the chairmanship of Mahmood Khan Achakzai, wherein the participants expressed concerns over the deteriorating regional situation. The participants urged the government to call an urgent joint session of parliament to form a national policy through collective wisdom.

They claimed that the international order was changing. The Israeli aggression in Palestine and the conduct of the United States in Latin America have severely undermined international law. They observed that imperial and



colonial powers were tightening their grip around Pakistan's neighbouring country,

Iran, while the western media was creating an environment that could be used as a pretext to

undermine Iran's sovereignty. The TTAP proposed that in view of the seriousness of the po-

tential crisis and its possible impact on the region, the government should also convene a

meeting of neighbouring countries to develop a joint and coordinated strategy to address

these challenges. PTI slams action against Adiala protesters and harassment.

Meanwhile, the PTI denounced the use of force by the Rawalpindi police to disperse its sit-in outside Adiala jail on Tuesday night. The police, in a midnight operation, had used force to disperse the participants.

In a statement, the PTI said these actions constituted a grave assault on the Constitution, the rule of law and fundamental human rights, and reflected a systematic campaign of political victimisation designed to silence dissent. The party vowed that such conduct was unacceptable in any democratic society and would be vigorously challenged at every constitutional, legal and democratic forum.

The party claimed that family members of Imran Khan and party workers were present outside the jail to exercise their constitutional and legal right to meet their incarcerated leader, but the police suppressed this activity using force, intimidation and harassment.

3 injured in Bannu ambulance attack



NEWS DESK: Three people were injured when unidentified assailants opened fire on a private ambulance transporting a patient to Islamabad here on Wednesday.

The incident occurred at Sperka Chowk in Domel, where armed men already present at the spot signalled an ambulance to stop. When the driver did not stop the vehicle, the assailants opened fire. As a result, three people accompanying the patient were injured. The vehicle was also damaged. The patient and the driver, however, remained unhurt.

The injured were identified as Mazhar Hussain, a resident of Jhang, Punjab, Shakir Ali, a resident of Karak (currently residing in Islamabad) and Sheeraz, a resident of Pakpattan, Punjab. All three are em-

ployees of a private care centre in Islamabad.

According to the police report lodged by one of the injured, Mazhar Hussain, they were transporting a patient, Rehmat, resident of Mirakhel Bannu, to Islamabad for treatment. Upon reaching Sperka Chowk, armed individuals attempted to stop the ambulance and then opened unprovoked fire.

Meanwhile, unknown miscreants carried out a hand grenade attack on a sentry point of Bannu Central Jail here on Wednesday. However, no loss of life or damage to property was reported.

The attackers targeted the sentry point located at the corner of the jail on the side of Khalifa Gul Nawaz Hospital.

The hand grenade struck the wall and bounced back onto the

road, where it exploded with a bang.

The jail superintendent said that the facility was also targeted in a sniper attack, but due to effective security arrangements, no casualties occurred and all personnel remained safe.

Sources said the jail had already received threat alerts regarding possible attacks. In view of these threats, jail authorities had been conducting regular night patrols.

However, he stressed that the system has created inequities, with benefits flowing to select groups while blame is unfairly placed on the city administration. "There is water in

Despite scepticism, mayor confident to dismantle water tanker network

NEWS DESK: While Mayor Murtaza Wahab outlined his plan to eventually dismantle the decades-old water-tanker system, officials at the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC) voiced scepticism, saying it would not be possible to entirely shut down hydrants and end tanker services given the existing water infrastructure.

Talking to the reporters on Wednesday after inaugurating the Jehangir Road rehabilitation project, the mayor, who is also the chairman of the KWSC board, said that water tankers and hydrants have been operating in Karachi for decades, largely filling gaps where the piped water supply does not reach.

However, he stressed that the system has created inequities, with benefits flowing to select groups while blame is unfairly placed on the city administration. "There is water in



the city, but the real issue is its unjust distribution," the mayor said, adding that his administration has already "shut down" several illegal hydrants. He said that the contracts of seven legal hydrants have expired, leaving the city with a choice: renew the contracts or permanently close the hydrants. Mr Wahab said that he had proposed a third option — the gradual dismantling of

the hydrant and tanker system, but emphasised that such a step could not be taken without a comprehensive alternative plan. "If hydrants are closed, how will water reach areas that depend on tankers? I have asked officials of the KWSC to develop a practical and citywide water supply strategy. We want to end this system, but responsibly," he said.

According to the

mayor, once the KWSC finalises its proposal, it will be presented to the City Council for approval. Only after formal approval will tanker services be phased out, and work on this strategy is currently underway.

Rejecting political motives behind the move, he said that his party had no hidden agenda. "This hydrant system was inherited. The beneficiaries are someone else, but the

accusations are directed at us," he said. He acknowledged that Karachi faces a genuine water shortage but reiterated that equitable distribution remains the administration's key objective. "Hydrants closure may hit DHA hardest." According to sources who spoke to Dawn, the mayor was told in a meeting with the water utility's senior management that a decision had to be made on renewing the hydrant contracts, which had already expired about seven months earlier.

They said the mayor had instructed the KWSC to consider shutting down the city's hydrants in order to achieve a fairer distribution of water. The sources said that closing the hydrants would not improve the city's water supply, as only 15-20 million gallons of water daily (MGD), or 3.5 per cent of the total 650MGD, was delivered through tankers.

3 dead, 6 injured in fog-related accidents in Sahiwal

NEWS DESK: Three people, including a woman, lost their lives while six others were critically injured in separate fog-related road accidents late on Tuesday night and in the early hours of Wednesday.

As per details, in one accident a car hit an unidentified 55-year-old man near the outer bus stop and fled the scene. Rescue 1122 shifted the body to the Sahiwal Teaching Hospital, while police had so far failed to trace either the driver or the victim's identity.

In another accident, one Raj Muhammad, a resident of Chak 421/GB, lost control of his motorcycle near the River Ravi and crashed into a bridge on the Sahiwal-Faisalabad Road. He failed to notice a turn and fell into a 40-foot-deep trench due to poor visibility and sustained a fatal head injury.

