

PPP leaders meet President

NAWAB SHAH (APP): Leaders and party workers of Pakistan Peoples Party, Sindh Chapter on Sunday called on President Asif Ali Zardari and discussed the overall political situation and development projects in the province. During the meeting, Member Sindh Assembly and Peoples Party Women Wing Central President Faryal Talpur was also present, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Afghans celebrate Eid  
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in the provincial capital Peshawar, Afghan refugees celebrated Eid ul Fitr on Sunday under strict security measures. As per reports, Afghan migrants residing in various areas, including the Khorasan Camp on Charsadda Road and the merged districts, offered Eid prayers.



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GAZA: Palestinians perform the Eid al-Fitr morning prayer in the courtyard of Gaza City's historic Omari Mosque, which is heavily damaged in Israeli bombardment during the ongoing battles between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza City, Palestine, on Sunday.

## PM extends Eid greetings to world leaders

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday held a telephone conversation with the President of Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to convey his warm greetings and best wishes to him, as well as to the brotherly people of Türkiye, on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul Fitr.

While recalling President Erdogan's historic visit to Pakistan in February this year, the Prime Minister expressed satisfaction at the positive momentum in bilateral relations between the two countries.

He emphasized the need to ensure timely implementation of the important decisions taken by the two sides during the 7th HLSCC meeting in Islamabad.

President Erdogan thanked the Prime Minister for his good wishes on Eid ul Fitr and warmly reciprocated the

same sentiments for the people of Pakistan. He reaffirmed Türkiye's steadfast support for Pakistan on all important issues.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday held a telephone call with His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, and extended warm greetings and best wishes to the Crown Prince as well as to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, and the brotherly people of Kuwait.

Recalling the historical brotherly ties between the two countries, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen its cordial relations with Kuwait for mutually rewarding cooperation. He fondly recalled his warm and productive meeting with the Crown Prince in New York last

year on sidelines of the UN General Assembly's annual session.

His Highness Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah warmly reciprocated Prime Minister's Eid greetings and conveyed best wishes for the people of Pakistan. He agreed upon the need to work closely together to further strengthen bilateral cooperation for mutual benefit and prosperity of the two countries.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also called the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein, to extend his best wishes and warm greetings to him and the brotherly people of Jordan on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The two leaders discussed the ongoing situation in Gaza. King Abdullah praised Pakistan's support for Palestine and lauded its gesture of sending humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people.

## Today last day for illegal foreigners in Pakistan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Two days are left now for illegal foreigners and Afghan Citizen Card holders to leave Pakistan.

The government has given a deadline for illegal foreigners and Afghan citizen card holders to leave the country by 31st of this month.

The government has assured that no mistreatment will occur during the process and it has made arrangements for food and health facilities for those returning.

Meanwhile the process of repatriation of illegal Afghans to their homeland is continuing.

As of now, the total number of returnees stands at 884,261.

## KSA welcomes new Syrian govt

RIYADH (Arab News): The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs has welcomed the formation of a new Syrian government and hopes it will fulfill the aspirations of its people, reported the Saudi Press Agency on Sunday.

### Notice

*It is to be notified that the offices of The Frontier Post publications will remain closed for two days (Monday and Tuesday) from March 31 to April 1, 2025. Consequently there would be no edition of The Frontier Post on Tuesday and Wednesday.*

# Palestinians in Gaza mark Eid with no end to war

DEIR AL-BALAH (AP): Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had little to celebrate on Sunday as they began marking a normally festive Muslim holiday with rapidly dwindling food supplies and no end in sight to the Israeli aggression on Gaza and the West Bank.

Many held prayers outside demolished mosques on the Eid Al-Fitr holiday marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. It's supposed to be a joyous occasion, when families gather for

feasts and purchase new clothes for children — but most of Gaza's 2 million Palestinians are just trying to survive.

"It's the Eid of Sadness," Adel Al-Shaer said after attending outdoor prayers in the central town of Deir Al-Balah. "We lost our loved ones, our children, our lives, and our futures. We lost our students, our schools, and our institutions. We lost everything."

Twenty members of his extended family have

been killed in Israeli strikes, including four young nephews just a few days ago, he said as he broke into tears.

Israel violated the ceasefire with Hamas and resumed the war earlier this month. Israeli strikes have killed hundreds of Palestinians, and Israel has allowed no food, fuel or humanitarian aid to enter for four weeks.

"There is killing, displacement, hunger, and a siege," said Saeed Al-Kourid, another worshipper. "We go out to per-

form God's rituals in order to make the children happy, but as for the joy of Eid? There is no Eid." Israel's offensive has killed over 50,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Israel's bombardment and ground operations have destroyed vast areas of Gaza and at their height displaced around 90 percent of the population.

## President urges to remember, support weaker segments on Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari urged that on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, they must remember those who were facing economic hardships as true happiness was related to sharing joys with others.

"We should actively fulfill our obligations of Zakat, charity, and Fitrana so that no needy person is deprived of the happiness of Eid," the president said in a message on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr 1446 Hijrah being celebrated across the country on Monday.

The president extended his heartfelt felicitation to the entire nation and the Muslim world on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

"This joyous day comes to us after the blessings, worship, and journey of

piety during the holy month of Ramadan. Eid ul-Fitr is a gift from Allah Almighty, granted to us as a reward for fasting," President Secretariat Press Wing in a press release, quoted the president as saying.

During Ramazan, the president said they strived to attain closeness to Allah Almighty, refine their characters, and excel in deeds of goodness. "This sacred month teaches us patience, endurance, worship, and compassion for the poor. Now, it is our responsibility to follow these lessons in our daily lives that were learnt during Ramazan and to uphold the virtues of sincerity, honesty, and love in our practical lives," he further added.

The president observed that the day also taught them the lesson of unity and solidarity among their ranks and stressed that they should strengthen these bonds, support one another and contribute to Pakistan's progress and prosperity.

"We must promote brotherhood among ourselves so that our country emerges as a strong and prosperous nation," he added.

On the occasion, the president also prayed for the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir to get freedom and the opportunity to celebrate Eid in peace.

The president prayed to Allah Almighty to accept their fasts and worship and guide Pakistan on the path of peace and prosperity.

## Israeli PM vows to pressure Hamas after ceasefire proposal

JERUSALEM/CAIRO, (Reuters): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated a demand on Sunday for Hamas to disarm and for its leaders to leave Gaza as he promised to step up pressure on the group while continuing efforts to return hostages.

He said Israel would work to implement U.S. President Donald Trump's "voluntary emigration plan" for Gaza and said his cabinet had agreed to keep pressuring Hamas, which says it has agreed to a ceasefire proposal from mediators Egypt and Qatar.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said Netanyahu's comments were a recipe for "endless escalation" in the region.

Netanyahu rejected assertions that Israel, which has resumed its bombardment of Gaza after a two-month truce and sent troops back into the enclave, was not negotiating, saying "we are conducting it under fire, and therefore it is also effective".

"We see that there are suddenly cracks," he said in a video statement issued on Sunday.

On Saturday, Khalil al-Hayya, the Hamas leader in Gaza, said the group had agreed to a proposal that security sources said included the release of five Israeli hostages each week. But he said laying down its arms as Israel has demanded was a "red line" the group would not cross.

On Sunday, the first day of the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday, health authorities in Gaza said at least 24 people, including several children, had been killed in Israeli strikes. Nine were killed in a single tent in the southern city of Khan Younis, they said.

Later on Sunday, the Palestinian Red Crescent Service said it had finally been able to get access to search for rescue teams that had come under Israeli fire during a rescue mission in western Rafah, a week after the attack.

It said it had recovered 13 bodies from the scene, seven of them were Palestinian Red Crescent members, another five were from the Gaza Civil Emergency Service, and another was a United Nations worker. There was no immediate Israeli comment. Israel launched its campaign in Gaza after a

devastating Hamas attack on Israeli communities around the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023 that killed some 1,200 people, according to an Israeli tally, and saw 251 abducted as hostages.

The Israeli campaign has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, according to Palestinian health authorities, and devastated much of the coastal enclave, leaving hundreds of thousands of people in tents and makeshift shelters.

Sunday's strikes took place as Palestinians celebrated the Eid holiday marking the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

"We are here to celebrate the rituals of God amid the destruction and the sounds of cannons," said Minnatallah Al-Far, in Jabalia, in northern Gaza, where most of the area has been laid waste by Israeli bombardment. "In Gaza, our situation is very difficult. Other people are celebrating these rituals in peace and safety, but we do them amid destruction and bombardment," she said.

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# Myanmar quake death toll hits 1,700 as aid scramble intensifies

BANGKOK (Reuters): The toll from Myanmar's earthquake continued to rise on Sunday, as foreign rescue teams and aid rushed into the impoverished country, where hospitals were overwhelmed and some communities scrambled to mount rescue efforts with limited resources.

The 7.7-magnitude quake, one of Myanmar's strongest in a century, jolted the war-torn Southeast Asian nation on Friday, leaving around 1,700 people dead, 3,400 injured and over 300 missing as of Sunday, the military government said.

