



Danish Taimoor responds to 'mein Filhal Ayeza kay sath hun' controversy

Thursday 20 March 2025

PM launches countrywide drive to plant 41.7m saplings; urges nation's active participation

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN (AJK)

Under the campaign, 12.80 million saplings will be planted in Punjab, 10 million in Sindh, 6.93 million in KP, 2.062 million in Balochistan, 10.147 million in AJK and four million in Gilgit Baltistan. The main species to be planted include Kikar, Jand, Amaltas, Shisham, Sukh Chain, Phulai, Chir, Kall, Deodar, Peepal, Neem, Botul, Aman, Imli and Chilgoza.

The plantation will be carried out through around 2047 events to be held across the country to plant 41.7 million saplings comparing 40.526 million during the monsoon tree plantation of 2024.

The prime minister



said that considering the benefits of the plantation drive in all aspects, the entire nation, especially the youth and farmers, should play their part. "It will significantly contribute to the betterment of the environment and can help effectively address various diseases," he remarked. He

Hike in sugar price intolerable: DPM/ FM Dar

HUMA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday said that sale of sugar at prices of Rs178-180 per kg was intolerable and announced that the retail price of sugar would remain at Rs64 per kg while the ex-mill price would be capped under Rs59 per kg.

Announcing the major decisions after chairing a meeting to review sugar prices in a live broadcast on national TV channels, he said a sub-committee was being formed to submit recommendations within one month to address the persistent issue. The DPM/ FM said that the committee formed on the directive of the prime minister to look into the sugar issue, had held several meetings in the past, after its prices were hiked in the holy month of Ramadan. The DPM/ FM Dar said that sale of sugar at Rs178-180 per kg was not tolerable at any cost; neither to the prime minister nor to the government. A sub-committee headed by Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain would submit its report within one month prior to April 9 in this regard, he informed.

Opposition alliance calls All-Parties Conference after Eid

AYESHA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP), the alliance of opposition parties, has convened an All-Parties Conference after Eidul Fitr to discuss the political as well as law and order situations in the country. The alliance, at its meeting on Wednesday, invited all parties to the conference, barring the government. She And in order to buttress the alliance further and organise the anti-government movement, the TTAP also announced the formation of three sub-committees.

Former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaisrani was made the head of the coordination committee, Hamid Raza the head of the political committee, while the third committee was constituted to oversee arrangements for convening the All-Parties Conference. Latif Khosa, who was made the committee head, was assigned the task to approach other political parties for the purpose.

EU Ambassador calls on Commerce Minister, discusses business, trade cooperation

SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka, called on Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan to discuss strengthening bilateral trade ties and upcoming business engagements between the EU and Pakistan.

During the meeting, Dr. Kionka invited the Commerce Minister to deliver closing remarks at the European Union-



Another key highlight of the discussion was the launch of the EU-Pakistan Business Network (EUPBN) during the

Forum. This network, comprising of more than 300 EU companies operating in Pakistan, will serve as a unified voice of European businesses, fostering investment and trade relations.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan welcomed these initiatives and appreciated the EU's role in supporting economic cooperation.

He acknowledged that the growing engagement between Pakistan and the

EU will create stronger business ties and new investment opportunities.

The EU is Pakistan's second-largest trading partner and primary export destination, accounting for around €12 billion in bilateral trade in 2024.

The EU-Pakistan Business Forum will further deepen the long-standing economic and diplomatic partnership between Pakistan and the European Union.

KP govt launches Universal Digital Payment System for all types of transactions

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has taken a revolutionary step towards digital transformation by deciding to launch a Universal Digital Payment System for all types of transactions and business payments in the province. Branded as "Cashless Khyber Pakhtunkhwa", a comprehensive strategy has been devised to implement this system, assigning clear responsibilities with timelines to various departments, institutions, and district administrations. Under this system, digital payments will



the implementation, data collection will be carried out at the village council level, covering all shops, stalls, vendors, and kiosks. Under the Cashless Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Initiative, it will be mandatory for all businesses, public transport services, and commercial centers to display QR codes for digital payments. To ensure the effective imple-

mentation of the system, a robust regulatory framework will be enforced. A structured mechanism will be devised under the leadership of district administrations to guarantee the smooth execution of this initiative, complemented by an extensive public awareness campaign. Additionally, training programs and support services will be provided to both business owners and the general public.

For monitoring and evaluation purposes, a dashboard will be set up in partnership between the provincial government and mobile wallet

service providers. The Chief Minister's Secretariat, the Finance Department, the IT Board, the PMRU, and district administrations will oversee performance tracking and regular reporting. Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ail Amin Gandapur, has officially directed the implementation of the Cashless Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Initiative. A formal letter has been issued by the Chief Minister's Secretariat to the Chief Secretary, instructing all relevant departments and institutions to fulfill their responsibilities within the set timelines.

Govt announces Eidul Fitr holidays from March 31 to April 2

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: The government has announced a three-day holiday for Eidul Fitr from March 31 to April 2, according to a notification issued on Wednesday. The prime minister has been pleased to declare March 31 to April 2, 2025 (Monday to Wednesday) as public holidays in the occasion of Eidul Fitr, the press release by the Cabinet Division stated.