Meanwhile, four coasters with passengers were seriously wounded after it collided with a sugarcane-laden tractor-trolley near Bootaywali Jhaal on



Jaranwala-Satiana Road. They were shifted to the Satiana RHC and were identified as Ashfaq (34) Shahid (22), Abid (20) and Saad (19).

In another incident on the Arifwala Road, a speeding car rear-ended a motorcycle near the Ravi security guard, leaving him critically injured. Rescue 1122 shifted him to the DHQ Hospital.

Separately, one Muhammad Raj of Mohalla Raj Pura was crossing the Old Overhead Bridge when a pickup van struck him from behind, causing serious injuries. He was taken to the Sahiwal Teaching Hospital.

FIRs have been registered by the Ghala Mandi Police, Noor Shah Police Sahiwal, and Sadar

Police Chichawatni but no arrests have been made so far in any of the cases.

BOYCOTT: The District Bar Association boycotted the court of Assistant Commissioner Maham Wahid on Wednesday accusing her of corruption and mistreatment of lawyers.

The lawyers chanted slogans near her office and refused to appear in her court for any hearing. The DBA unanimously passed a resolution condemning the AC, accusing her of corruption, receiving kickbacks, and harassing lawyers.

The resolution, signed by DBA President Muhammad Saeed Saghla and Secretary Tariq Kamyana, also denounced the alleged

mistreatment of bar member Mazhar Ali Fatyana.

Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not obtain the AC's version.

Reports suggest that lawyers plan to meet the Sahiwal deputy commissioner to discuss the matter and demand transfer of the AC from Sahiwal.

SUICIDE: A second-year student reportedly committed suicide by shooting himself in the head in village 18/11-L, Chichawatni tehsil on Wednesday noon.

The deceased was identified as Saqib. His parents confirmed to the police that he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Upon receiving

the report, the Saddar Police arrived at the scene, conducted a forensic examination, and shifted the body for an autopsy.

The Saddar SHO told Dawn that the police were investigating the incident from all angles. He added that the post-mortem report would help determine the exact range and nature of the gunshot wound to the head.

OBITUARY: District Newspaper Sellers Association General Secretary Gulzar Ahmed Qureshi passed away due to a heart attack on Wednesday.

He was laid to rest at the Mai Shah graveyard where a large number of journalists, newspaper censors, lawyers, and local citizens attended the funeral.

Pakistani passport ranking improves by five places, now ranked 98th

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's passport ranking has improved on the Henley Index in 2026, rising from 103 in 2025 to 98 this year, according to figures released on Thursday. According to the latest rankings, Pakistan's travel document was placed 98th on the list, tied with Yemen.

It ranked higher than Iraq (99), Syria (100) and Afghanistan (101). The ranking showed that Pakistan's passport allows visa-free access to 31 countries, including visa-on-arrival (VOA). Pakistan's ranking on the Henley Passport Index from 2006 to 2025 — screening via Henley's website.

Singapore ranked the highest, with visa-free access to 192 coun-

tries, followed closely by Japan and South Korea with 188.

Denmark, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland tied for the third spot with visa-free access to 186 countries. According to the Henley Index, Pakistani passport holders have free visa access to Barbados, Cook Islands, Dominica, Haiti, Micronesia, Montserrat, Rwanda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu. While a visa-on-arrival was available for Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde Islands, Comoros, Djiibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Niue, Palau Islands, Qatar, Samoa, Senegal,

Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, and Tuvalu.

Pakistani passport holders can also avail an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) for Kenya, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi took to X and hailed the development. He termed it a "strong achievement" and vowed that the "momentum will continue". Last year in October, the Pakistani passport ranked the fourth worst for the fifth straight year, with a ranking of 103. Pakistan's passport has been declared the world's fourth-worst since at least 2021 on the Henley index, which calculates countries' "visa-free score".



He said the initiative aims to promote sports activities and bring emerging talent to

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif presiding over a consultative meeting with private sector experts regarding reforms in Pakistan Railways.

The modernised layout blends enhanced security features with artistic elements, showcasing Pakistan's heritage in line with international design standards.

Additionally, the government has imposed a condition for the approval of new petrol pumps. New fuel stations will only receive their No Objection Certificate (NOC) after installing electric vehicle charging units. This decision ensures that no new petrol pump can operate in 31 cities have been issued via the E-Biz portal. Notable cities such as Faisalabad (29 pumps), Lahore (14 pumps), Bahawalpur (10 pumps), and Khanewal and Bahawalnagar (9 pumps each) will see new petrol stations with mandatory electric charging units.

During the hearing, the petitioner's lawyer argued that large-scale cutting of trees was being carried out in violation of rules and regulations, causing serious environmental damage

During the hearing, the petitioner's lawyer argued that large-scale cutting of trees was being carried out in violation of rules and regulations, causing serious environmental damage

The spokesperson also informed the media that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call from the Amir

tutional experts, public administrators, economists, and representatives of civil society to engage in serious and

MANAMA: President Asif Ali Zardari being briefed by the Economic Development Board of Bahrain, in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain Shaikh Khalid Bin Abdullah Al Khalifa.

teers were killed in a massive landslide while repairing a flood-damaged nullah



Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC) Awards 53 Students from Chagai with Fully Funded Scholarships

Syed Muhammad Qaseem:

Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC), in partnership with Community Development Committees (CDCs), held a Scholarship Award Ceremony in Nokkundi to celebrate academic excellence.

A total of 53 talented students from District Chagai, including 19 female students, were awarded fully funded scholarships under the RDMC Scholarship Program.

The selected students will attend a six-month Foundation Program at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Sukkur. Parents and community members attended the ceremony to acknowledge the students' hard work and achievements. RDMC Head of Sustainability, Ashley Price, said the company remains committed to people-centered development. She stressed that education is key to building strong and self-reliant communities and



praised the students for earning the opportunity through dedication and discipline. Representatives of the CDCs from Nokkundi, Humai, and Fan Sediments also addressed the gathering. They appreciated RDMC's continued support for local development and pledged to work closely with the company for the long-term welfare of the communities.

During the event, certificates were presented to the scholarship recipients. The foundation program will help them strengthen academic skills, build confidence, and prepare for admission to universities across Pakistan.

RDMC General Manager Ryan Mitchell congratulated the students, noting that their success would benefit not only them but also their communities. He encouraged them to give back and contribute positively to society.

