

PM Shehbaz pats his team on the back

ISLAMABAD:(News Desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday took pride in his government's performance for "steering the country out of multiple crises" and evading bankruptcy with the help of friendly nations during its first year in power. "To meet the IMF's (International Monetary Fund) conditions, we have to arrange \$5 billion, which was impossible except we go to our friends, for which I and Gen Asim Munir went to them to get their financial assistance," said the prime minister while addressing a cabinet meeting in which he reviewed the one-year performance of the gov-

ernment. Lauding the performance of his cabinet members, the premier said that they took the challenge of saving the country from default. "...the government succeeded in achieving the economic turnaround and steering the country out of the financial straits," he said, while expressing resolve to make Pakistan a \$1 trillion economy by 2035. The prime minister, highlighting the government's efforts towards economic stability, expressed the confidence that the Rs400 billion tax cases pending for adjudication in various courts would be decided expeditiously. He underlined the need to plug Rs850 billion losses in-

currred by the state-owned enterprises, terming them as 'bottomless pits' that needed to be plugged. He also stressed the need to end circular debt in the power sector. He said the government had rolled out a Rs20 billion Ramazan package to benefit four million families through the digital wallet system, adding that each family would get Rs5,000 through a new system that discouraged financial mismanagement. The prime minister condemned the closure of the Gaza corridor for humanitarian assistance and said that more than 50,000 Palestinians had been martyred by Israel. He also highlighted the plight

of Kashmiri people, urging the international community to raise their voice for Kashmir and Palestine. Diplomatic isolation PM Shehbaz Sharif presents a book on one-year performance of the government by Planning minister Ahsan Iqbal and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, during a cabinet meeting in Islamabad, Mar 4, 2025. — PI-D On the occasion, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said the country's diplomatic isolation was over. Pakistan has become a member of the UNSC for 2025-26, he said, adding that after a gap of 27 years, multilateral international conferences like SCO were held in Pakistan.



PM Shehbaz Sharif presents a book on one-year performance of the government by Planning minister Ahsan Iqbal and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, during a cabinet meeting in Islamabad, Mar 4, 2025

Armed men block Makran highway, torch vehicles

GWADAR: (News Desk) Unknown armed men set fire to several vehicles, including gas armers, after blocking the Makran Coastal Highway (N-10) between Pasni and Ormara in Gwadar district late on Monday night. Officials said that a large group of armed men barricaded the Makola area of the highway and stopped passing vehicles for inspection. They seized several vehicles, including empty LPG tankers on their way back to Iran from Karachi, and set them ablaze. "Seven vehicles were torched, including six gas tankers and a Highway Police vehicle," SSP Highway Police Hafeez Baloch confirmed. He added that three tankers were completely burnt, while three others were damaged. The assailants also opened fire on three tankers, puncturing their tyres, before launching an attack on the Highway Police. During the attack, the gunmen raided a Highway Police checkpoint, snatched official weapons and disarmed patrolling officers. The attackers remained on the highway for over three hours.

Dar, UAE foreign minister reaffirm commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation



Islamabad:(News Desk) Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and United Arab Emirates (UAE) Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Wednesday reaffirmed their countries' commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation across all sectors.

Pakistan and the UAE share close diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties, strengthened by historical connections and a large Pakistani expatriate community in the Emirates.

The UAE is also one of Pakistan's largest trading partners in the Middle East and a major source of remittances, with thousands of Pakistanis working in various sectors. Both countries collaborate on defence, energy, and investment projects, with the UAE frequently providing financial aid and humanitarian assistance to Pakistan.

Dar, also the foreign minister, received a phone call from FM Nahyan, during which both leaders conveyed heartfelt Ramadan greetings to each other's leadership and citizens, the Associated Press of Pakistan reported. The two leaders also discussed the results of the Abu Dhabi crown prince's recent visit to Pakistan, where the two countries signed five accords of cooperation.

All 16 terrorists killed as security forces respond to Bannu Cantt attack: ISPR

Peshawar:(News Desk) All 16 terrorists were eliminated while five soldiers were martyred as security forces responded to yesterday's terrorist attack on the Bannu Cantonment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's namesake district, the military's media affairs wing said on Wednesday. Terrorists had rammed two explosives-laden vehicles into the perimeter of the Bannu Cantonment in an attempt to enter the high-security zone on Tuesday evening. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement today that "troops engaged the in-

truders with precision, eliminating all 16 terrorists, including four suicide bombers." "In the intense exchange of fire, five brave soldiers, after putting up a heroic resistance, embraced martyrdom in the line of duty," the ISPR added. Meanwhile, 13 civilians lost their lives while another 32 were injured as a result of a mosque and a residential building suffering "severe destruction" due to the suicide blasts causing the perimeter wall to partially collapse. Recalling the attack's details, the ISPR said a "cowardly terrorist attack was at-

tempted on Bannu Cantonment by khwarij elements". The government refers to the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates as Fitna al Khawarij. "The assailants sought to breach the cantonment's security; however, their nefarious designs were swiftly and decisively foiled by the vigilant and resolute response of Pakistan's security forces. In their desperation, the attackers rammed two explosive-laden vehicles into the perimeter wall," the ISPR said. "Displaying unwavering courage and professional excellence,

our valiant troops engaged the intruders with precision, eliminating all 16 terrorists, including four suicide bombers," the statement said, adding that five soldiers were martyred during the efforts. "The multiple suicide blasts resulted in the partial collapse of the perimeter wall, causing damage to the adjacent infrastructure. Tragically, a mosque and a civilian residential building in close proximity also suffered severe destruction, leading to the martyrdom of 13 innocent civilians and injuries to 32 others," the ISPR stated.



A blast in Balochistan's Khuzdar on Wednesday.