However, the announcement of the moon sighting will determine the date for Eidul Fitr celebrations across Pakistan. The Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee, along with zonal committees, will convene on the evening of March 30 (Sunday) to sight the moon of Shawwal, marking the potential end of Ramadan. The Pakistan Meteorological Department has said there is a good chance of sighting the new moon of Shawwal 1446 AH on the evening of March 30, according to a notification issued on March 7 and a copy of which is available with Dawn.com.

However, last month, the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission had forecasted that Ramadan would begin on March 2, while Eidul Fitr would be observed on March 31.

ISSI-PAIDAR commemorate Tunisia's Independence Day

KOMAL BUTT

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), on Wednesday organized an event to commemorate Tunisia's Independence Day. The event began with the national anthems of Pakistan and Tunisia – were moderated by Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA, said a press release.

Speakers included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI; Dorsaf Maaroufi, Charge d'Affairs of Tunisia to Pakistan; Javed Ahmed Umrani, Ambassador of Pakistan to Tunisia; Khalid Mahmood, Chairman MOEAI; and Chief Guest on the occasion was



resilience and leadership, he called for stronger trade, education, and cultural exchanges, advocating deeper people-to-people and business linkages. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to Africa, emphasizing that the future belongs to the Global South.

trade was valued at \$14 million in 2023-2024, he stressed the need to bring in the economic relationship at par with the excellent political ties between Pakistan and Tunisia. He also recognized Tunisia's active role in regional and global affairs, including its principled stance on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute at the Security Council during the term 2020-21. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood further highlighted convergent views of the two countries on a range of issues including the need for collective endeavors to combat Islamophobia. Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to deeper ties, he underscored the importance of expanding educational exchanges, academic and think-tank collaboration, strengthening trade and investment, and fostering cultural cooperation.

Ambassador Hamid Asghar reaffirmed

Pakistan's deep ties with Tunisia, rooted in shared history, faith, and culture. He recalled Pakistan's support for Tunisia's independence and Habib Bourguiba's message to Qaid-e-Azam in 1947. Highlighting the 'Engage Africa' policy, he outlined efforts to boost trade, agriculture, energy, and industry, including talks on a Preferential Trade Agreement. He stressed expanding economic ties beyond the \$13.58 million trade volume, citing opportunities in IT, pharmaceuticals, and tourism. He also emphasized Pakistan-Tunisia cooperation on global issues and Africa's economic potential, urging deeper engagement for mutual growth.

In her remarks, Ms Amina Khan highlighted Tunisia's struggle for sovereignty and Pakistan's historic support for its decolonization. She emphasized

upcoming FITA 2025 forum as opportunities to enhance trade and investment. She concluded by reaffirming Tunisia's commitment to strengthening collaboration with Pakistan.

Secretary of State Javed Ahmed Umrani emphasized Pakistan-Tunisia's longstanding ties, recalling Pakistan's support for Tunisia's Independence Day. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, in his vote of thanks, said that as we celebrate Tunisia's 99th Independence Day.



Pakistan team reach Auckland for must-win third T20I on Friday

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan have departed Dunedin for Auckland as they prepare for the third T20I against New Zealand on Friday.

The national squad will hold a practice session at Eden Park from 2 PM to 5 PM local time as they look to recover from back-to-back losses in the series.

Third T20I in the series will take place on Friday March 21. Pakistan's struggles continued in the second T20I after failing to defend 135 in a rain-shortened 15-over contest.

New Zealand's openers, Tim Seifert and Finn Allen, launched a rapid 66-run stand, setting the tone for a dominant chase.

Seifert's 45 off 22 balls ended when Mohammad Ali claimed his maiden T20I wicket, while Allen smashed 38 off 16 before falling to Jahandad Khan.

Pakistan made brief inroads, dismissing Mark Chapman (1) and Jimmy Neesham (14), but a steady 35-run partnership



between Daryl Mitchell and Mitchell Hay kept New Zealand on course. Harris Rauf removed Mitchell (14), yet Michael Bracewell and Hay sealed the win with 11 balls to spare.

Pakistan's batting woes continued with early wickets once again derailing their innings.

Captain Salman Ali Agha and Irfan Khan built a 31-run stand before Ish Sodhi's double strike in the seventh over removed Irfan (11) and Khushdil Shah (2), leaving Pakistan struggling at 52-4.

Agha fought back with a 38-ball 46, supported by Shadab

Khan's 24, but their dismissals exposed the lower order. A late 22-run cameo from Shaheen Afridi pushed the total to 135, which proved insufficient.

With the series slipping away, Pakistan will aim for a turnaround in Auckland to keep their chances alive.

Babar Azam drops in latest T20I rankings

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: New Zealand's dominant start to their T20I series against Pakistan has propelled several of their players up the latest ICC Men's T20I player rankings.

The Black Caps secured a 2-0 lead in the five-match series, with their revamped top order and bowling attack making an impact.

Tim Seifert and Finn Allen, who provided aggressive starts in both games, have been rewarded in the latest rankings update.

Seifert jumps 20 spots to joint 13th among T20I batters following scores of 44 and 45, while Allen climbs eight places to 18th after innings of 29 and 38.