He also thanked CDC members for ensuring that RDMC's community initiatives are aligned with genuine local needs.

RDMC continues to prioritize inclusive and sustainable development, with education as a central focus. The scholarship program is part of a broader effort that includes support for primary education and financial assistance to deserving university students from Balochistan.

DC Jaffarabad Chairs Key Meeting on Agricultural Land Identification Under Green Pakistan Initiative



JAFFARABAD: A special meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Jaffarabad, Khalid Khan, to identify agricultural land in the district under the Green Pakistan Initiative.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Director Agriculture Extension Jaffarabad Mehr Dil Abro, Tehsildar Jhatpat Abdullah Lashari, Naib Tehsildar Jhatpat Abdul Ghani Chachar, Qanoongo Fakhrudin Umriani, Superintendent Cattle Farm Ameer Bakhsh Soomro, along with other concerned officers and members.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the objectives of the Green Pakistan Initiative, increasing agricultural production, identification of barren and cultivable government and private land, and its effective utilization.

Officials from the Agriculture and Revenue departments briefed the participants on the availability of agricultural land in the district, existing irrigation facilities, and potential development projects.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner, Khalid Khan stated that the Green Pakistan Initiative is a major government program aimed at strengthening the agricultural sector, achieving food self-sufficiency, creating employment opportunities, and stabilizing the economy.

He emphasized the need for transparent and accurate identification of agricultural land and directed all relevant departments to work in close coordination to ensure practical implementation so that the benefits of the initiative reach farmers at the grassroots level.

Balochistan Food Minister Visits Injured of Ziarat Tragic Incident at Civil Hospital Quetta

QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Food and Chairman Balochistan Food Authority, Haji Noor Muhammad Khan Domki, visited the Trauma Center of Civil Hospital Quetta to inquire about the health of those injured in the tragic incident that occurred in the Kilti Manah area of Ziarat.

During the visit, the provincial food minister met the injured patients individually, inquired about their condition, and expressed heartfelt sympathy with them and their families.

He prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured and assured them of full support from the provincial government.

Haji Noor Muhammad Khan Domki also received a detailed briefing from the hospital administration regarding the ongoing medical treatment and overall healthcare arrangements. He issued clear instructions that all possible and quality medical facilities be provided to the injured without any delay, emphasizing that negligence in treatment would not be tolerated.

District Chairman Ziarat, Abdul Sattar Kakar, was also present on the occasion and accompanied the provincial minister

during the visit. He too inquired about the condition of the injured and assured the hospital administration of full cooperation. The families and attendants of the injured expressed their gratitude to the provincial food minister for personally visiting the patients and taking keen interest in resolving their issues, terming the gesture as commendable and reassuring.

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High-Level Agriculture Review Meeting Held in Quetta Under Secretary Noor Ahmed Pirani

QUETTA: A high-level meeting of various departments of the Balochistan Agriculture Department was held in Quetta under the chairmanship of Secretary Agriculture & Cooperatives

Directorate General CRS, Agricultural College Quetta and Panjgur, and the Green Pakistan Initiative Balochistan.

During the session, participants reviewed the progress of development projects and PSDPs for the second quarter of fiscal year 2025-26.

The meeting was attended by senior officials and representatives from the Department of Agriculture

ment of Agriculture (Extension), Agriculture Research, On-Farm Water Management (OFWM), Agriculture Engineering, and SNEs.

He emphasized the importance of attending future meetings with complete preparation, accurate

counts Committee (DAC) meeting. Furthermore, detailed deliberations were held on SNEs for the fiscal year 2026-27, which will be taken up in the next session of the Budget Priority Committee.

Secretary Noor Ahmed Pirani directed all concerned officials to accelerate the implementation of development schemes, PSDPs and

data, and all required documentation to ensure improved performance and sustainable growth of the agricultural sector in Balochistan.

The meeting reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to strengthening agricultural development and enhancing institutional efficiency for the long-term benefit of farmers and the rural economy.

UNICEF and CPD Organize Two-Day AI-Based Training for Teachers in Sherani to Reduce School Dropout Rate

ZHOB: A two-day training workshop was organized in Sherani through the joint collaboration of UNICEF and CPD to train teachers on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for student attendance tracking and monitoring.

Master Trainers Aimal Khan and Noor Muhammad conducted the training sessions, while Teachers Associate Ikramullah and Project Assistant Shoaib Salar supervised the overall training process.

During the training, the master trainers highlighted findings from a comprehensive study conducted by

the School Education Department in collaboration with UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

The study revealed an alarming school dropout rate at the primary level in Balochistan. According to the research, the dropout rate among boys ranges from 59 to 61 percent, while among girls it stands at 56 percent.

The study, titled "Study on School Dropouts in Balochistan," reviewed data from 20 districts of the province between 2016 and 2021.

The report identified major reasons for school dropouts, including child-related issues, lack of parental interest, social pressure,

school-related challenges, systemic weaknesses, and adverse economic and social conditions.

The report recommended child-centered interventions, increased parental support, improvement in school infrastructure and teaching quality, and the establishment of an effective dropout prevention system.

To address the current challenges, special training programs for teachers are underway across Balochistan, with a

strong focus on modern technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence. During the sessions, teachers received practical training on using AI tools for monitoring student attendance, assessing academic performance, and generating comprehensive evaluation reports.

According to officials, the AI-based system will help in early identification of dropout trends and enable timely and effective interventions, contributing to improved education outcomes and a reduction in dropout rates across Balochistan in the future.



Power users to continue paying debt surcharge

NEWS DESK: The government on Wednesday announced that the Rs2.23 per unit debt surcharge on electricity consumers would continue for up to six years as it notified a revised uniform national base tariff for the current year without any change.

In a statement issued on the sidelines of the revised tariff notification for all distribution companies (Discos) and K-Electric, the Power Division said the debt surcharge, currently charged at Rs2.23 per unit, would be withdrawn in five to six years once the circular debt is cleared.

"Once the circular debt is cleared, the debt surcharge currently charged at Rs2.23 per unit will be withdrawn, providing further tariff relief to consumers," it said, adding that the government had introduced a surplus power package under which industrial and agricultural consumers can avail additional electricity at a concessional rate of

Rs22.98 per unit for three years, helping reduce average industrial tariffs. In addition, a circular debt settlement plan has been launched to eliminate outstanding debt within five to six years.