The junta chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, warned that the number of fatalities could go up and his administration faced a challenging situation, state media reported, three days after he made a rare call for international assistance.

India, China and Thailand are among

Myanmar's neighbours that have sent relief materials and teams, along with aid and personnel from Malaysia, Singapore and Russia.

"The destruction has been extensive, and humanitarian needs are growing by the hour," the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said in a statement.

"With temperatures rising and the monsoon season approaching in just weeks, there is an urgent need to stabilise affected communities before secondary crises emerge."

The United States pledged \$2 million in aid "through Myanmar-based humanitarian assistance organizations" and said in a statement that an emergency response team from USAID, which is undergoing massive cuts under the Trump administration, is deploying to Myanmar.

The devastation has piled more misery on

Myanmar, already in chaos from a civil war that grew out of a nationwide uprising after a 2021 military coup ousted the elected government of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Critical infrastructure - including bridges, highways, airports and railways - across the country of 55 million lie damaged, slowing humanitarian efforts while the conflict that has battered the economy, displaced over 3.5 million people and debilitated the health system rages on.

In some areas near the epicentre, residents told Reuters that government assistance was scarce, leaving people to fend for themselves.

"It is necessary to restore the transportation routes as soon as possible," Min Aung Hlaing told officials on Saturday, according to state media. "It is necessary to fix the railways and also reopen the airports so that rescue

operations would be more effective." The U.S. Geological Service's predictive modelling estimated Myanmar's death toll could eventually top 10,000 and losses could exceed the country's annual economic output.

Hospitals in parts of central and northwestern Myanmar, including the second-biggest city, Mandalay, and the capital Naypyitaw, were struggling to cope with an influx of injured people, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said late on Saturday.

The quake also shook parts of neighbouring Thailand, bringing down an under-construction skyscraper and killing 18 people across the capital, according to Thai authorities.

At least 76 people remained trapped under the debris of the collapsed Bangkok building, where rescue operations contin-

ued for a third day, using drones and sniffer dogs to hunt for survivors.

Myanmar's opposition National Unity Government, which includes remnants of the previous administration, said anti-junta militias under its command would pause all offensive military actions for two weeks from Sunday. The devastation in some areas of upper Myanmar, such as the town of Sagaing near the quake's epicentre, was extensive, said resident Han Zin.

"What we are seeing here is widespread destruction - many buildings have collapsed into the ground," he said by phone, adding that much of the town had been without electricity since the disaster hit and drinking water was running out.

"We have received no aid, and there are no rescue workers in sight."

Sections of a major bridge connecting Sagaing to nearby Mandalay col-

lapsed, satellite imagery showed, with spans of the colonial-era structure submerged in the Irrawaddy river. "With bridges destroyed, even aid from Mandalay is struggling to get through," Sagaing Federal Unit Hluttaw, a political association linked to the NUG, said on Facebook.

"Food and medicine are unavailable, and the rising number of casualties is overwhelming the small local hospital, which lacks the capacity to treat all the patients."

In Mandalay, scores of people were feared trapped under collapsed buildings and most could not be reached or pulled out without heavy machinery, two humanitarian workers and two residents said.

"My teams in Mandalay are using work gloves, ropes and basic kits to dig and retrieve people," said one of the humanitarian workers. Reuters is not naming them because of

security concerns.

"There are countless trapped and still missing. The death toll is impossible to count at the moment due to the number trapped and unidentified, if alive."

A video filmed by a Mandalay resident on Saturday and shared with Reuters showed patients in beds, some attached to drips, on the grounds outside a 500-bed orthopaedic hospital in the city.

Public and private health care facilities in Mandalay, including the Mandalay General Hospital and parts of Mandalay Medical University, were damaged by the quake, according to the World Health Organization.

Russian and Indian rescue workers were heading to Mandalay, and multiple teams of Chinese, Thai and Singapore rescue personnel have also arrived in the country.

In Bangkok, at the site of the collapsed 33-storey

building, rescuers surrounded by shattered concrete piles and twisted metal continued their efforts to rescue dozens of workers trapped under the rubble.

Teerasak Thongmo, a Thai police commander, said his team of policemen and rescue dogs were racing against time to locate survivors, struggling to move around metal debris and sharp edges on an unstable structure.

"Right now, our team is trying to find anyone that might still be alive. Within the first 72 hours, we have to try and save those still alive," he said.

Near the rescue operations, relatives and friends of the missing and trapped construction workers waited for news. Some broke down. "Ploy, Ploy, Ploy, my daughter, I'm here for you now!" one woman wailed, as she was hugged by two others. "Ploy, can you hear me calling out for you?"





## CM congratulates Muslim ummah on moon sighting

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has warmly congratulated the Muslim Ummah on the sighting of the Shawwal moon, making the end of Ramadan and the joyous arrival of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In her message, the CM prayed for the new month to bring peace, faith, and security for everyone. "I pray that Allah Almighty blesses us with a month filled with safety, faith, and the prosperity of Islam," she said.

CM Maryam Nawaz also expressed her sincere hope that all the prayers, fasts, and acts of worship performed during the holy month of Ramadan would be accepted. "From the depths of my heart, I pray that Allah accepts our Ramadan prayers, fasts, and worship," she added. "May the Eid-ul-Fitr moon bring joy and serenity to every home," she stated.

The CM prayed for

peace and security throughout the entire month of Shawwal. "I pray that every day and night of Shawwal is filled with peace and safety," she emphasized.

Expressing solidarity with oppressed communities, Maryam Nawaz also remembered the plight of Palestinians and Kashmiris in her prayers. "I pray that Allah grants freedom to the oppressed people of Palestine and Kashmir so they, too, can celebrate Eid in peace," she added.

**Keeping planet pollution-free a shared responsibility:** CM: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that keeping the planet pollution-free is a collective responsibility.

In her message on International Day of Zero Waste being observed on Sunday, the CM said under the "Suthra Punjab Program," efforts are

underway to make every city in Punjab zero waste. The Mehmood Booti dumping site, once home to over 12.5 million tons of waste, is being transformed into a lush green forest and solar park.

The chief minister said that the Punjab government is committed to managing plastic waste by strictly enforcing the ban on plastic bags. To support agricultural waste management, farmers are being provided subsidized super seeders. Additionally, environmental laws are being strictly enforced in factories and industries across the province.

CM Maryam Nawaz said that the Punjab's first Climate Change Policy and a comprehensive action plan will be game changers in tackling environmental pollution. She urged every citizen to fulfill their social responsibility by eliminating plastic use.

## 'Pakistan's progress stalled without Imran'

LAHORE (PPI): Musarrat Jamshed Cheema, a senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, said on Sunday that the longstanding partnership of the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Pakistan Muslim League (N) had never benefited the country or its people.

Both parties have merely enjoyed power, she pointed out in a statement. Cheema argued that despite numerous experiments and efforts, the deteriorating conditions in the country have proven that Pakistan cannot advance without Imran Khan. She urged the current rulers to abandon their stubbornness and opposition to Khan.

She highlighted that during this year's Ramadan, citizens did not receive any relief, as they struggled to afford essential food items, while the government turned a blind eye, reporting falsely that everything was fine. She criticized profiteers for exploiting the public during Ramadan more than ever before, despite the so-called experienced rulers in power.

Cheema further noted that Imran Khan, alongside his wife, endured imprisonment without striking any deals, demonstrating their genuine commitment to Pakistan and its people. She said that the day is not far when Imran Khan will be vindicated and once again assume the role of the country's Prime Minister.

## Temporary mechanical swings banned on Eid

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has banned temporary mechanical swings across the province during Eidul-Fitr to ensure public safety. According to a spokesperson for the Punjab Home Department, the decision aims to prevent any risks to human lives. All Deputy Commissioners have been instructed to enforce the ban through an official directive.

As large crowds, including families and children, are expected to visit amusement parks, gaming zones, and recreational areas during Eid, the government has introduced strict regulations. While permanent mechanical swings will be allowed, operators must obtain a mandatory fitness certificate to ensure compliance with safety standards.

Additionally, a verification certificate from the respective Deputy Commissioner will be required for safety inspections and regulatory compliance. To oversee implementation, the Punjab Home Department has established a central control room, which will operate 24/7 to monitor reports from across the province. Senior officials will remain on duty during Eid holidays to ensure law and order and strict enforcement of government directives.

## LGH finalizes Eidul-Fitr emergency arrangements

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore General Hospital (LGH) administration has finalised arrangements to ensure uninterrupted medical services during Eidul-Fitr holidays, following Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique's directives. According to a notification on Sunday, Principal Ameeruddin Medical College, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Al-Fareed Zafar, appointed Dr. Yahya Sultan (Grade 20) as Director Emergency at LGH. MS LGH, Prof. Faryad Hussain, confirmed that administrative doctors and health professionals will work in three shifts as per schedule. Emergency patients will receive free medicines, diagnostic tests, and other medical facilities.