Australia's Travis Head continues to lead the T20I batting rankings, with India's Abhishek Sharma and England's Phil Salt following.

Pakistan's Babar Azam dropped a spot to No. 8 after he was dropped from the squad for the New Zealand T20I-leg of the tour.

In the bowling rankings, Jacob Duffy reaches a career-high rating, moving up 23 places to 12th overall after claiming six



wickets in the first two matches. Pakistan's Harris Rauf, who picked up two wickets in the second game, rises four places to 26th.

West Indies spinner Akeal Hosein remains the top-ranked T20I bowler.

Meanwhile, changes in the latest ODI rankings reflect performances in the ongoing ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 in Windhoek.

Netherlands spinner Aryan Dutt moves up two places to joint 33rd among ODI bowlers after successive three-wicket hauls against Namibia, while his teammate Paul van Meekeren climbs six spots to 61st after a three-wicket spell in their latest match.

Pakistan's Shaheen Afridi remains steady at No. 9.

Namibia's Gerhard Erasmus also sees gains, breaking into the top 10 ODI all-rounders after a four-wicket performance against Canada.

He also registered a half-century against the Netherlands last week, moving up two places to joint 10th.

Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai retains the top spot in the all-rounders rankings.

New Zealand will look to maintain their momentum in the remaining T20I matches against Pakistan, while the World Cup League fixtures continue to shape the ODI rankings.



LAHORE: CEO Lahore Qalandars Ch Ayaz presents bat to his counterpart after signing the memorandum at local hotel in Provincial Capital here on Wednesday.

Agha Salman stresses urgent improvements after Pakistan's defeat

RIZWAN HAIDER

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan cricket team continued to struggle in the ongoing T20I series as New Zealand clinched an impressive five-wicket victory in the rain-affected second match at Dunedin, extending their lead to 2-0 in the five-match series.

Following the defeat in the second T20I, Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha acknowledged the team's shortcomings and emphasized the need for greater consistency in all departments. "I believe our batting showed some improvement compared to the Christchurch game," he said and added, "However, we still need to finish better. Our fielding was outstanding, and there were positive spells in our bowling, but



we must be more consistent overall." Agha pointed out that adjusting to the conditions in New Zealand remains a key challenge for the team. "The bounce here is quite

different from what we are accustomed to back home. Once we adapt to it properly, I am confident we will perform better," he added. Pakistan's biggest setback came during the

Powerplay, where their bowlers conceded 66 runs in just five overs, allowing New Zealand to take early control of the chase. While praising his bowlers' efforts later in the innings,

Boxing champion Imane Khelif targets second Olympic gold in LA

KOMAL BUTT

ISLAMABAD: Imane Khelif, who won Paris Olympics boxing gold amid gender-eligibility row, is determined to defend her title at the 2028 Los Angeles Games and says she will not be intimidated by US President Donald Trump.

Trump signed an executive order banning transgender women from female sports in the United States last month and called Khelif "a male boxer" in his speech after signing the order.

"I will give you a straightforward answer, I am not transgender," she told ITV in an interview. "This does not concern me, and it does not intimidate me."

The International Olympic Committee's executive board recommended boxing's inclusion in the 2028 Games on Monday and Khelif said she dreamed of retaining her title in California.

"Second gold medal, of course. In America, Los Angeles (will) defend with everything this gold medal," she said.

"I believe that if the old Imane operated at 50 per cent of her potential, then



the Imane Khelif of today is even more motivated and determined."

Khelif was disqualified by the International Boxing Association at the 2023 world championships after a test that the body said rendered her ineligible to fight as a woman on the grounds of gender.

The IBA lost its Olympic recognition over governance issues, however, and the International Olympic Committee cleared Khelif to compete in Paris, aggressively defending its position after heavy criticism.

A rival body to the IBA, World Boxing, was given provisional recognition at the international governing body of the sport last month.

The recommendation still requires final approval

by the IOC at its session in Greece and outgoing President Thomas Bach said he was confident the session would approve it.

"At this point, I can say that the IBA is a thing of the past," Khelif said. "As we say in Algeria, those who have nothing to hide should have no fear."

The debate over the inclusion of transgender athletes and athletes with Differences of Sexual Development (DSD) in women's sport has been a key issue in the IOC presidential race, with the elections set for Thursday.

"I hope the next president of the IOC leads with true sportsmanship, stays committed to Olympic principles, and upholds the values of fair play," Khelif said.

Pakistan's Test captain Shan Masood joins Leicestershire club for 2025 season

MUHAMMAD USMAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Test captain Shan Masood has signed an all-format deal with Leicestershire for the 2025 county season. The 35-year-old opener, who led Pakistan to a Test series win against England last year, is set to bring experience and quality to Grace Road.