The Power Division also conceded that the growth of off-grid solar consumption had distorted subsidy requirements, with the number of protected consumers doubling from 11 million in 2021

to 22m recently due to hybrid consumption patterns. "This has not only strained fiscal resources but has also increased the cross-subsidy burden on industrial and commercial users, undermining their competitiveness," it said, adding that commercial, bulk supply and high-consuming domestic consumers were currently bearing a significantly higher cross-subsidy burden than the industrial sector. Responding to criticism over higher energy costs — also highlighted by Finance Minister M u h a m m a d Aurangzeb as one of the key reasons for the exit of foreign firms

from Pakistan and export challenges — the Power Division said it would explore additional options to further reduce the cross-subsidy burden on industrial consumers, including subsidy re-

forms and debt refinancing, in addition to the tariff reduction measures already in place.

It added that data showed the industrial cross-subsidy burden had been reduced from Rs225 billion (Rs8.9 per unit) in March 2024, when the current government assumed office, to Rs102bn (Rs4.02 per unit) at present, reflecting a reduction of Rs123bn. "Industrial electricity tariffs (including taxes) have declined from Rs62.99 per unit in March 2024 to Rs46.31 per unit in December 2025, while the national average tariff has fallen from Rs53.04 to Rs42.27 per unit," it said. Moreover, to reduce electricity tariffs, the government has terminated inefficient power plants and successfully renegotiated contracts with independent power producers (IPPs). These measures have resulted in tariff reductions, and further negotiations with the remaining IPPs are underway, the Power Division said.

Equities falter after overnight rally

NEWS DESK: After a mild recovery overnight following a three-session of continuous hammering, the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday came under renewed selling pressure as investors resumed profit-taking amid a dearth of any positive triggers and the mounting regional tensions, pulling the benchmark KSE-100 below the 183,000-point barrier.

Topline Securities Ltd said the bourse witnessed a round of profit-taking as investors chose to lock in gains following the recent rally. The benchmark index remained volatile throughout the session, hitting an intraday high of 775 points and a low of 1,581 points before

closing at 182,569.82, down 1,381.69 points or 0.75pc.

Defying the broader market trend, the E&P sector emerged as a notable outperformer. Oil and Gas Development Company rose 2.95pc, while Pakistan Petroleum gained 2.12pc, both closing higher than the previous session amid selective buying interest in energy stocks.

On the index front, heavyweights including OGDC, PPL, Askari Bank, Mezan Bank, and Atlas Honda Ltd lent support, collectively contributing 429 points. Conversely, weakness in United Bank, MCB Bank, Fauji Fertiliser, Lucky Cement, and Hub Power weighed on sentiment, shaving 897

points off the benchmark.

Trading activity remained subdued, with total market volume fell to 1.031 billion shares. However, the value of shares traded rose 5.19pc to Rs65.9bn. K-Electric led the volume chart, with 56 million shares traded.

Ali Najib, Deputy Head of Trading at Arif Habib Ltd, attributed the subdued market momentum to heightened geopolitical tensions, as investors adopted a cautious stance and escalating uncertainty in the Middle East.

On the macro front, Bloomberg expects Pakistan's recent inflation slowdown to 5.6pc year-on-year to be temporary.

EU Green Deal rules put textile exports at a crossroads

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's textile sector has entered 2026 at a defining juncture, with its long-standing export model facing mounting pressure from tightening global regulations, intensifying competition and domestic cost constraints. After a modest recovery in 2025 that lifted textile exports to around \$17.85 billion, industry leaders now warn that the sector's preferential access to European markets under the GSP Plus regime is increasingly at risk.

These concerns dominated discussions at the Global Procurement and Supply Chain Summit (GPS 2026), held in Karachi, where policymakers, procurement leaders and textile executives assessed the evolving global trade environment. Addressing the summit as chief guest, Shahbaz H Syed, President and CEO of EXIM Bank of Pakistan, described the current environment as a "perfect storm", driven by rising energy costs, aggressive sustainability regulations and redirected global supply flows.

At the core of the challenge is the European Union's Green Deal, which is reshaping pro-

urement standards worldwide. Regulations such as the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) are fundamentally altering how buyers evaluate suppliers. According to GPS Advisory Board member Imran Mushtaq, procurement is undergoing a structural shift.

"Procurement is no longer just about price; it's about provenance," Mushtaq said. He noted that EU regulations now require detailed traceability across the supply chain, standards that

most Pakistani mills currently lack at a granular level. Without credible systems to demonstrate environmental compliance and product origin, exporters risk exclusion from key European buyers, regardless of price competitiveness.

Energy economics further complicates the picture. Pakistan's elevated grid tariffs have significantly eroded margins, forcing manufacturers to reconsider their operating models. Industry participants highlighted that on-site renewable energy solutions, such as solar and biomass, are increas-

ingly viewed not only as sustainability measures but also as strategic tools to manage cost volatility. Similarly, the use of recycled fibres and certified cotton has shifted from being a niche preference to a baseline requirement for access to EU markets.

Adding to regulatory pressure is the growing influx of diverted Chinese textile shipments. As the United States tightens trade restrictions on China, surplus Chinese inventory is being redirected to the European Union and Middle Eastern markets at sharply discounted

prices. This has intensified competition, particularly in commoditised product categories.

Syed cautioned that Pakistani exporters cannot compete solely on price against such volumes. Instead, he urged a strategic pivot towards high-compliance and value-added segments. Vertical integration — mills, those controlling the entire value chain from spinning to stitching, retain an advantage through shorter lead times, higher transparency and better alignment with buyer compliance requirements. Crucially, strict adherence to the EU's Rules of Origin allows Pakistani exporters to legitimately benefit from GSP Plus duty-free access, an option unavailable to diverted Chinese goods.

Technology adoption emerged as a recurring theme at the summit, particularly the role of artificial intelligence and digital traceability in procurement. Altaf Gul Muhammad, Chief Supply Chain and Operations Officer at Yunus Textile Mills, emphasised the need for stronger coordination across industry, regulators and technology providers.