He directed department heads to keep their phones on, ensure generator maintenance, and secure staff availability. Sanitary inspectors were instructed to maintain cleanliness, while security personnel were advised to stay alert and treat patients with courtesy. Strict compliance with duty hours was emphasized, with warnings of departmental action against absenteeism.



LAHORE: Large number of people busy shopping on Chaand Raat in preparation for Eid ul Fitr at local market. —APP Photo

## Poor infrastructure stifles Karachi's growth

KARACHI (PPI): Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor said on Sunday that poor infrastructure of the megacity Karachi is the main hindrance to its development but sadly the federal and provincial governments are not investing generously to this crucial sector.

Shakoor emphasized the city's vast potential for economic growth and job creation but lamented that its deteriorating infrastructure cannot support these opportunities.

He pointed out that despite the substantial tax revenues generated from Karachi, the federal and provincial governments fail to reinvest adequately in its infrastructure development. Shakoor stressed that modernizing Karachi's civic facilities could significantly increase revenue collection.

He identified several critical issues plaguing the city, such as pot-holed roads, street encroachments, water shortages, inadequate public transport, and street crimes,

but noted the government's reluctance to prioritize these matters. Additionally, Shakoor highlighted the untapped tourism potential of Karachi as a beach city.

Shakoor also criticized the stalled Karachi Circular Railway project, arguing that resources were instead allocated to Lahore's rail-based commuting system. He noted that cities smaller than Karachi in other countries have developed underground rail systems, whereas Karachi lacks even a surface-based railway.

Addressing the need for educational and healthcare advancements, he called for the establishment of new universities, medical colleges, and teaching hospitals in Karachi. He highlighted the Sindh government's ability to upgrade existing hospitals and the potential for more private medical colleges to accommodate local students.

Shakoor questioned the efficacy of Karachi's infrastructure development bodies and criticized the

Metropolitan Corporation's performance, labeling it a "white elephant." He described the elected local government's efforts in civic infrastructure development as a failure.

In a call to action, PDP chief demanded a comprehensive anti-encroachment operation post-Eid to clear roads and footpaths, which would alleviate traffic congestion and reduce road accidents. He also urged action against illegal settlements, which he claimed are hubs for crime and drug activities.

Furthermore, Shakoor called for the civic infrastructure development of Karachi to be a focal point for the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) due to its direct impact on industrialization. He appealed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, and COAS General Syed Asim Munir for their personal attention and financial support in addressing Karachi's infrastructure challenges.

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Inna Lillahi wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un

Family, Friends, and Well-Wishers

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Saleem ur Rehman Memon	Farida Jabbar
Naeem ur Rehman Memon	Shahla Pirzada Memon
Waseem ur Rehman Memon	Hamida Rehman Memon
Aftab ur Rehman Memon	Shabana Khalil
Faheem ur Rehman Memon	Shazia Maqsood
Raja Naseem Memon	Anila Khan
Hafeez ur Rehman Memon	
Adil Memon	





PESHAWAR: Peshawar Division Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud chairing a meeting at his office regarding ban on boating in rivers.

## Ban imposed on Boating in Nowshera and Charsadda During Eid-ul-Fitr

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Division Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud has announced a complete ban on boating in Nowshera and Charsadda during Eid-ul-Fitr to prevent accidents.

The district administrations of Nowshera and Charsadda have been directed to enforce Section 144 to prohibit boating. Additionally, the district administrations of Peshawar, Nowshera, and Charsadda have been instructed to prevent over-

charging of tickets in amusement parks. Orders have also been issued to the police to ensure security in recreational parks. No amusement park management will be allowed to charge unauthorized ticket prices during Eid-ul-Fitr. To ensure proper

monitoring, all Deputy Commissioners have been directed to assign Assistant Commissioners for duty during Eid to inspect amusement parks. These measures aim to maintain safety and prevent any mishaps during the festive celebrations.

## KP sets target to enroll 1 million children in schools

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has set a target to enroll 1 million children in schools during the new academic year's admission campaign.

The provincial government has decided to launch an enrollment drive for the new school year. Provincial Education Minister Faisal Tarakai stated on Sunday that under

this campaign the government aims to ensure that 1 million children are enrolled in schools. He emphasized that out-of-school children will be brought back into the education system at all costs.

The admission campaign will continue until April 30, he said adding that to facilitate, students, will also be admitted to second-shift schools where necessary.

## Eid Prayer timings announced in Peshawar

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR (APP): The schedule for Eid prayer timings in Peshawar was officially released here on Sunday. According to the announcement, the main Eid congregation at the Central Eidgah on Charsadda Road will be held at 7:00 a.m. As per the schedule, the Eid prayer at Masjid

Mahabat Khan (Bazaar Masgaran) will be offered at 7:00 a.m. while at Ashrafia Mosque (Fakirabad), the Eid prayer will be offered at 7:30 a.m. For Hayatabad dwellers, the Eid prayer will be offered at 7:30 a.m. in Bagh Naran Park, while in Sher Khan Market Park, Hayatabad Phase 7, the Eid prayer will be offered

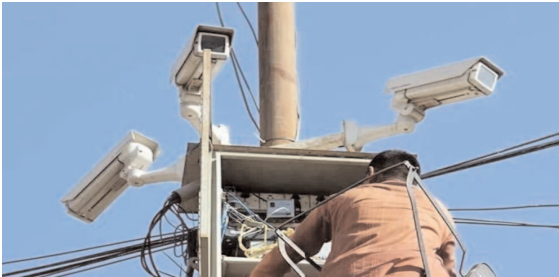
at 7:30 AM. In Masjid Zaid Bin Harith Hayatabad Phase 2, the Eid prayer will be offered at 6:45 AM. At Qasim Ali Khan Mosque (Qissa Khwani) the Eid prayer will be at 7:00 a.m. while in Wazir Bagh Ground, the Eid prayer will be offered at 7:00 a.m. At Jamia Masjid Safa (Ghaziabad, Dila Zak

Road) the time for Eid prayer will be 7:15 a.m. while in Jamia Masjid Phor Gran Chowk (Nasir Khan) the Eid prayer will be offered at 7:15 a.m. Residents were advised to reach their designated prayer locations on time. The schedule ensures multiple options across different parts of the city to accommodate worshippers for the special Eid prayer.

## KP set to launch Safe City Project

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to initiate work on the Peshawar Safe City Project. According to official sources on Sunday, the project will officially commence after Eid, with 700 cameras installed at 100 key locations across the city.

In the second phase, the Safe City project will expand to southern districts, including Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, where preliminary work has already been completed. The project will become operational in the coming days, enhancing security and surveillance in the region.



## Peshawari Chappal: a handmade footwear draw people ahead of Eidul Fitr celebrations

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawari Chappal, a famous traditional footwear with eye-catching designs started attracting customers ahead of Eidul Fitr celebrations. With less than five days left in Eidul Fitr, people thronged to Peshawari chappal outlets to select appropriate shoes for themselves and family members. Known as the city of artisans, Peshawar's Jahangirpura Bazaar near the historic Qissakhwani Bazaar has been the hub of skilled cobblers where shoemakers are burning the midnight oil to meet the growing demands of people. Many consumers, belonging to other districts, have trekked long distances to buy decent, shiny and unique designs for themselves and their family members. Besides its cultural rele-

vance, one contributing factor to the increased preference for durable readymade chappals is the skyrocketing costs of foreign footwear, which the salaried, middle class and low-income groups can barely afford. Fayaz Khan, a local shoemaker who remained associated with this hard business for the past 25 years in Jhangirpura, said that peoples' demands for this traditional chappal has increased manifold due to its durability and shininess. "Currently, we cannot accept more orders due to shortage of time, power load-shedding and fasting," he said. Fayaz felt proud of adhering to these skills from his forefathers, who were associated with this profession for decades with expertise, skill and craftsmanship. "Peshawari chappal is

my favorite and my Eid seems incomplete without it," Faraz, Khan, a resident of Wapda Town Nowshera, said while selecting footwear for himself and family members at Jhangirpura. "I purchased six sets of handmade designs of Peshawari chappal for Rs5000 each this year as against Rs4,500 last year for myself, brother, and orphans," he said adding that purchasing shoes and clothes for poor people would double our joy on Eid. He urged the government to regulate this business and fix rates for Peshawari chappal to facilitate the customers. "Peshawari chappal is my first choice for Eid as it gives a traditional touch with shalwar qameez and can also be worn with pants and jeans, as is the trend now," Professor Ehtisham Khan, a resident

of Nowshera, said. "I purchased plain black and green designs of this famous chappal as demanded by my brothers," he said, adding that its other designs both for girls and boys with different prints embellished with stones are giving a different look and individual style attracting an influx of buyers on Eid. The unique footwear is exported to South Africa, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Europe, Afghanistan and Russia besides is liked in Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir, Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan. He urged the provincial government to announce a special financial package for shoemakers. The centuries-old Peshawar chappal business would grow only if the government provided interest-free loans to the labourers, he added.