Masood will join the Foxes in May following the conclusion of the Pakistan Super League, with his debut expected on May 31 against his former club, Derbyshire. His move marks the end of his tenure with Yorkshire, where he captained the side under a two-year contract from 2023. Masood played a



key role in Yorkshire's promotion to Division One in 2024, scoring 1,240 County Championship runs at an aver-

age of 53.91 in 15 matches. Before Yorkshire, he had a standout 2022 season with Derbyshire, amassing 1,078 first-class runs

at an average of 82.61, including consecutive double centuries. Capped 90 times by Pakistan across all formats, including 42 Test appearances, Masood joins club captain Peter Handscomb and Netherlands allrounder Logan van Beek as Leicestershire's overseas signings. His availability is expected throughout the season, as Pakistan currently has no scheduled Test matches in England during the summer.

However, he could be recalled for a limited-over tour of the Caribbean starting July 31, though his last white-ball appearance for Pakistan came in May 2023.

Wilkinson Sword Intuition Partners with Women's Rugby World Cup 2025

ZAHID YAQOUB KHAWAJA

ISLAMABAD: World Rugby has announced Wilkinson Sword Intuition as the Official Shaving Partner for Women's Rugby World Cup 2025. The partnership highlights the brand's dedication to supporting major sporting events while promoting the growth and visibility of women's sports on a global scale.

As a leading name in women's shaving and personal care, Wilkinson Sword Intuition aims to celebrate the power, determination, and individuality of women's values that align closely with the spirit of the Women's Rugby World Cup. The company's shaving range, designed specifically for women, supports a diverse approach to personal care, much like rugby embraces dif-



ferent skills and strengths on the field. The sponsorship represents a significant marketing investment for Wilkinson Sword Intuition.

The brand plans to engage with its target audience of women aged 25-44 through an extensive digital, social media, and retail campaign. Fans will also have the chance to win tickets to the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 final, set to take place at Twickenham Stadium on September 27, 2025. Sarah Massey, Managing Director of Women's Rugby World Cup 2025, expressed excitement over the collaboration, stating, "We're delighted to welcome Wilkinson Sword Intuition as the Official Shaving Partner for Women's Rugby World Cup 2025. Their commitment to amplifying the tournament through their extensive marketing approach aligns with our mission to increase the visibility of women's rugby and reach new audiences."

Legislative Delays and Judicial Reforms Take Center Stage Amid Gridlock

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: Concerns over irregularities and procedural delays took center stage as the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice convened today to discuss the leadership of Senator Farooq Hamid Naek. The meeting, intended to deliberate on key legislative bills, was overshadowed by the committee's strong reservations about the delay in notifying Senator Hamid Naek's nomination to the Board of Governors of the Legal Aid and Justice Authority. Chairman Naek issued directives for immediate notification and demanded updates on the progress, highlighting inefficiencies in the process. Additionally, significant constitutional amendments faced failure to provide necessary input. The Constitution (Amendment)

Bill, 2024, introduced by Senator Khalida Ateeb, was deferred due to a lack of support from the Khayber Pakhtunkhwa government and pending responses from other provinces. Similarly, a proposed amendment by Senator Muhammad Abdul Qadir concerning Article 27 and quota regulations was put on hold as the committee sought to review Supreme Court judgments on time limitations for quotas. The proposal to create a new province of South Punjab, brody forward by Senator Aamir Abbas, was also deferred, with the committee emphasizing the need for a comprehensive national policy backed by input from all provinces. Despite these setbacks, the committee successfully passed the Civil Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2025, introduced by Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam

Nazeer Tarar. The bill, already approved by the National Assembly, seeks to alleviate the growing burden of litigation on the Islamabad High Court by enabling district courts to handle certain appeals. Senator Tarar underscored the urgency of this amendment, citing a surge in property valuations exceeding twenty-five hundred thousand rupees, which has significantly increased the number of appeals filed against civil court decisions. Further discussions revolved around the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2024, proposed by Senators Munzoor Ahmed and Danesh Kumar. This amendment, aiming to revise Article 51 of the Constitution, was scrutinized in light of the 2023 population census, which revealed stark geographical concentrations of minor-

ity communities. The findings indicated that while the Christian community predominantly resides in Punjab, the Hindu community is largely based in Sindh. Concerns were raised over the challenges of designating each province as a single constituency for minority reserved seats. The committee advised further analysis of the population data before proceeding, while the bill's movers requested additional time to refine their proposal. The meeting was attended by Senators Farid Ali Zaman, Amsha Rahman, Ahmad Khan, Shahada Awan, Kamran Murtaa, Khalil Tahir, Muhammad Abdul Qadir, Zakir Hussain Ghumro, Danesh Kumar, Khalida Ateeb, and Aon Abbas. Also present were State Minister Barrister Aqeel Malik and representatives from relevant departments.

Strengthening Pakistan-Spain Trade & Cultural Ties!

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Diplomatic Affairs Miss Shumaila Siddiqui, Member Nasir Mehmood along with Co-Convenor and SVP Tayab Saeed had a fruitful meeting at the Embassy of Spain with H.E. Mr. Jeos, Ambassador of Spain, and Ms. Cristina Lou Economic & Commercial Attache. Discussions focused on a trade delegation and economic exchange program in H.E. Mr. Jeos welcoming the initiative, noting it's



the first time a business community has approached them for such collaboration. We also explored cultural exchange, including the Spanish Flamenco show to Pakistan. Exciting opportunities ahead!