PAKISTAN STOCK EXCHANGE							evolving global trade environment. Addressing the summit as chief guest, Shabbir Hameed, President and CEO of EXIM Bank of Pakistan, described the current economic situation as a "crisis of faith form", driven by rising energy costs, aggressive sustainability regulations and reduced global supply flows.
THE TOP FIVE				ACTIVITY			
GAINERS	LOSERS	LEADERS		Total	428		
Atlas Honda 83.14	PKA Housing Cdo 913.34	K-Electric 86.25	Active	483			
Security Papers 18.30	United Foods 98.42	WorldCall Telecom 55.67	Open	90			
Asahi Petroleum 8.76	Asahi Petroleum 40.00	HEAT 17.63	Limit	352			
CEM Sugar Mills 8.74	United Motor Cdo 32.38	Asahi Petroleum 42.40					
OGDC 8.67	Platinum Trade 27.88	National Power Ltd 42.40					
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				Local	9,50,000	Market 1,50,000	
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Semenyo an instant hit as City close on League Cup final

NEWS DESK: Antone Semeyo made himself an instant Manchester City hero as Pep Guardiola's men took a giant stride towards the League Cup final with a 2-0 win against Newcastle United.

The Ghana international, who joined from Bournemouth for £5 million (\$87 million) last week, opened the scoring and also had a second goal controversially ruled out.

But Rayan Cherki delivered what could be the knockout blow to the holders in the 98th minute. The Magpies ended a 70-year wait for a domestic trophy by winning the League Cup last season, but will need a heroic fightback to reach Wembley when the sides meet again for the second leg of the semi-final on Feb 4.

Semenyo also scored on his debut on Saturday in a 1-0 demolition of Exeter in the FA Cup.

"The whole envi-



ronment here is perfect," Semeyo said. "Everyone is confident and wanting to achieve the best. I've just come into that and they've helped me with my confidence and they've made me feel welcome."

In previous years he

would have been cup-tied after featuring for Bournemouth earlier in the competition. Newcastle boss Eddie Howe made clear his dissatisfaction before the game with a rule change this season that allows players to play for

two clubs in the one campaign and City took full advantage. Guardiola showed his desire to reach the final for the first time since 2021 as Erling Haaland made a first League Cup start in three years in a strong

City selection just days before they visit Manchester United in the Premier League.

Youssef Wissa blazed a glorious early chance over the bar as Newcastle roared out of the blocks in front of a packed St. James' Park.

Katie Ledecky posts second-fastest 1500m free time ever in Pro Swim win

NEWS DESK: Nine-time Olympic gold medalist Katie Ledecky clocked the second-fastest 1500m free time in history on Wednesday to launch the US Pro Swim Series event in Austin, Texas, with a dominant victory.

Ledecky was untouchable as she cruised to victory in 15:23.21, more than a minute in front of 16-year-old runner-up Brinkley Hanson, who touched in 16:31.31.

Becca Mann was third in 16:35.09. Ledecky didn't threaten her world record of 15:20.48, set in 2018, but she used a strong late surge to improve on the second-best ever time of 15:24.51 that she had set at the Pro Swim Series in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, last April.

Since then she has gone on to win her sixth world title in the event at last year's world championships in Singapore.

She has won both Olympic gold medals — at Tokyo in 2021 and Paris 2024 — since the 1500m free was made an Olympic event for women.

Now 28, the American who won her first Olympic gold in the 800m freestyle at the 2012 London Games is showing no signs of fading as the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics beckon.

Ledecky, the only woman to break 15:30 for the 1500m free, did so for the 10th time. She owns the top 12 times ever and 24 of the top 25, with Italian Simon Quadrelli's runner-up finish to Ledecky in 15:51.79 at last year's world championships in 2:00.19 and Carson Foster in 2:00.24.

Men's world record-holder Bobby Finke, Ledecky's training partner in Florida, won the men's 1500m free in 15:01.70. Ireland's Daniel Wiffen, the reigning 800m Olympic champion, was second in 15:04.98.

Olympic stars Summer McIntosh and Leon Marchand led the way into Thursday's finals of the 200m individual medley, in which they are both world record-holders.

Canada's McIntosh, winner of three gold medals at the Paris Games and four world titles in Singapore last year, touched in 2:09.27 to top the semi-final times ahead of Teagan O'Dell (2:13.15). Emma Weyant was third fastest, winning her semi in 2:14.74.

France's Marchand, who won four golds in Paris, topped the men's 200m medley semi-finals in 2:00.10 ahead of Kieran Smith in 2:00.19 and Carson Foster in 2:00.24. World record-holder Regan Smith of the United States won the women's 100m backstroke in 57.98sec, and reigning world champion Anna Elendt of Germany won the women's 100m breaststroke in 1:06.91.

PCB names Women's squads for SA tour

NEWS DESK: The Pakistan Cricket Board has today unveiled the ODI and T20 squads of the Pakistan Women's team for the upcoming tour to South Africa starting 10 February in Potchefstroom.

Fast bowling all-rounder Fatima Sana will continue to lead the side in both formats as Pakistan build towards the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 in June.

Alia Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Gul Feroza, Muneeba Ali, Nashra Sundus, Natalia Parvaiz, Rameen Shamim, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, and Tasma Rubab are part of both the squads, while uncapped batter Saira Jabeen and right-arm fast bowler Humaira Amin have earned their maiden T20 call-ups.

Opening batters Ayesha and Gul, along with left-arm pacer Tasma and wicketkeeper-batter Najiba Ali have been called up to the 15-member ODI squad after missing out on the ODI World Cup selection.

Diana Bag, Najiba, Sadaf Shamaz and Syeda Aroob Shah are just part of the 50-over squad, while Humna, Saira, Tuba Hassan and Eymann Fatima are in the T20 squad only.

During the tour, mentor Wahab Riaz will be assisted by a seasoned set of coaches including Imran Farhat (batting coach), Umair Asif (fast bowling coach), Abdul Rehman (spin bowling coach) and Abdul Majeed (fielding coach).