## Eid without loved ones: The silent grief of martyrs' families

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

EID is undoubtedly a festival of happiness, a day of celebration and gratitude after a month of fasting. It is a time for families to come together, for laughter to echo in homes, and for loved ones to exchange warm greetings. However, amid the joyous atmosphere, there are countless homes where silence replaces laughter, where memories fill the space left by those who once celebrated with them. These are the families of martyrs—those who sacrificed their lives to protect this nation, leaving behind parents, spouses, and children who now experience Eid with a deep void in their hearts.

In the homes of these martyrs, the festive spirit is overshadowed by the painful absence of their loved ones. Their uniforms, medals, and cherished belongings remain in their rooms as silent reminders of their sacrifice. Every Eid, these items stir emotions too deep to be expressed in words. Mothers, who once prepared special dishes for their sons, now prepare meals with tears in their eyes. Fathers, who once embraced their sons in pride, now sit in quiet remembrance. Wives, who once looked forward to celebrating Eid with their husbands, now struggle with an emptiness that no words can fill. Children, too young to understand the full depth of their loss, still wait at the door, hoping their father will return with gifts, unaware that he has given the greatest gift of all—his life for the nation.

A striking example of this sacrifice is the story of Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed (Nishan-e-Haider). He embraced martyrdom during the Kargil conflict, fighting with unmatched bravery. His mother, despite her immense grief, always expressed pride in his sacrifice. She once said, "My son was not just mine; he belonged to the entire nation. His sacrifice was not a loss; it was an honor." This sentiment echoes in the hearts of many families who have lost their loved ones in service to Pakistan.

Similarly, the family of Aitzaz Hasan, the young boy who sacrificed his life in January 6, 2014 to stop a suicide bomber from attacking his school, spends each Eid in reflection. His father, Mujahid Ali, has often stated, "My son saved hundreds of lives, but he left a void in our home that can never be filled." These are not just stories; they are living examples of the price paid for our peace and security.

Islam teaches us to honor those who sacrifice their lives for a just cause. The Holy Quran states "Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord." (Surah Aal-e-Imran 3:169)

This verse assures us that martyrs are not truly gone; they have attained an eternal life in the hereafter. However, for their families, the separation is a daily struggle. The pain intensifies on occasions like Eid when their absence is most deeply felt.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the honor of martyrdom in many Hadiths. He said "A martyr is given six special blessings: he is forgiven with the first drop of his blood, he is shown his place in Jannah, he is saved from the punishment of the grave, he is kept safe from the Great Terror (Day of Judgment), he is crowned with honor, and he will be allowed to intercede for seventy of his relatives." (Tirmidhi)

This Hadith not only highlights the high status of martyrs in Islam but also reminds us of our responsibility to support their families. Their sacrifice is not just the ultimate test for them but also a challenge for those they leave behind.

We have nothing to repay for these unparalleled emotions. The selflessness of their sacrifice is priceless, but we as a society must ensure that their families are not left alone in their grief. True celebration of Eid is not just in personal joy but in sharing happiness with others, especially those who struggle with sorrow.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught us that the best among us are those who help others. He said "The most beloved people to Allah are those who are most beneficial to others. And the most beloved deed to Allah is to make a Muslim happy, to remove his troubles, to pay off his debt, or to remove his hunger." (Tabarani)

This Hadith serves as a guiding principle for how we should approach Eid. We must reach out to the families of martyrs, visit them, include them in our celebrations, and remind them that they are not alone. Even a simple gesture, a heartfelt Eid greeting, or a small act of kindness can make a difference.

As we celebrate Eid with our loved ones, let us take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices that allow us to live in peace. Let us honor the memory of those who have laid down their lives and extend our hands in solidarity to their families. Their loss is our loss, and their pain should be our concern. May Allah grant the martyrs the highest ranks in Jannah and give their families patience and strength. Let us ensure that this Eid is not just a festival of happiness but also a reminder of our responsibility towards those who have given everything for our nation.

## Governor extends Eid greetings

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday extended heartfelt Eid-ul-Fitr greetings to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and to the entire nation and the Muslim Ummah.

In his message on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, the Governor emphasized that this joyous festival is a practical expression of unity and brotherhood, bringing the Muslim Ummah together on the foundation of love and solidarity.

In his Eid message, Governor Kundi highlighted that in the current situation of the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there is a critical need for unity and brotherhood

to defeat the malicious designs of anti-state elements. He stressed that such unity would help transform the province and country into a haven of peace.

He further encouraged everyone to continue sharing smiles and love with each other during Eid and throughout the year, spreading joy not only on this significant occasion but also in the small and big moments of life.

Governor Kundi also paid tribute to the security forces and police martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the peace and security of the nation.

He expressed his gratitude for the sacrifices made by these brave souls, acknowledging that the happiness of

the occasion is possible due to their contributions.

He extended his salutations to the families of the martyrs, offering them respect and recognition on this joyous day.

The Governor further said that the message of Eid-ul-Fitr is to share one's happiness with others and to include the less fortunate members of society in our love and celebrations. He recognized Eid-ul-Fitr as a day of reward from Allah for the Muslim Ummah.

Governor Kundi thanked Allah for the blessings of Ramadan and prayed for the acceptance of the month's virtues and for the continued blessings of worship in the coming year.

### Zalan Khan shines in annual exams



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zalan Khan, a student of The Smart School Saddar Campus, excelled in his Grade one annual exam. Zalan attributed his success to the hard work of his teachers and the prayers of his parents. He expressed his determination to continue working hard and achieve even greater success in the future. Zalan's teachers have praised his inquisitive nature and commitment to excellence, noting that he consistently goes above and beyond in his studies.

### Khidmat ul Ibad helps the needy

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Under the auspices of the social organization Khidmat-ul-Ibad, Eid gifts will be distributed among 90 families on their own at the end of the month of Ramadan and on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Khidmat-ul-Ibad Coordinator Daniyal Ahsan and Overseas Support Program Coordinator Bilal Akbar, while talking to media representatives regarding these activities, said that for the past 4 years, in Peshawar, with the support of our help and overseas Pakistanis from the United States and England, they have been distributing ration packs in white clothes to the poor, needy, sick and needy. In addition, a table is set for Sehri and Eid clothes are distributed to children in various orphanages.

Shoes and clothes have been distributed, and regular Iftars have been organized to eliminate the feeling of inferiority complex. In addition, children living in these orphanages are supported for 12 months of the year. Their needs are taken care of and fulfilled. Events are organized under the auspices of the social organization Khidmat-ul-Ibad regarding Eid and government festivals.

It is an impossible and difficult task, but with the help of Allah, someone or the other keeps supporting us. Now we are also receiving a lot of support from overseas. These people have developed trust in us. It is a difficult task to live up to someone's trust. Allah is making us successful.

Our project for providing clean drinking water is also going on successfully. Hand pumps are being installed in every house in remote areas. Our members are supporting us. He further said that with the cooperation of our members and overseas, regular Iftar and Sehri are being distributed in 3 important places of Peshawar: Lady Reading Hospital, Maulvi Ji Hospital, Government Maternity Hospital Hashtangri and Children's Hospital Haji Camp. Senior member Khalil and his family play a vital role in this regard. The credit goes to team leader Chairman chief exactive Asad Ashrif







## In brief

### Three killed Swabi incidents

SWABI (APP): At least three people lost their lives in separate incidents in Swabi, police informed on Sunday. The first incident occurred near the Muhajir Camp on Gaju Khan Road, where an armed man opened fire and killed a rickshaw driver. In the second incident, a motorcyclist lost his life in a collision with a car on Jehangira Road. Meanwhile, in Yaqubi area, a young man was shot and killed over a property dispute. Police have registered cases for all incidents and have launched investigations.

### Shopkeepers fined

NAWABSHAH (INP): Crackdown Continued against vendors found involved in overpricing in Shaheed Benazirabad and 19 shopkeepers were imposed fines to the tune of Rs10,600. The raiding teams led by Assistant Commissioners and Mukhtarkars in all Talukas initiated action against shopkeepers charging excessive prices for essential commodities, on the instructions of deputy commissioner Shahryar Gul Memon. Assistant Commissioners and Mukhtarkars from all four tehsils reviewed the prices of essential goods, including grocery items, vegetables, fruits, meat, and dairy products. As a result, fines totaling were imposed on 19 shopkeepers found guilty of overpricing. The district administration has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring price control and taking strict action against profiteering to provide relief to the public.

### Nine injured in accident

MULTAN (APP): Nine people were injured when a mini truck collided with a pickup near here on Sunday morning. According to Rescue officials, the accident took place near Head Naubahar where a mini truck collided with a pickup carrying commuters. Nine commuters sustained multiple injuries. Five injured identified as Nasir (25), Aqeel Ahmed (26), Jahangir (16), Zahid (31) and Jind Wada (19) were shifted to the Nishtar Hospital after first aid. While four others who sustained minor injuries were treated on the spot. Police were investigating.