Grimby Church Hosts Heartwarming Multi Faith Iftar, Bridging Faiths and Building Community Bonds

REPORT / WAJIBA TAMSEEL
ISLAMABAD: In a powerful display of unity and interfaith harmony, a Grimby church opened its doors to host an iftar dinner, bringing together people of all faiths and backgrounds to break the fast during Ramadan. Hosted by Zakia Kamal,



diverse communities with Grimby. The gathering was a resounding success, attracting prominent figures including Mayor Councillor Jane Goodwin, MP Melanie Ann Chief Superintendent Paul French of the Police, local councillors, and representatives from all faith and communities.

Gender Budgeting Disparities Spark Debate as Lawmakers Push for Equal Development Funds

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Disparities in gender budgeting and unequal allocation of development funds came under scrutiny as parliamentarians, civil society representatives, and academics convened to discuss gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). Concerns were raised over the neglect of female voters, financial dependency among women, and the limited access to healthcare and education, especially for divorced women. The lack of ownership rights and gender disparities in constituency development funds were also flagged, with calls for urgent intervention at the Prime Minister's Office. The Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) of the National Assembly, led by Secretary Dr. Shahida Rehmani,

hosted a strategic session on gender-responsive budgeting at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS). The session, titled "Federal Budget FY2025-26: Promoting Gender-Responsive Budgeting," was moderated by constitutional expert Mr. Zafarullah Khan and organized in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The discussion aimed to integrate gender-focused financial planning into national policies to fulfill Pakistan's commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In her opening remarks, Dr. Shahida Rehmani highlighted the WPC's efforts in crafting the Gender-Responsive Budgeting Strategy 2023, a roadmap for insti-

tutionalizing gender considerations in public budgeting. Barrister Aqeel Malik, MNA, provided updates on the Gender Mainstreaming Committee, now under the leadership of MNA Dr. Nafisa Shah. He detailed ongoing consultations with government departments to embed gender-responsive budgeting into policy frameworks. The committee is also analyzing gender-based budget data to set priorities for the Federal Budget FY2025-26 and advocating for equal development funds for MNAs on Reserved Seats. During the session, MNA Keso Mal Khaal Das underscored the multiple roles of women in society—ranging from homemakers to labor force contributors and public representatives. He stressed the necessity of addressing their economic struggles

through inclusive financial planning. Syeda Noosheen Iftikhar, President of the Young Parliamentarians Forum (YPF), voiced concerns over the systemic challenges faced by women in her constituency, particularly the underrepresentation of female voters and the socio-economic disparity between divorced women. MNA Dr. Nafisa Shah elaborated on the committee's recent strides, including official communications with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning & Development to incorporate gender-responsive measures into the upcoming budget. She highlighted disparities in development funding and emphasized the need for immediate government action to ensure equitable financial distribution.

IOC session celebrates olympic agenda achievements

MUHAMMAD HARIS
ATHENS Greece: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is celebrating the achievements of its Olympic Agenda reforms at the 144th IOC Session in Greece. Today IOC members gathered to mark the progress made since the introduction of the



highlighted the key achievements of the reforms showcasing the ideologies that threaten the Olympic community. The celebrations also included a 30-minute film featuring powerful testimonials from individuals, personalities, and organizations that have benefited from the changes.

Crucial Editorial

Army Chief Delivers Strong Warning to Fitna Al Khwarij

Abdul Basit Alvi
The TTP's ideology is rooted in a radical interpretation of Islam that rejects the legitimacy of the Pakistani state, its leaders, and its laws. This uncompromising stance has led to the original Khwarij, who viewed any compromise with rulers as apostasy. The rise of Khwarij-inspired groups in Pakistan has had a profound impact on the country's security, social fabric, and political landscape. Pakistan has faced a relentless wave of attacks from militant groups adhering to Khwarij-like ideologies. Suicide bombings, assassinations, and assaults on schools, mosques, and markets have become frequent, resulting in the loss of thousands of innocent lives. The TTP, in particular, has been responsible for many of these attacks. Sectarian violence has escalated in various regions of Pakistan, with militant groups orchestrating violence on religious sites, mosques, and individuals. This violence has deepened sectarian divisions and endangered the lives of innocent Pakistanis. The TTP's tribal areas, especially in North and South Waziristan, have long served as sanctuaries for militant groups, including those influenced by Khwarij ideology. The absence of effective governance, along with historical marginalization, has made these regions ideal breeding grounds for extremist groups. A defining characteristic of Khwarij-inspired groups is their rejection of the Pakistani government or its institutions, often calling

for the establishment of a caliphate based on their interpretation of Islamic law. This ideology erodes the authority of the state and challenges the political and legal framework, making governance more challenging. In Pakistan, this ideology is inspired by Khwarij ideology, such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS, and others, who have carried out numerous deadly terrorist attacks. These attacks have targeted civilians, security forces, government institutions, and religious minorities. The TTP's ideology is characterized by fear and instability. Although not directly carried out by a Khwarij group, the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on December 27, 2007, is often linked to extremist factions that hold radical ideologies similar to those of the Khwarij. Bhutto's leadership and political views were seen as a threat by many extremists who opposed her vision of an Islamic state. The attack occurred during a rally in Rawalpindi, when a gunman shot and killed Bhutto, followed by a suicide bombing that killed dozens of her supporters. The Taliban, especially the TTP, claimed responsibility for the assassination, interpreting the event as retaliation for Bhutto's secular stance and her alleged ties to the West. Although the TTP's ideology is more complex, it often echoes the Khwarij legacy of rejecting established authority and leadership. On March 3, 2009, a