The pre-series training camp will commence from Sunday, 1 February at the Hanif Mohammad High Performance Centre, Karachi. The T20s will be played in Potchefstroom, Benoni and Kimberley from 10 to 16 February with all being day-night fixtures. Pakistan will warm up for the ODI series with a 50-over game at Kimberley followed by the three ODIs at Bloemfontein, Centurion and Durban from 22 February to 1 March.

The second ODI will begin in the afternoon and will also be played under lights, while the warm-up, first and third ODIs will be day games.

Pakistan Women's team is set to return to South Africa for a bilateral series after January 2021, when they took part in a three-match ODI series in Durban. In February 2023, Pakistan took part in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

Cup in South Africa and played their matches in Cape Town and Paarl. T20 squad: Fatima Sana (captain), Alia Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Eymann Fatima, Gul Feroza (wicket-keeper), Humna Bilal, Muneeba Ali (wicket-keeper), Nashra Sundus, Natalia Parvaiz, Rameen Shamim, Sadia Iqbal, Saira Jabeen, Sidra Amin, Tasma Rubab, and Tuba Hassan.

ODI Squad: Fatima Sana (captain), Alia Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Diana Bag, Gul Feroza, Muneeba Ali (wicket-keeper), Najiba Ali (wicket-keeper), Khatun Najiba, Rameen Shamim, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah and Tasma Rubab.

Player support personnel: Wahab Riaz (mentor), Imran Farhat (batting coach), Umair Asif (fast bowling coach), Abdul Rehman (spin bowling coach), Abdul Majeed (fielding coach).

coach), Moeen (strength & conditioning coach), Waleed Ahmad (performance analyst), Ayesha Ashar (Team manager), Tehreem Sumbal (physiotherapist) and Raza Rashid Kitchlew (media manager).

Pakistan Women's tour of South Africa Schedule: (10 February to 1 March) 1st T20I - 10 February - JB Marks Oval, Potchefstroom (day/night) 2nd T20I - 12 February - Willowmoore Park, Benoni (day/night) 3rd T20I - 16 February - Kimberley Oval, Kimberley (day/night) 50-over warm-up match - 19 February - Kimberley Oval, Kimberley (day/night) 1st ODI - 22 February - Mangaung Oval, Bloemfontein (day/night) 2nd ODI - 25 February - SuperSport Park, Centurion (day/night) 3rd ODI - 1 March - Kingsmead Stadium, Durban (day/night)

NEWS DESK: Daryl Mitchell scored an unbeaten 131 from 117 balls to lead New Zealand to a victory before he top-edged India in the second One-Day International on Wednesday and levelled the three-match series at 1-1.

New Zealand won the toss and sent India into bat, restricting the hosts to 284/7 in Rajkot. The visitors chased down that target with 15 deliveries remaining to set up a series decider.

Mitchell, who has been in fine form in ODI cricket and scored 761 runs in 2025 at an average of 54.35, came in with New Zealand in a difficult position at 46-2.

The 34-year-old quickly built a strong partnership with top-edged Young as the pair combined for 162 runs, with Mitchell being dropped on 80 by Prashidh Kumar Reddy's hands, ending the partnership. It was too little too late from India, however, as Mitchell and Glenn Phillips (32) took New Zealand over the finish line and helped them to their eighth ODI century.

We haven't won here for a couple of years. Nice to get a win. I am just enjoying doing the job for the country," Mitchell said. "Young is a class player, I love batting with him, we also have fun batting together. He enjoyed playing the spinners and using all his options."

Indian bowlers enjoyed early success when Harshit Conway bowled Devon Conway, who made 16, and Shivam Dube, who made 14. A quick Krishna had Henry Nicholls inside-edge a delivery onto his stumps

Mitchell ton helps NZ level ODI series against India



After that Young was joined at the crease by experienced Mitchell and the pair steered the innings for the Black Caps.

Young (87) came close to scoring a century before he top-edged a Kuldeep Yadav delivery and sent the ball looping into Nitish Kumar Reddy's hands, ending the partnership. It was too little too late from India, however, as Mitchell and Glenn Phillips (32) took New Zealand over the finish line and helped them to their eighth ODI century.

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Indian bowlers enjoyed early success when Harshit Conway bowled Devon Conway, who made 16, and Shivam Dube, who made 14. A quick Krishna had Henry Nicholls inside-edge a delivery onto his stumps

stall India's top-order, sending Rohit Sharma, Shreyas Iyer and Virat Kohli back to the dressing room.

Kl. Rahul was the cornerstone of India's innings as he struck an unbeaten 112 from 92 balls. He put together a 73-run stand with Ravindra Jadeja (27) and added another 57 with Reddy (20) as he scored his eighth century and also recorded his joint-highest score in the 50-over format.

"We did get a decent start with the ball, but they batted very well in the middle overs," Mitchell said. "India captain Shubman Gill said."

In the first 10-15 overs that we bowled, the ball was doing well. After that the wicket settled. But we could have been more brave, taking more chances."

The decisive third match of the series will be played in Indore, before the teams wrap up

their preparations for next month's Twenty20 World Cup with a five-match T20I series.

Scoreboard INDIA: R. Sharma c Young b Clarke 24.5. Gill c Mitchell b Jameson 56. V. Kohli b Clarke 23.5. Iyer b Brazevell b Clarke 8. K. L. Rahul not out 112. R. Jadeja cdk Brazevell 27. N. K. Reddy c Phillips b Foulkes 20. H. Rana c Brazevell b Lennox 2. M. Siraj not out 2. EXTRAS (LB-2, NB-1, W-7) 10 (TOTAL for 7 wickets, 50 overs) 284. FALL OF WICKETS: 1-70 (Sharma), 2-99 (Gill), 3-115 (Iyer), 4-118 (Kohli), 5-191 (Jadeja), 6-248 (Reddy), 7-256 (Rana), 8-256 (Gill), 9-256 (Iyer), 10-256 (Siraj).

BOWLING: Jameson 10-2-70-1 (w), Foulkes 9-0-67-2 (w), Clarke 8-0-56-3 (2w, 1b), Lennox 10-0-42-1 (2w), Brazevell 10-1-34-1 (2w), Phillips 10-1-34-1 (2w), Conway b Rana 16. H. Nicholls b Krishna 10. W. Young c Reddy b Yadav 87. D.