### Action on transporters

KHANEWAL (APP): In a crackdown against overcharging, the traffic police imposed fines of Rs 50,000 on commuters vehicles in the district. District Police Officer (DPO) Ismail Kharak supervised the crackdown late at night. According to official sources, traffic police also recovered Rs 70,000 in excess fares and returned to passengers. Similarly, over Rs 80,000 fines were imposed on overloaded vehicles. The DPO urged the citizens to pay only the officially fixed fares and warned that no vehicle owner was allowed to overcharge or overload. Strict legal action would be taken against violators, he added.

### Security plan finalized for Eid

LODHRAN (APP): The district police have devised a comprehensive security plan to ensure public safety on the eve of Eidul Fitr and Eid days. Over 550 police officers and personnel would be deployed on duty to maintain law and order across the district. According to police spokesperson, 265 volunteers would also be deployed to assist in security arrangements for Eid prayers.



HYDERABAD: A man busy in cleaning the Eidgah Mosque for Eidul Fitr prayers in Qasimabad area.

## Supporting Kashmir's freedom struggle a national obligation

MIRPUR (INP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has emphasized that supporting and strengthening the freedom movement in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) is a national duty for every citizen in the state. Barrister Sultan Mahmood, while speaking at a ceremony in his native village of Chachiyaa, reaffirmed his commitment to

Kashmir's freedom struggle, stating that it has been his top priority throughout his political career.

President Chaudhry highlighted his efforts to promote the Kashmir issue on the international stage, including visits to key countries such as the US, UK, France, and Turkey.

Barrister Sultan Mahmood also underscored the importance of fostering national consensus on the issue, uniting

leaders from various political backgrounds to ensure a united front.

The president cited recent high-profile visits, such as US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar's visit to Muzaffarabad, as evidence of his successful campaign to bring Kashmir into the international spotlight.

These visits, he noted, have pressured the Indian government, prompting formal protests against the US and UK.

## 10 arrested for power theft in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) Sunday caught 10 power pilferers during an ongoing crackdown.

According to official sources, the task force raided various areas and caught the accused involved in electricity theft from main lines and through meter tampering.

They were identified as Nisar Ahmad, Khadim Hussain, Dilawar Ali, Arshad, Abu Abida, Dost Muhammad, Ishiaq, Aoun Muhammad and others.

The police registered cases against pilferers.

## Announcement of rally in Larkana by PPP (SB) on 4th April

Allah Dad

LARKANA: The Pakistan People's Party (Shaheed Bhutto) has announced to hold a rally in Larkana on April 4 to celebrate the 46th death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in Garhi Khuda Bux Bhutto. In connection the People's Party (Shaheed Bhutto) central leader Inayat Ali Umrani, Qazi Abdul Qadir, Dilmurad Jatoi and others has announced in press conference to hold a public meeting at Main Chowk Jinnah Bagh in Larkana city.

After robbing young traders, they were killed and people belonging to the minority community were abducted and robbed in Badani city, while in different cities of the province, girls of the Hindu community are forcibly converted and married.

While this movement is still going on under the leadership of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Jr. because the issue of canals is a life and death issue for the people of Sindh, they finally made a strong appeal to the proud people of Sindh to participate in the meeting.

## Weathering the Storm: Harnessing Psychology to Face Pakistan's Climate Crisis

Baseer Ali Rahman Khan

THE state of our planet often feels like a hard nut to crack. Forests are disappearing, rivers are running out and entire communities are facing the wrath of an unpredictable climate change. Pakistan, in particular, is no stranger to these challenges—devastating floods, scorching heatwaves and rapidly melting glaciers paint a grim picture. Faced with such a tough battle, it's easy to feel like a drop in the ocean—helpless, frustrated, and exhausted. But what if, instead of sinking into despair, we turned these emotions into a driving force for change?

### A Fork in the Road: A Personal Awakening

When I first started studying environmental issues, it felt like staring into the abyss. Learning about the impact of climate change on Pakistan—the encroaching deserts, the receding Indus River, and the displacement of millions—left me feeling paralyzed. The more I understood, the more I felt like a deer caught in headlights, unable to move forward. That changed when I studied the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral in the northern region of the province, where I met locals directly impacted by glacial melt yet still resilient and hopeful—transforming my perspective. Instead of bottling up my emotions, I engaged in open conversations about climate anxiety. That experience was a lightbulb moment: perhaps psychology could be the missing piece in climate action. Could understanding our emotions help us fight this crisis more effectively?

### The Psychology Behind Climate Action

Returning from that trip into the Northern range, I pivoted my focus toward clinical psychology, exploring how grief, fear, and resilience shape human behavior. One thing became clear—climate discussions often ask, "Why aren't we doing more?" but rarely examine how people mentally process a crisis of this magnitude. To tackle climate change, we must first understand the human mind.

### Here are three psychological insights that can help us respond more effectively:

#### 1. The Window of Tolerance: Why Overwhelm Leads to Inaction

Dr. Dan Siegel's "window of tolerance" concept, rooted in neuroscience and psychology, describes the ideal emotional and physiological state for effectively managing stress, processing emotions, and making decisions. Within this window, we can think clearly and respond thoughtfully. However, when overwhelming challenges—such as relentless floods, unpredictable monsoons, or suffocating smog—push us beyond our limits, we may either shut down in despair or seek false comfort. The constant stream of distressing news can further push individuals out of this balanced state, making action feel impossible. Understanding this concept allows us to build resilience and remain engaged without succumbing to burnout.

#### 2. The Double Bind: Stuck Between Care and Powerlessness

Many Pakistanis deeply care about climate change but feel like a cog in the machine—too small to make a real difference. At the same time, they fear that large-scale policy shifts, like phasing out fossil fuels, might worsen economic hardships. This creates a psychological double bind: caring but feeling powerless. When people feel stuck, they disengage—not out of apathy, but out of exhaustion.

Consider Pakistan's struggle with sustainable energy. While there's a strong push for renewables, communities reliant on coal and gas fear job losses. This mirrors the global dilemma: the desire for progress tempered by the fear of its consequences. Instead of swinging between doomsday warnings and blind optimism, we must acknowledge these fears while guiding people toward practical, manageable solutions.

#### 3. Attunement: Meeting People Where They Are

A skilled therapist doesn't force change but builds trust first. The same principle applies to climate conversations. Instead of shaming people into action or dismissing their doubts, we must create dialogues that validate concerns while steering them toward solutions.

A great example is Pakistan's local water conservation initiatives. By collaborating with farmers and incorporating indigenous water management techniques, experts have found ways to conserve resources without disrupting livelihoods. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, making change feel less like a foreign imposition and more like a shared mission.

#### Turning Climate Anxiety into Action

These psychological tools aren't just for therapists—they're for all of us.

Self-awareness: Instead of suppressing climate anxiety, acknowledge it. It's okay to feel overwhelmed.

Supportive dialogue: Create spaces where people can voice their fears without judgment.

Authentic leadership: Leaders must admit uncertainties while committing to action. Saying, "We don't have all the answers, but we're in this together" is far more powerful than empty reassurances.

The silver lining? We already have the resilience, adaptability, and ingenuity needed to tackle this crisis. What we need now is to foster the right conditions—together.

So take a deep breath. Let's extend compassion to ourselves and each other. The road ahead won't be easy, but we don't have to walk it alone. Pakistan is ready for change. And we have what it takes to make it happen.

*The author is a Provincial Management Service (PMS) officer of BS-19, serving in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.*

## Over 52,000 animals vaccinated against FMD

LODHRAN (APP): The livestock department launched an extensive vaccination campaign against foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in cattle across the district.

A total of 80 teams were working at the Union Council level to vaccinate cattle heads. So far, 52,775 animals have been vaccinated, and the department's staff continued to administer vaccines in every Union Council.

Livestock & Dairy Development Punjab Secretary Saqib Ali Ateeel was supervising the campaign.

Talking to the media, Additional Director

Livestock Dr Allah Bachaya Sial explained that FMD was a viral disease that affects cows and buffaloes.

The virus spreads through air, contaminated food and water, movement of infected animals, farm workers' clothes and shoes, and even motorcycles.

Infected animals suffer from fever, mouth ulcers, and foot lesions, affecting their overall health and productivity.

Farmers have been advised to limit unnecessary farm visits, restrict the entry of unauthorized persons, and regularly use lime and disinfectant

sprays on their farms. In case of an outbreak, soft food should be provided to affected animals, and farms must be kept clean and dry.

Farmers have also been advised to immediately contact the nearest veterinary hospital for treatment as the livestock department had ample stock of vaccines, which were being administered free of cost.

He reassured farmers that no case of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) was reported in Lodhran. The department was well-equipped with sufficient vaccines to handle any emergency, he added.

## Bait-ul-Mal Ramazan Iftar drive concludes

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) successfully concluded its Ramadan Iftar campaign, achieving all set objectives smoothly.

PBM Managing Director Shaheen Khalid Butt expressed his sincere appreciation for the outstanding performance and dedication of the entire team.