group of militants, reportedly linked to the TTP, claimed the Sri Lanka national cricket team's bus in Lahore. The attack killed six Pakistani police officers and wounded several players. The TTP took responsibility, citing their desire to target Pakistani government forces, whom they viewed as complicit in the fight against Afghan Taliban insurgents. The timing and execution of the attack underscored the growing violence driven by groups influenced by Khwarij-like ideologies, aiming to destabilize Pakistan by attacking its civilian and national institutions. One of the most devastating terrorist incidents in Pakistan's modern history occurred on December 16, 2014, when seven gunmen stormed the Army Public School in Peshawar, killing at least 141 people, including 132 children. The attackers specifically targeted students and teachers, many of whom were the children of military personnel, in retaliation for Pakistan's military operations against the Taliban in Waziristan against the TTP. This horrific massacre mirrored the Khwarij-like approach of targeting innocent civilians to send a political message. The TTP's uncompromising ideology, which rejects any form of compromise with the state, is reminiscent of the Khwarij's original violent actions against those they considered enemies of their religious cause. The attack shocked Pakistan and spurred the nation's efforts to combat terrorism. On August 8, 2016, a suicide bomber targeted a gathering of lawyers at the Civil Hospital in Quetta, Balochistan, killing at least 70 people and injuring more than 100. The bombing was followed by a second suicide

bombing that targeted residents and bystanders. ISIS claimed responsibility, reflecting their radical ideology, which shares many similarities with the Khwarij, particularly in terms of their strict interpretations of Islam and rejection of authority. This attack, along with many others attributed to ISIS and its affiliates, highlights the spread of Khwarij-inspired ideology in Pakistan. ISIS has taken responsibility for several attacks across the country, targeting civilians, military institutions, and religious minorities. General Asim Munir, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Pakistan, has become a key figure in the country's ongoing battle against terrorism and extremism. His leadership has been essential in taking the fight against terrorism through some of the most severe security challenges, including the elimination of groups influenced by Khwarij ideology. General Munir assumed the role of COAS on November 29, 2022, following General Qamar Javed Bajwa. A highly experienced military officer, General Munir has held several critical positions in the Pakistan Army, including Director-General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Director-General of Military Intelligence (DGMI). His deep expertise in national security, intelligence gathering, and counterterrorism operations uniquely positions him to lead Pakistan's defense forces amid an increasingly volatile security landscape. Upon taking office, General Munir faced multiple challenges, including rising tensions with neighboring countries, internal political instability, and an escalating security threat from terrorist organizations. Among the most significant threats was to tack-

le the militant groups inspired by Khwarij ideology, which has long plagued Pakistan. Pakistan's security forces have been engaged in combatting these groups for years, but the growing influence of Khwarij-inspired extremism has presented a serious challenge to national security. Since taking office, General Munir has adopted a clear and firm approach to combating terrorism and extremism, particularly from groups rooted in Khwarij-like ideologies. His approach combines military operations, intelligence-based counterterrorism strategies, and efforts to foster national unity by escalating the fight against extremism. A key objective for General Munir has been ensuring that the Pakistan Army is well-equipped to tackle the escalating threat from terrorist groups, including those influenced by Khwarij ideology. Under his leadership, the Pakistan Army has intensified its operations in tribal areas, particularly in South Waziristan, where militant groups have long been active. In recent years, military operations such as Zarb-e-Azad (2014) and Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017) have played a key role in dismantling the networks of militant groups like the TTP. Additionally, the intelligence-based Operation Azm-e-Istehkam has been instrumental in General Munir has stressed the importance of maintaining these operations with precision and ensuring coordination among various branches of the military's intelligence agencies, and local law enforcement. Under his leadership, the Pakistan Army has also intensified efforts to combat cross-border terrorism, particularly from Afghanistan, where the TTP has found refuge. General Munir's office

on securing Pakistan's borders and preventing militant groups from Afghanistan as a launching point for attacks has been vital in reducing the violence and instability caused by the financing of terrorist groups. As a former head of Pakistan's intelligence agencies, General Munir understands the crucial role intelligence plays in countering terrorism. His leadership has supported initiatives to rehabilitate former militants and prevent the recruitment of youth into extremist groups. The de-radicalization programs led by General Munir focus on engaging religious scholars, community leaders, and youth organizations to promote a moderate interpretation of Islam. Through promoting religious tolerance and dialogue, the Pakistani military aims to reduce the appeal of groups like the TTP and ISIS, which often target vulnerable young people with promises of a utopian Islamic state. General Munir has also focused on strengthening Pakistan's ties with mainstream religious scholars and institutions by Khwarij ideology. With state guidance, religious institutions in Pakistan have been encouraged to issue fatwas (religious decrees) that denounce terrorism and violence carried out in the name of Islam. These efforts seek to reshape the conversation surrounding religion and politics, promoting values of peace, tolerance, and unity over division and violence. A key element of General Asim Munir's leadership has been his outspoken opposition to extremism. He has consistently condemned the use of violence by militant groups, making it clear that

President reaffirms commitment to defeat terrorism, ensure sustainable peace, development in Balochistan

PEAK POINT
QUETTA: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday reaffirmed the government's resolve to defeat terrorist elements at all cost and ensure sustainable peace and development in Balochistan.