Afghanistan approve three-foreign-league annual cap for top players

NEWS DESK: Top Afghanistan players such as Rashid Khan can play a maximum of three franchise leagues abroad per year, alongside mandatory availability for a rebouted domestic competition, according to a new policy approved by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB).

The decision was taken at the board's annual general meeting in Kabul on Wednesday "to protect player fitness and mental well-being," the ACB said in a statement.

"This measure aims to manage workload and ensure peak performance for national duties," it added.

All players should be available for the five-team Afghanistan Premier League slated to launch



around October 2026 in the United Arab Emirates.

Star all-rounder Rashid Khan, who has played in the Premier League in India, the UAE, the United

States, South Africa and England.

His teammates Noor Ahmad, Mubeen Ur Rahman, Rahmanullah Gurbaz and teenager AM

Ghazanfar also play in multiple leagues across the world.

Similar caps exist elsewhere. Pakistan restricts centrally contracted players to two

overseas leagues outside the Pakistan Super League, while India does not allow its contracted male players to participate in any league abroad.

Bangladesh Cricket Board removes director Najmul Islam amid player boycott

NEWS DESK: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Thursday removed director Najmul Islam following protests from cricketers and in the best interest of the organisation "and that it would come into effect immediately."

The Daily Star reported. "The decision has been taken in accordance with the authority vested in the BCB President under Article 31 of the BCB Constitution and is aimed at ensuring the continued smooth and effective functioning of the Board's affairs," the statement read. "The Board remains fully committed to upholding the honour and dignity of all players under its jurisdiction."

"In this regard, the BCB hopes that all cricketers will continue to display the highest standards of professionalism and dedication to the betterment of Bangladesh cricket, and will do their utmost to

ensure continued participation in the Bangladesh Premier League," it added.

Until further notice, Bulbul will serve as the acting chairman of the finance committee that Islam was the chair of. Islam had said on Wednesday night that he believes national cricketers should be asked to return the "crores and crores of taka" that the BCB spends on them, ESPN Cricinfo reported.

The BCB officially distanced itself from Islam's comments and expressed its "sincere regret for remarks that may be deemed inappropriate, offensive, or hurtful." "The Bangladesh Cricket Board also makes it clear that it will take appropriate disciplinary action against any individual whose conduct or comments show disrespect towards cricketers or cause harm to the reputation and integrity of Bangladesh cricket."

Iran warns of retaliation if Trump strikes, US withdraws some personnel from bases

NEWS DESK: The United States is withdrawing some personnel from bases in the Middle East, a US official said on Wednesday, after a senior Iranian official said Tehran had warned neighbours it would hit American bases if Washington strikes.

With Iran's leadership trying to quell the worst domestic unrest the Islamic Republic has ever faced, Tehran is seeking to deter US President Donald Trump's repeated threats to intervene on behalf of anti-government protesters.

The UN Security Council is due to meet on Iran on Thursday at the request of the United States.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States was pulling some personnel from key bases in the region as a precaution given heightened regional tensions.

"All the signals are that a US attack is imminent, but that is also how this administration behaves to keep everyone on their toes."



Unpredictability is part of the strategy, a Western military official told Reuters later on Wednesday.

At the White House, however, Trump suggested he was

adopting a wait-and-see posture toward the crisis. Trump told report-

ers that he has been told that killings in the Iranian government's crackdown on the protests

were subsiding and that he believes there is currently no plan for large-scale executions.

Asked who told him that the killings had stopped, Trump described them as "very important sources on the other side".

The president did not rule out potential US military action, saying "we are going to watch what the process is" before noting that his administration had received a "very good statement" from Iran.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Wednesday, "there is no plan" by Iran to hang people, when asked about the anti-government protests. "There is no plan for hanging at all," the foreign minister told Fox News in an interview on the "Special Report with Bret Baier" show. "Hanging is out of the question," he said.

According to the Norway-based Iran Human Rights Society, hangings are common in Iranian prisons. Timing remains unclear. Two European officials said US military intervention could come in the next 24 hours. An Israeli official also said it appeared

Trump had decided to intervene, though the scope and timing remained unclear.

Qatar said it drew down from its Al Udeid air base, the biggest US base in the Middle East, were "being undertaken in response to the current regional tensions".

Three diplomats said some personnel had been told to leave the base, though there were no immediate signs of large numbers of troops being bussed out to a soccer stadium and shopping mall as took place hours before an Iranian missile strike last year.

Britain was also withdrawing some personnel from an air base in Qatar ahead of possible US strikes. The I-Paper newspaper reported. The British defence ministry had no immediate comment.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to intervene in support of protesters in Iran, where thousands of people have been reported killed in a crackdown on the unrest against clerical rule.

China asks firms to stop using US, Israeli cybersecurity software

NEWS DESK: Chinese authorities have told domestic companies to stop using cybersecurity software made by roughly a dozen US and Israeli due to national security concerns.

As trade and diplomatic tensions flare between China and the US and both sides vie for tech supremacy, Beijing has been keen to replace Western-made technology with domestic alternatives. The US companies whose cybersecurity software has been banned include Broadcom-owned VMware, Palo Alto Networks and Fortinet, while the Israeli companies include Check Point Software Technologies, the sources said.

Shares of Broadcom and Palo Alto Networks were down more than 1pc in premarket trading, while those of Fortinet

fell nearly 3pc. Washington allows Nvidia to send advanced AI chips to China with restrictions.

Chinese authorities expressed concern that the software could collect and transmit confidential information abroad, the sources said. They declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the situation. While the West and China have clashed over China's efforts to build up its semiconductor and artificial intelligence sectors, Chinese analysts have said Beijing has become increasingly concerned that any Western equipment could be hacked by foreign powers. It has therefore sought to replace Western computer equipment and word processing software. The country's largest cybersecurity providers include 360 Secu-

rity Technology and Neusoft.

Nvidia to send advanced AI chips. The US Commerce Department on Tuesday opened the door for Nvidia to sell advanced artificial intelligence chips in China with restrictions, following through on a policy shift announced last month by President Donald Trump. The change would permit Nvidia to sell its powerful H200 chips to Chinese buyers if certain conditions are met — including proof of "sufficient" US supply — while sales of its most advanced processors would still be blocked. However, uncertainty has grown over how much demand there will be from Chinese companies, as Beijing has been encouraging tech companies to use home-grown chips.