In a statement, he said, "It is truly commendable to see that our team not only met but exceeded the goals set for the drive with remarkable efficiency.

This achievement was a testament to your professionalism, expertise, and commitment to excellence.

Your dedication and hard work have played a significant role in the success of this initiative, and I am deeply grateful for your efforts."

He said the success reflected Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal's strong teamwork and spirit of humanitarian service.

He expressed confidence that with the same

determination and perseverance, even greater accomplishments would be achieved in the future.

The MD urged all Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal members to convey his message across all ranks within the organisation to acknowledge and appreciate everyone's contributions. Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal remained committed to its mission of serving the underprivileged and aimed to introduce more welfare initiatives in the future, said a press release issued here.

## 4 relatives held in girl murder case

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The police have arrested four relatives of a minor girl who was slaughtered in a sunflower field in Baqirpur area on suburb of the city.

A spokesman for Bahawalpur police said here that an 11-year-old girl, identified as Fiza Bibi, daughter of Shaukat, was slaughtered in a sunflower field the other day.

He said that modern technology and forensic science was availed to trace out the whereabouts of the killers involved in

the murder of the girl. "Sadar police have arrested four relatives of the girl including two real uncles and two other relatives," he said.

He said that action to arrest the culprits was taken following DNA results received from Forensic Science Agency.

He added that special investigation headed by ASP (Sadar) Circle had been formed to conduct investigation into the case. It is recalled here the victim Fiza Bibi went missing when she came

out of her house to fetch water from nearby water pump for house.

The family along with local people conducted search of the girl when they saw the girl coming from sunflower field with bleeding from her neck.

The family and local people offered water to the girl but water came out of slaughtered neck and the girl died on the spot.

The incident took place in Baqirpur area lying within jurisdiction of Sadar Police.

CHARSADDA (APP): On the eve of Eidul Fitr celebrations, the streets of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) are filled with the tantalizing aroma of traditional sweets including Rajjar Methai, attracting people in droves.

Among the most coveted is the Rajjar sweet, a local delicacy of Charsadda district that has long been a part of the region's festive traditions.

One such shopkeeper, Barkatullah, was overjoyed with the surge in demand for Rajjar Methai on occasion of Eidul Fitr celebrations.

As his sweet shop in Rajjar Bazaar, located just north of Charsadda city, bustled with activity, Barkatullah had to hire three extra workers to keep up with the flood of orders. Customers from across KP, as well as shopkeepers

from distant districts, placed large orders, eager to secure their share of the beloved treat.

"My grandfather started this business back when Pakistan gained independence," Barkatullah explained, his voice filled with pride. "He was known as Pehlwan, and now I'm part of the third generation keeping this tradition alive."

Known across the country—and even abroad—Rajjar Methai is especially popular for its rich flavor, crafted from pure Gur sourced from the fertile lands of Charsadda and Mardan districts.

Despite modern changes in production methods, the core of the sweet remains the same, with flour, butter, and Gur mixed to create its signature taste.

However, Barkatullah noted that the recipe has

evolved slightly over the years to enhance the flavor, reflecting changes in ingredient availability.

Noor Shah, another sweet shop owner in Charsadda Bazaar, emphasizes the purity of his product. "Only ghee, flour, sugar, and milk go into our sweets," he said.

"They are completely chemical-free and affordable compared to other sweets in the market. The taste and aroma of Rajjar sweets last for months."

During a visit to Rajjar Bazaar, the heart of the Rajjar sweet market, long lines of eager customers were seen waiting patiently to purchase the beloved sweet.

The market, which once centered around general trade, now stands as a bustling sweets market during the days leading up to Eid. People from vari-

ous districts of KP flock to the area, both to purchase Rajjar sweets and to send them as gifts to loved ones living in other parts of the country or abroad.

On the eve of Eid, the demand for Rajjar sweets—and other traditional treats—has skyrocketed in Peshawar.

As families prepare for the celebrations, they serve a variety of traditional sweets such as Gulab Jamun, Ras Malai, Barfi, and Jalebi to honor the occasion and strengthen bonds with relatives and friends. However, it is Rajjar Methai that takes center stage on Eid.

Rajjar Methai has long been a staple in homes across KP, especially in towns like Peshawar, Nowshera, and Charsadda.

Its popularity during festive occasions such as Eid and weddings is unde-

niable, with many households preparing large quantities to share with guests.

In fact, Rajjar Methai is so cherished that it is now exported to various countries, including Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, and several Middle Eastern and Western nations, where it is sent as a special gift.

For residents like Sundas Amin, a statistics lecturer, Rajjar Methai holds a special place on Eid. "It's my favorite sweet for special occasions, especially Eid," she said.

"It's served at every house and hujra (guest house) in Charsadda. Its delicious taste and affordable price make it a favorite among guests and hosts alike."

The demand for Rajjar Methai continues to soar

during Eid days, with many shopkeepers investing heavily to meet the needs of customers.

Arshad Ali, a local sweet dealer in Peshawar, noted that he had brought 200 kilograms of Rajjar sweet from Charsadda to sell, and had already sold 100 kilograms in just a few days.

"The taste of Rajjar sweets is what makes them stand out from other sweets in the market," he said.

For people like Khurshid Khan, a government employee from Nowshera, Rajjar Methai is more than just a treat—it's a part of family tradition.

"I have purchased 10 kilograms of Rajjar Methai for my family as special Eid gifts," he said. "It's an affordable and delicious way to celebrate the occasion." In addition to their

local appeal, traders believe there is untapped potential for Rajjar sweets in international markets.

Many are hopeful that with better marketing and export opportunities, Pakistan could generate valuable foreign exchange from this cherished confection.

Shopkeepers and traders are now calling for industry status for Rajjar Methai, hoping it will elevate the product and create more opportunities for growth and recognition on a global scale.

As Eidul Fitr are likely to be celebrated on Monday (tomorrow), the streets of KP continue to buzz with excitement, with traditional sweets like Rajjar Methai at the heart of the celebrations—drawing both locals and visitors alike to partake in the joy of the festive season.





TOKYO: Pete Hegseth, US secretary of defense, left, shakes hands with Shigeru Ishiba, Japan's prime minister, at the Prime Minister's office in Tokyo, Japan, on Sunday.

## Man tending grave probed for starting South Korea fires

SEOUL (BBC): A 56-year-old man is being investigated in South Korea on suspicion of starting a deadly wildfire that killed 30 people.

The man, who has not been named, was performing an ancestral rite by a family grave on a hill in Uiseong county, North Gyeongsang province, at the time.

He has been booked - but not arrested - and will be called in for questioning once the investigation of the site has been completed. He denies the charges.

On Sunday, officials said the main fires had finally been brought under complete control - 10 days after they started, causing widespread damage to buildings, including historic temples.

Investigators reportedly spoke to the suspect's daughter who is said to have told them the fire began as her father tried to burn tree branches hanging over the graves with a cigarette lighter.

According to the Korea Forest Service, the fire burned more than 48,000 hectares - equivalent to about 80% of the size of the capital Seoul.

It also destroyed an estimated 4,000 structures, including homes, factories and a number of national treasures.

Goun Temple - a Unesco World Heritage Site - was among the temples destroyed in the blaze. It was built in 618 AD and was one of the largest in the province.

Most of the casualties were people in their 60s and 70s. Fuelled by strong and dry winds, the fires spread to several cities and counties.

Unseasonably warm weather, dry conditions and pine forests in the region also helped fuel the flames.

An investigation involving the police, fire authorities, and forest management

will be carried out next week.

Acting President Han Duck-soo said the government would provide financial support for those who have been displaced by the fires.

**Why have the wildfires in S Korea been so devastating?**

Strong winds, dense forest and unusually dry weather - that's the deadly combination that experts say is fuelling the largest wildfires in South Korea's history.

The inferno in the south-east has burned through 35,810 hectares (88,500 acres) as of Thursday - that's about half the size of New York City - killing 27 people so far and displacing tens of thousands.

Authorities believe the wildfires started by accident from human activity, but the main drivers of the devastation are dry land, and strong gusts sweeping over inland regions.

The high concentration of pine forest in North Gyeongsang province, where the fires are burning, is also "oiling" the blaze, said a forest disaster expert.

"Pine trees contain resin, which acts like oil, intensifying fires when ignited. This resin causes wildfires to burn faster, stronger, and longer," said Lee Byung-doo from the National Institute of Forest Science in Seoul.

Andong, one of the worst-hit cities, is known for its tranquil pine forests.

While they provide shelter and food for local wildlife and sometimes help break the wind, pine trees "become problematic during wildfires", Mr Lee told the BBC.

Unlike neighbouring countries such as China and North Korea, South Korea has made gains in forest cover over recent years.

"Most mountains are now filled with fallen

leaves and pine trees... This accumulation has become a significant factor in accelerating the spread of wildfire," says Baek Min-ho, a disaster prevention specialist at Kangwon National University.

Climate change is also to blame, experts say.

"This wildfire has once again exposed the harsh reality of a climate crisis unlike anything we've experienced before," South Korea's disaster chief Lee Han-kyung said on Thursday.