5 dead in market blast in Balochistan's Khuzdar: rescue service

Khuzdar:(News Desk) Five people died in a blast on Wednesday in a market in Balochistan's Khuzdar district, according to rescue service Edhi Foundation.

A statement from the organisation said several people were injured and five killed in a blast in Khuzdar's Naal Bazaar. It added that the casualties were moved to the hospital for treatment.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti strongly condemned the blast in a statement, adding that orders were issued to provide the injured with the best medical care available.

"Terrorism will be eradicated in all its forms," CM Bugti was quoted as saying. "Elements hostile to peace will fail in their nefarious objectives and those involved in this incident will be brought to justice."

Three universities in Islamabad in dire financial straits

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Three federally-chartered universities have been facing severe financial crunch, even finding it difficult to pay salaries and pensions, Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), International Islamic University Islamabad (IIU) and the Federal Urdu University of Science and Technology are suffering due to low funding from the Higher Education Commission (HEC). Sources said HEC and the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training had requested the government for a supplementary grant of Rs2.5 billion to resolve the issues of these universities. "Yes, we have moved a summary seeking Rs2.5 billion for QAU, Urdu university and IIUI," said Secretary Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani. He said these universities were in dire need of funds. HEC and Ministry of Federal Education request govt for a supplementary grant of Rs2.5bn to resolve issues on an urgent basis. "Hopefully, the funding issue would be resolved soon after approval from appropriate forums," he said. Meanwhile, sources in HEC said the higher education sector of the country was facing a shortfall of Rs60 billion. "Higher education sector has been facing a shortfall for the past several years...the sector faced a shortfall of Rs17.7 billion in 2018-19, which is continuously increasing," HEC Chairman Dr Mukhtar Ahmed told a National Assembly standing committee a few months ago.

Punjab notifies ban on early paddy sowing

LAHORE: (News Desk) Punjab has banned early sowing of paddy crop on the recommendation of an inquiry committee formed in the wake of farmers' complaints of poor yield leading to financial losses during the last crop year.

An official notification issued on Tuesday says the ban has been imposed under the Punjab Agriculture Pests Ordinance 1959 and warns of a strict action against the occupiers of land cultivating paddy nurseries before May 20, 2025. The law prescribes Rs50,000 fine and/or six-month jail term for violation of any provision or rules made under the ordinance. A communique sent to all divisional directors and deputy directors of agriculture (extension) says early paddy sowing is caused by some farmers' attempts to get two rice crops in a season and the practice is severally causing stress on the canal and subsoil water as well as damaging the climate and farmers equally. Move aims to stop farmers from getting two rice crops to avert water stress. The ban comes on the recommendation of an inquiry committee formed on the direction of the National Food Security & Research Ministry on complaints of paddy growers of low yield due to poor quality seed provided by the seed companies last season. The probe committee, led by Joint Secretary of the ministry Amjad Ahmad, with RRI, Kala Shah Kaku Principal Scientist Dr Muhammad Ijaz, Guard Agri Research & Services (Pvt) Ltd's Shehzad Ali Malik, Pakistan Kissan Ittehad President Khalid Khokhar, and Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD) DG Muhammad Azam Khan as its members was formed in September last year.

Malala makes first visit to hometown Barkana since being attacked

Barkana:(News Desk) Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai on Wednesday visited her hometown Barkana in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Shangla district for the first time since being shot by the Taliban in 2012. Malala was shot in the face by the Pakistani Taliban

when she was a 15-year-old schoolgirl, amid her campaigning for female education rights. Her activism earned her the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, and she has since become a global advocate for women's and girls' education rights. Her most recent visit to

Pakistan was in January when she spoke at a summit in Islamabad on girls' education in Muslim nations and emphasised that women living under the Taliban system were in a "gender apartheid". Malala, who belongs to Shangla, has been living in the United Kingdom since

October 2012. The Nobel laureate on Wednesday met her family members in Barkana and visited their ancestral graveyard. She also met with her uncle, Ramazan, who recently underwent surgery in Islamabad after suffering from heart problems.

Imran won't take deal, despite govt pressure, says Aleema

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Aleema Khan, the sister of PTI founder Imran Khan, has said her brother will not sign a deal with the government despite being "pressured to do so". While talking to reporters on Tuesday outside the Adiala Jail, where her brother is incarcerated, Ms Khan accused the government of "using all possible tactics" to pressurise her brother. "But Imran Khan has said that no matter what happens, he will not compromise and not sign a deal

with the government," she claimed. She also said that her brother was in good health and had no pain in his ear. A team of doctors who examined the PTI founder in prison on Monday claimed that he was feeling pain in his ear. The team of doctors from the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) was headed by ENT specialist Dr Altaf Hussain. Ms Khan said the rumours circulating on social media regarding the health of her brother were

baseless. She also dismissed the rumours that her brother was suffering from a brain infection. "Allah is protecting him," she said and claimed her brother was in good health. However, she said there were restrictions on her brother in prison, due to which he was unable to communicate with his personal doctor and family members. Ms Khan said that it was unfortunate that her brother was not being allowed to speak to his children and revealed that

PTI lawyers, led by Salman Akram Raja, will file a petition in this regard. While replying to a question, she said the verdict on PTI's appeal in the Al-Qadir case might be announced in a week or so. However, she claimed that some individuals were trying to delay the decision. She didn't give any more details or name anyone. While talking about cricket, Ms Khan said that her brother — former captain of the Pakistan cricket team — was not



pleased with the proposal to change the name of Peshawar's Arbab Niaz Stadium. He has demanded that the stadium not be renamed. Last week, it was reported that the PTI government in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa has decided to rename the stadium — currently named after Arbab Niaz, former federal minister for sports — to honour the former captain's role in shaping the nation's sports landscape.