Chairing a meeting on the law and order situation in Balochistan, the president underscored the threat posed by the terrorists who wanted to divide the nation.

The meeting was attended by Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Acting Governor Balochistan Captain (ret'd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, IG Police Moazzam Jah Ansari and other high officials.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti briefed the meeting on the law and order situation in the province.

"The situation is clear, the state will continue to exist and we will have to win war against terrorism," the president remarked.

He emphasized that the government will provide latest weapons to the anti-terrorism wing.

Balochistan is close to our hearts and we want peace and sustainable development in the province, the president added.

He said the government wanted to see every child of Balochistan enrolled in the schools.

It is the need of the hour to make the children aware of the modern technology, President Zardari added.



QUETTA: President Asif Zardari chairing a meeting on the law and order situation in Balochistan.

Khawaja Asif signals possible action in Afghanistan to pursue terrorists

ARSHAD MALIK

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has indicated that Pakistan may conduct operations in Afghanistan to target terrorists.

Speaking to a private channel, the defence minister said, "If we have to go after Pakistan's enemies in any country, we will do so."

He emphasized that Pakistan can take strong action against forces that provide safe havens to hostile elements. The banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Khawaja Asif accused the Afghan government of supporting TTP terrorists. He further claimed that during the tenure of former prime minister Imran Khan, the TTP was brought back to the region in order to establish a private militia, which he said harmed the country's internal security.

Asif also mentioned that the National Action Plan (NAP) already exists



and is now being reinstated to eliminate terrorism effectively.

The Parliamentary Committee on National Security on Tuesday approved a unanimous declaration, reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering commitment to eradicating terrorism in all its forms and vowing decisive action against elements threatening national stability.

The country's top civil and military leadership reiterated this commitment during the first committee meeting under the incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led coalition government. However, the meeting was boycotted by the key opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), among others.

The committee emphasized that no institution, individual or group acting in collusion with hostile forces would be allowed to undermine Pakistan's peace and stability. While expressing regret over the absence of some opposition members, an official statement said that consultations on the matter would continue.

The in-camera session, chaired by National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, key federal ministers, parliamentarians and senior military officials. The military leadership provided a detailed briefing on the prevailing security situation, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P).

The meeting was informed about ongoing counterterrorism operations, recent threats and the state's comprehensive strategy to ensure internal security.

NA informed of costs spent on handling protests in Islamabad's Red Zone

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday submitted in the National Assembly (NA) details of the expenditures incurred on dealing with the protest demonstrations at Islamabad's Red Zone during the past five years.

As per these details, the government spent Rs105,550,000 in the year, 2019-2020 for transporting the Pakistan Army, Rangers, FC and police personnel from their barracks to the checkpoints to deal with protesters.

Likewise, in the same year, Rs2,211,000 were spent on the provision of food items to these personnel, thus putting the total expenditures incurred at Rs107,761,000.

The expenditures stood at Rs96,135,599 in the year, 2020-21; at Rs27,948,000 in the year,

2021-22; at Rs724,031,000 in the year, 2022-23, and Rs100,000,000 in the year, 2023-24.

Also on Wednesday, the interior minister submitted in the NA in writing details of the damage caused to the Margalla Hills National Park due to frequent incidents of fire.

The House was informed that total 57 incidents of fire were reported from the forest in three years. "76 such incidents took place in the year, 2021; nine in 2023, and 22 in 2024."

The report said 117 acres of the Margalla Hills were burnt due to the fires in 2022. 20 acres of land was destroyed in 2023, and 130 acres of land was destroyed in 2024.

The Capital Development Authority (CDA), in the last three years, had planted saplings in the affected areas of the forest to make up for the damage.

Islamabad spends over Rs724mln on protest prevention & red zone security in 2022-23

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior, Senator Tahk Chaudhry, revealed that a total of Rs724 million was spent on protest prevention and Red Zone security in Islamabad during the fiscal year 2022-23. He shared these details while addressing the National Assembly's Question Hour on Wednesday.

According to Senator Chaudhry, in 2019-20, the government spent Rs150 million on Red Zone security, a significantly lower amount compared to 2022-23, due to fewer protests. For the current fiscal year, an additional grant of Rs100 million has been



allocated for Red Zone security.

He explained that security expenditures generally fall under two categories including movement, food, and accommodation of security forces and procurement of containers used to block roads and prevent unlawful gatherings.

Chaudhry stated that 2022-23 saw the highest security expenditure in

the past five years due to the large number of protests and sit-ins in the capital. He emphasized that if opposition parties had protested within legal boundaries, these expenses could have been avoided and used for public welfare instead.