The ideal environment for these record blazes has been building for the past few weeks, which saw temperatures rise above 20C (68F), unusually high for spring. Analysis by Climate Central, which researches climate science, suggests that these high temperatures have been made up to five times more likely by global warming.

The unusual heat dried out the land and air, allowing fires to spread more rapidly, especially when combined with strong winds.

Dense tree cover and strong winds in the fire-hit region also pose substantial challenges to firefighting efforts.

On Wednesday, a 73-year-old pilot died when his firefighting helicopter crashed in Uiseong county. At least three other firefighters have been killed in the blazes.

"Because forests [in South Korea] contain large numbers of pine trees, the areas are particularly vulnerable when fires break out," he said.

Furthermore, pine trees retain their needles throughout winter, making them susceptible to "crown fires" - wildfires that spread by igniting the dense canopy of branches and leaves. This has contributed to the rapid and extensive spread of the flames over the past week.

Most of the 26 people

who died are in their 60s and 70s, officials say. South Korea is an ageing society, where one in five people are at least 65 years old.

North Gyeongsang is its second-oldest province, which also explains the relatively high death toll - it is especially difficult to evacuate older people in a disaster because they may have mobility issues or other health risks.

They may also have more difficulty accessing or interpreting evacuation orders.

Three residents of an elderly care facility in Yeongdeok county died on Wednesday, when the car they were in went up in flames. Only one out of four in the vehicle managed to flee in time, the Korea JoongAng Daily reported.

Acting President Han Duck-soo said on Thursday it was "worrying" that many of the victims are elderly, as he ordered the interior minister to relocate to North Gyeongsang to oversee relief efforts.

An Andong resident who evacuated but lost her home told the BBC her family and their neighbours were caught off guard by the fires.

"No one in the village was prepared," said the woman, who asked not to be named.

"We had to leave with nothing, and all our belongings are gone. Many of the residents are elderly, so I hope the government can provide temporary shelters where people can stay comfortably," she said.

Historical relics have also been burned to the ground - a significant loss to an area considered one of South Korea's cultural centres. These include treasures in two temples, each more than 1,000 years old. One of them, the Gounsa temple, dates back to the Silla dynasty (57BC to 935AD).

## Australia's Albanese expects 'one-on-one' discussion with Trump

SYDNEY (Reuters): Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Sunday he expected to have a one-on-one discussion with U.S. President Donald Trump on tariffs, as Washington prepares to announce new tariffs on its trading partners on April 2.

There are concerns Australia could be impacted by the looming escalation in the Trump administration's global trade war when it unveils the reciprocal tariffs on so-called "liberation day". Trump this month imposed steel and aluminium tariffs that affect Australian exports.

Albanese, speaking on the second full day of campaigning ahead of a May 3 general election in

Australia, said his government had engaged "very constructively" with U.S. officials on tariffs, ahead of the expected April 2 announcement.

Asked about the possibility of speaking with Trump on the issue, Albanese said: "We'll have a one-on-one discussion".

"A couple of weeks ago, the reason why that didn't occur was because the president made a decision to not talk to anyone and impose this regime on every country," Albanese added, in remarks televised by the Australian Broadcasting Corp from Canberra.

A key issue in Australia's election campaign is which leader - Albanese or the Liberal-

National coalition's Peter Dutton - would best handle relations with Trump, who exempted Australia from U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminium during his first presidential term.

Albanese has previously said his centre-left Labor government is "engaging on a daily basis" with the Trump administration over tariffs, pointing to his two phone calls with the U.S. president and early meetings between the two countries' defence and foreign ministers.

Also on Sunday, Albanese's government made a pledge to crack down on price gouging by the nation's supermarkets, as part of the five-week election campaign in

which the cost of living also is a central issue. Albanese on Saturday touted Labor's credentials on affordable healthcare.

The government is running neck-and-neck in opinion polls with the National-Liberal coalition, which has campaigned on a housing crisis that it claims is putting home ownership out of reach. Longer-term, the coalition wants to adopt nuclear power in the country.

After enjoying a healthy lead for much of his term, Albanese's personal approval ratings are now near those of Dutton, a former police officer and the defence minister in the last conservative government.

## Martinique's water woes drive anger at French rule

FORT-DE-FRANCE, (Reuters): In Martinique, a French territory in the Caribbean, tourists flock to crystalline waterfalls nestling in the tropical rainforests. But the water that comes out of Christelle Marie-Sainte's tap at home runs yellow.

"I don't drink the tap water," she said, outside a supermarket where she was buying locally-bottled Lafort water. A relatively low-cost brand, Lafort is double the price of an equivalent product in parts of Paris.

Anger at Martinique's prices and poor services erupted in months of protests and unrest late last year that saw dozens of businesses targeted and burned. The protests have largely given way to a movement that has won concessions from Paris, including a promise last week of government-backed legislation to tackle grocery prices, which official data shows are on average 40% higher than on the mainland.

Like many contentious issues in Martinique, water is intertwined with questions of class and race, including the prominence of a handful of families descended from white owners of enslaved people.

Known locally as Békés, the white creole families make up about 1% of the population but control swaths of the economy on the island of 350,000 people, the majority of whom are Afro-Caribbean, or descendants of Indian and Chinese indentured labourers.

The government has promised to open up the economy, but activists remain sceptical.

On a visit to Martinique on March 17, Overseas Minister Manuel Valls met with local politicians and

business leaders, including Stephane Hayot, son of Martinique's most successful businessman Bernard Hayot, whose supermarket-to-car dealerships company Groupe Bernard Hayot (GBH) has been a target of protesters' ire.

Valls called on the businessmen to be more transparent about profits, saying "unfair" supply chains and opacity stifled the economy. He said the government would soon pass a law to fight anti-competitive practices, building on two bills already in parliament.

Activists, some of whom call for independence, say more must be done. They are planning new protests around a trial next week against three protesters.

Valls' words "need to be followed by concrete, efficient and sustainable action," said Gwladys Roger, a leader of the movement, Gathering for the Protection of Afro-Caribbean People and Resources (RRPRAC), which has led the protests, where placards with images of water bottles and prices have featured.

GBH recently published consolidated annual accounts for the first time after a lawsuit by activists. In reply to questions from Reuters, Nicolas Assier de Pompignan, a GBH director, said the company published accounts because "times had changed" and there was pressure for transparency. He said there was "healthy competition" in Martinique and that GBH was surprised by Valls' comments.

The regional government led by Serge Letchimy is drawing up a wide-ranging bill to reduce reliance on imports by giving small farmers access to more land. It also seeks to centralise water management to lower prices and encourage

investment, Letchimy's office said.

"We need significant tax reforms, property reforms," Letchimy told Reuters.

More than 80% of the food on Martinique is imported, mostly from France.

Farmer Jerrick Venitus rears animals and grows fruit and vegetables for local markets. He called the current system a "colonial pact."

Almost half the farmland is planted with sugar for rum or bananas for export, a situation encouraged by European subsidies.

The banana, sugarcane and rum industries in 2023 received 161.5 million euros in support, a Reuters tally of French government accounts shows, representing 80% of all agricultural subsidy programs for Martinique. Venitus has yet to receive a 145,000 euro subsidy he applied for three years ago.

"We need to redistribute the cards and prioritise those producing for the local market," Venitus said, in his banana fields.

Discontent in French overseas territories is not unique to Martinique.

In the Pacific Ocean archipelago New Caledonia, an attempt to reduce the voting weight of indigenous Kanak people brought deadly unrest in May. In December, a cyclone devastated the Indian Ocean archipelago of Mayotte, near East Africa, killing 39 and highlighting poor living conditions.

In response to a request for comment, the French overseas ministry referred Reuters to Valls' speeches. The Elysee did not respond to a request for comment.

**WATER POOR**

Martinique, which France colonised in 1635, became a department of the

Republic in 1946. Its social indicators still trail the mainland.

More than a quarter of people are poor, a higher rate than in many Caribbean islands and twice that of mainland France.

Around half the households are "water poor" under U.N. guidelines, spending more than 3% of income on water bills, according to a 2017 report by France's sustainable development body. Tap water costs on average 28% more per cubic metre than in mainland France, government data shows.

"They make us pay for tap water as if it is drinkable, when it is not," said Roger, one of the activists on trial for entering the governor's residence in November at the height of the protests.

Drinking water in most towns in Martinique is within bacterial and chemical norms, but does not always meet quality standards, with high chlorine levels and a bad smell and taste noted in some towns, a health ministry database shows.

Benoit Vittecoq, director for the French geological survey in Martinique, blamed discoloured water on old piping and a lack of maintenance. Leaks also contribute to regular outages, he said.

Water cuts, sometimes lasting for days, further increase costs for people by pushing them to buy bottled water.

The distrust of mains water is compounded by fears related 1980s and 1990s pesticide pollution from plantations that grew bananas for export.

French health authorities found a "strong presumption of a link" between exposure to the pesticide and the risk of developing prostate cancer.