Chinese officials have informed some firms they would only approve buying H200 chips under special circumstances, such as development labs or university research, news website The Information reported on Tuesday, citing people with knowledge of the situation. The Information had previously reported that Chinese officials were calling on companies there to pause H200 purchases while they deliberated requiring them to buy a certain ratio of AI chips made by Nvidia rivals in China. In its official update on Tuesday, the US Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security said it had changed the licensing review policy for H200 and similar chips from a presumption of denial to handling applications case-by-case.



Pakistan hopes routine processing of US immigrant visas will resume 'soon' after internal review: FO

NEWS DESK: Pakistan on Thursday expressed hope that the United States would "soon" resume immigrant visa processing, adding that it viewed the recent suspension as part of an internal review.

The US on Wednesday announced the suspension of immigrant visa processing for Pakistan and 74 other countries, effective January 21, citing concerns that immigrants from these nations often rely on public welfare programmes.

In its statement, the State Department had said the "freeze will remain active until the US can ensure that new immigrants will not extract wealth from the American people". Responding to a query about the move despite Pakistan's improved relations with Washington in recent months, Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi acknowledged coming across the "reports".

"Basically, it was a brief statement by the US State Department on



their social media about the internal review of processing immigrant visas that they are in the process of," he said.

"We are in touch with the US authorities to ascertain further details. This is an evolving process that we are following." "We understand that this is an internal ongoing process of review of US immigration policies and system, and hope that the routine processing of immigrant visas will resume soon," the FO spokesperson

added. The visa processing suspension could delay travel, study, and work plans for thousands of Pakistanis who annually seek US visas. Pakistani consulates in the US are expected to provide guidance to affected applicants in the coming days.

The freeze is linked to the US public-charge rule, which evaluates whether immigrants are likely to rely on government assistance. While suspension of visa services have occurred in

the past, officials have termed the scope of this action unprecedented.

No timeline has been given for resuming visa services, but the State Department assured that countries would be notified once the review is complete. "Full confidence in Iranian people and their leadership" On the ongoing unrest in Iran and Tehran's heightened tensions with the US, the FO spokesperson said Pakistan was "closely following the developments".

Global unemployment 'stable' in 2026

NEWS DESK: The global unemployment rate is expected to hold steady in 2026, the United Nations said Wednesday, but cautioned the labour market's seeming stability belies a dire shortage of decent jobs.

The UN's International Labour Organization said the global economy and labour market appeared to have weathered recent economic shocks better than expected.

But the ILO warned that efforts to improve global job quality had stagnated, leaving hundreds of millions of workers wallowing in poverty, even as trade uncertainty risked cutting into workers' wages.

The global unemployment rate was estimated at 4.9 percent last year and the year before, and is now projected to remain at a similar level until 2027, a report from the UN labour agency said.

That amounts to



186 million people out of work this year, it said.

"Global labour markets look stable, but that stability is quite fragile," Caroline Fredrickson, head of the ILO's research department, told reporters, cautioning that the "apparent calm masks deeper and unresolved problems".

At a time when US President Donald Trump has slapped towering tariffs on friends and foes alike,

the report cautioned that disruptions caused by trade uncertainty, combined with ongoing long-term transformations in global trade, could significantly affect labour market outcomes.

Going forward, the ILO said its modelling suggested that a moderate increase in trade policy uncertainty "may reduce returns to labour and, as a consequence, real wages for both skilled

and unskilled workers across all sectors", especially in Southeast Asia, Southern Asia and Europe.

The potential of trade to generate new employment opportunities was also being challenged by the ongoing disruptions, the report said, pointing out that 465 million jobs globally depended on foreign demand through exports of goods and services and related supply chains in 2024.

Trump reiterates desire for Greenland following high-stakes meeting

NEWS DESK: US President Donald Trump reiterated on Wednesday that the United States needs Greenland and that Denmark cannot be relied upon to protect the island, even as he said that "something will work out" with respect to the future governance of the Danish overseas territory.

The remarks, which came after a high-stakes meeting between US, Danish and Greenlandic officials, indicate that there are still fundamental, if not intractable, differences between how Washington and Nuuk see the political future of the island.

"Greenland is very important for the national security, including of Denmark," Trump told reporters in the White House. "And the problem is there's not a thing that Denmark can do about it if Russia or China wants to occupy Greenland, but there's everything we can do. We didn't manage to change the American position,"

Rasmussen told reporters outside the Danish embassy in Washington. "It's clear that the president has this wish of conquering over Greenland."

Trump has not ruled out taking Greenland by force. Before the two-hour meeting, he argued on social media that Nato would become far more formidable and effective with



meet in the coming weeks.

Greenland "not for sale", Copenhagen and Nuuk say.

But they also made clear that Washington had not budged on its position that it must acquire Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark that is strategically located and rich in minerals. Rasmussen and Motzfeldt described such an outcome as an unacceptable breach of sovereignty.

You found that out last week with Venezuela," he said.

Greenland in the hands of the US. "Anything less than that is unacceptable," he wrote.

In recent weeks, he has frequently repeated the longstanding claims that acquiring Greenland is a national security imperative and that Denmark is not capable of warding off Russian and Chinese influence in the Arctic region.

Greenland and Denmark say the island is not for sale, that threats of force are reckless and security concerns should be resolved among allies. Prominent EU countries have backed Denmark, a member of the Nato alliance.

Ahead of the meeting, Greenland and Denmark said they had begun to increase their military presence in and around Greenland in close cooperation with Nato allies, as part of their promise to beef up Arctic defence.

plane landed at Nuuk airport and personnel in military fatigues disembarked, footage showed. The Danish military will support the preparation of exercise activity, according to the nation's Joint Arctic Command.

Germany, Sweden and Norway have also announced that they would send military personnel to the island. The increased military presence would include a range of exercise activities throughout 2026, according to the Danish defense ministry.

Avoiding a Zelensky moment at the White House

In their remarks to reporters, Rasmussen and Motzfeldt called the meeting respectful and emphasised that Denmark shared US concerns about Arctic security. But they firmly rejected the idea of the island becoming American.