Dr Mehreen Razaq Bhutto raised a question in the House regarding the total security costs for protests in the last five years. Responding to a supplementary question by Senator Shehar Kamran, Chaudhry clarified that empty containers are legally procured by the administration for security purposes, with proper payments made to the respective companies.

BISP, World Bank discuss collaboration on skill development and cybersecurity

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, held a meeting with World Bank Country Director Mr. Najy Benhassine at the BISP Headquarters to explore avenues of collaboration on skill development and the re-certification of BISP Registration Centres.

During the discussion, Senator Rubina Khalid underscored the importance of the Skill Development Programme in empowering BISP beneficiary families by alleviating poverty and promoting financial independence.

According to security sources, the high-level flag meeting was held at the Afghan Customs House near the border on Wednesday, where both sides endorsed the decisions of the Pak-Afghan Jirga.

Under the agreement, cargo vehicles will now be allowed to cross, while Afghan patients in urgent need of treatment will also be granted passage.

However, pedestrian movement will remain suspended for two more days due to technical issues in the Torkham information system.

On February 21, tensions escalated when Afghan forces began unauthorised construction near the Torkham border, prompting Pakistan to suspend all cross-border movement.

Two days later, on February 23, Pakistani police officials confirmed the closure, citing the construction of trenches by Afghan authorities as the key reason. The closure halted trade and pedestrian movement, leaving trucks stranded and families relocating for safety. A Pak-Afghan Jirga on March 17 made a major breakthrough.

He lauded that current



cal expertise of BISP field staff.

Additionally, Senator Rubina Khalid sought the World Bank's support in strengthening BISP's IT and cybersecurity framework.

In response, Mr. Najy Benhassine assured the World Bank's full cooperation in assisting BISP in digital transformation and cybersecurity enhancement.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to strengthening collaboration between BISP and the World Bank to ensure effective service delivery and capacity building for the welfare of underprivileged communities.

Fawad questions PTI's labeling as terrorists, calls for national unity

SEHRISH NAZ

LAHORE: Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry has stated that if former prime minister Imran Khan and his party members were considered terrorists, then there is nothing left to discuss. Speaking to the media outside the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC), Fawad Chaudhry recalled that during the National Security Committee meeting, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur questioned who should be classified as a terrorist.

He pointed out that the majority of cases being heard in ATCs involve PTI members. If a party that secured 70 per cent of the votes was deemed terrorist, then it implied that Pakistan itself was being labeled as such.

He lamented that cur-



questioned the narrative being promoted by the government.

He also expressed concern over the message sent to the world by the recent National Security Committee meeting, suggesting that instead of partisan politics, a national government should be formed to move Pakistan forward.

Meanwhile, the Lahore ATC extended Fawad Chaudhry's interim bail in five cases. His lawyer argued that multiple FIRs had been filed for the same incident and urged the court to merge them. The court was informed that Fawad Chaudhry's trial had already begun in Faisalabad.

After reviewing the case, the court extended his interim bail until April 16 and adjourned the hearing.

Minister directs to make motorways automated with AI & enhance surveillance

MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday issued directives to make all motorways automated, enhance monitoring and surveillance by ensuring road safety including M-tag and other key measures.

Presiding over a joint meeting of the National Highway Authority (NHA) and the Motorways and Highways Police, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that it should be mandatory for all commercial vehicles before coming on the Motorways

to undergo physical fitness check. Similarly, no bus should operate on highways without the necessary certification. Additionally, overloading of commercial vehicles will not be tolerated under any circumstances, said a press release. The Motorway Police has been directed to ensure strict checks on buses and where ever passenger numbers exceed the limit, the bus should be offloaded at that same location. The minister further stated that within the next three months, the licenses of all existing commercial drivers will be re-verified. To ensure public awareness

about these policies, the NHA and the Motorway Police will launch separate media campaigns for their effective promotion, he added. Abdul Aleem Khan also instructed the IG of Motorways and Highways Police to personally meet with transporters and take them into confidence about the new measures.

The minister emphasized that making national highways safer is a top priority. He added that as long as officers remain active, improvements will also continue. Abdul Aleem Khan highlighted that the recent actions taken by the NHA have not

only resulted in an increase in revenue but have also led to a reduction in incidents of over speeding on the Motorways. He directed the Secretary for Communications, Chairman NHA and the Inspector General of Motorway Police to establish monitoring cells in their respective offices under an integrated system where data and videos of each Motorway and Highway can be accessed with the one click of a button. He also emphasized the use of Artificial Intelligence and advanced technology in this regard.

BY-NEWS DESK
TORKHAM: After 25 days of closure due to border tensions, Pakistan and Afghanistan have successfully reopened the Torkham trade route following a successful flag meeting between security officials of both nations.

According to security sources, the high-level flag meeting was held at the Afghan Customs House near the border on Wednesday, where both sides endorsed the decisions of the Pak-Afghan Jirga.

Under the agreement, cargo vehicles will now be allowed to cross, while Afghan patients in urgent need of treatment will also be granted passage.

However, pedestrian movement will remain suspended for two more days due to technical issues in the Torkham information system.

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan presided over joint meeting of NHA & MHMP.