## Archeologists unearth signs from 1700s of British control in Florida after centuries of Spanish rule

FLORIDA (AP): The city of St. Augustine — with its centuries-old buildings and massive stone fort — is an enduring reminder of Spain's storied history in Florida, going back generations before the United States even existed. But for two decades in the 1700s, Great Britain controlled the region, and archeologists have finally found some of their long-sought-after footprints.

City archeologists identified a dry moat last fall of a British redoubt, a fortified military outpost, that had been constructed in 1781. Excavations were completed last month in the city's Lincolnville neighborhood, making way for the construction of a new single-family home.

"St. Augustine had a 20-year British period," city archeologist Andrea White said. "They came, and they built seven of these redoubts, and nobody has ever found any archeologically. We have rough ideas of where they were, and they show up on historic maps. But we've never found actual, tangible, archeological evidence for

any of them until recently."

The Spanish military built the Castillo de San Marcos in the late 1600s, and the fort remains on the western shore of Florida's Matanzas Bay, though as a national monument rather than a military installation.

When the British took control of Florida in 1763, St. Augustine already had extensive Spanish-built defenses, but British officers were concerned about an attack from a nearby river and ordered the construction of the outposts along the city's western edge.

White said Britain's relatively brief occupation of St. Augustine, which ended along with the American Revolution in 1783, has been largely forgotten by time, and the discovery of the fort is a way to reclaim a little piece of lost history.

"That's what's interesting about these British redoubts, they're the only defenses that the British built themselves," White said. "Everything else that's in St. Augustine or the surrounding area that everyone's familiar with,



those were already built by the Spanish. And then the British just kind of reoccupied them."

The structure was discovered thanks to a unique archeological preservation ordinance adopted by St. Augustine in 1986, White

said. Founded in 1565, the city is the oldest continuously occupied part of the U.S. to previously be a European settlement. To document and preserve that history, St. Augustine has its own archeology program that is part of the

city's planning and permitting department.

"We get a chance to come in and document what's there prior to construction," White said. "We never stop construction, that's not the goal. It's just to give us a little bit of

time to come in, document what might be there, learn a little bit more about our history, and then the project gets to move forward."

White knew the area under development had a long history, going back to a Native American mission

in the early 1700s, followed later by an agricultural plantation and after the Civil War, the construction of the Lincolnville neighborhood.

"So we knew we had multiple centuries of history that could potentially be on the property, but we're pretty excited to actually find evidence," White said. "What we found evidence of was a large moat about 15 feet wide that would have been part of the rampart."

Researchers found few artifacts at the site and are still unsure about the fort's actual size and shape, but they did recover thousands of different types of seeds. White said they're working with a paleoethnobotanist, who studies the history of how humans and plants interact, to learn how the structure was built and used.

It's possible that plants like Spanish bayonet or prickly pear cactuses were used to prevent erosion or to slow down attacking soldiers.

"So we're very hopeful that we might find some

good information from our plant remains that we've recovered," White said.

Jason Heidegerken, the contractor working on the lot where the fort's moat was found, said the city's archeological program can certainly cause delays, but White and her team were great and communicating well, so he could adjust his timelines.

"I've been around St. Augustine since 1980 personally, and part of the attraction is the history," Heidegerken said. "So if you want to live there and do this kind of business, it's to be expected, and you need to have the patience for it."

Over the past four decades, the city's archeology program has completed more than 1,200 projects. Not only have researchers collected data from Spanish colonial times but also Native American settlements and villages going back 4,000 years.

"I actually think it's pretty cool what the city does. I'm a history nut myself," Heidegerken said. "I think it's pretty neat."



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## Syria, Lebanon sign agreement on border issue

Syria and Lebanon have signed an agreement on demarcating borders in Jeddah on Friday. The agreement was signed by Syrian Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra and Lebanese Defence Minister Michel Menassa who held talks in the presence of Saudi Arabian Defence Minister Khalid Bin Salman.

It has been agreed to form specialised committees to sort out the details. There were tensions between Syria and Lebanon earlier in the month when three Syrian soldiers were reported to have been kidnapped by Hezbollah and killed, while seven Lebanese soldiers were killed in the skirmishes between the two countries.

The Syrian and Lebanese ministers had agreed on the "strategic importance o demarcate border". The new Syrian government which had taken control after the overthrow of Bashar Al Assad had suspected Iranian-backed Hezbollah of supporting the pro-Assad regime elements, but Hezbollah had denied involvement.

The situation in Syria is of strategic importance and interest. When Bashar Al Assad was in power, it was quite evident that Iran, along with Russia, was supporting his government. Turkey was opposed to the Assad government because they suspected that it supported the Kurdish rebels. But in the last few months of Assad's regime, Turkey was willing to restore relations with Damascus.

Similarly, there was a division in Lebanon over the Syrian factor. Many of the refugees who had fled Syria after the 2011 Arab Spring rebellion, went to Lebanon and to Turkey.

The latest agreement is a recognition that Syria and Lebanon have to respect each other's independent status, and that neither side can claim to have any strategic interest in the other country. The securing of the Lebanon-Syria border is also expected to end the smuggling, especially of drugs, from Lebanon into Syria. It has been a complaint made even by the Saudi authorities.

The strategic contours of the Middle East are changing. With the new government in place in Damascus, the internal strife in the country has ended. The pro-Assad forces have been pushed back after a breakout of clashes in the north-east of the country.

Lebanon, which had been through political and economic turmoil in the last few years, is trying to find its feet. Lebanon has been under attack from Israel in the wake of the war in Gaza. After a brief lull, Israel has resumed attacks in south Lebanon. Israel has been hostile towards Syria, which goes a long way back in the history of the region. And Syria-Israel relations will continue to be tense.

Saudi Arabia playing the mediator between Lebanon and Syria is the new factor in diplomacy in the region. Riyadh is acceptable to both Damascus' new government as well as to the government in Beirut. This will most likely keep out the interference of outside powers like the United States and France. France has shown concern and interest in both Syria and Lebanon. The French connection in the two countries is quite strong.

But the Saudi mediation shows that the internal differences in the region need to be sorted out by the regional players themselves. Saudi Arabia, which is the immediate neighbour to both Syria and Lebanon, helps Riyadh in playing the mediator's role.

Syria's President Ahmed Al Sharaa, who had led the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which has now been disbanded, and whose fighters have become part of the Syrian army, has restored a sense of stability to Syria unlike the polarising impact of Bashar Al Assad, who was opposed by the United States and supported by Russia and Iran. Syria was a bone of contention. Now, outside powers are not declaring their stakes in Syria and in Lebanon. This lends to regional solutions to internal differences.

### Important Notice

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## It's not just Trump, the EU is also waging an anti-migration crusade

For months now, US President Donald Trump's administration has been leading a well-publicised crackdown on migration. The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have turned deportations into media spectacles, posting videos of chained deportees and releasing their names to spread fear.

Within the past few weeks, the Trump administration has expanded its deportation surge to include even foreign nationals with legal status in the country, including academics. The president has pledged to deport 11 million people – doubling the number removed under President Joe Biden and even surpassing President Barack Obama's two terms, during which 5.3 million people were deported.

While the world's attention is focusing on Trump's anti-migration spectacle, the European Union is quietly carrying out its own crackdown. Its policies are far less visible, yet they are just as ruthless.

In the first nine months of 2024, EU states issued 327,880 expulsion orders, with 27,740 people forcibly removed between July and September. Deportations have intensified, as EU states have begun implementing the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, which was passed in December 2023 and entered into force in June 2024.

Under its provisions, EU members are fast-tracking removals, expanding detention centres, and strengthening cooperation with third countries to facilitate deportations. However, it is not only member states that will be part of this.

Balkan countries that have to fulfill certain criteria to become part of the EU, through the EU accession process, are effectively being turned into a border zone for the EU. Unlike EU member states, Balkan candidate states had no say in shaping this pact, yet they are forced to implement it and abide by what can only be described as colonial blackmail.

Most recently, the EU made its expectations clear at the December EU-Western Balkans Summit, declaring that, "We need to

Nid ara Ahmetašević and Emina Bu inkic

strengthen our cooperation and strategic partnerships in migration management, which is a shared challenge and responsibility and a key priority."

This is part of the EU's broader strategy to externalise migration control and fortify its borders, but also to move away from any responsibility and accountability for violations of human rights and transfer them on to third countries.

A key part of this strategy is the creation of "return hubs" close to and outside the EU's borders – places where unwanted people can be warehoused. This model, championed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, is already in motion. People are being sent to the Balkans, Turkey and North Africa. Frontex, the EU's border agency, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) play key roles in enforcing these removals.

In practice, we can see what that looks like in Croatia, the EU member state bordering two Balkan non-member states – Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Croatia has played an important role in maintaining the EU border regime by normalising pushbacks, which over the years caused numerous deaths and injuries and represented a massive violation of fundamental human rights. Instead of establishing responsibility for this, the EU rewarded Croatia – along with Bulgaria and Romania – by allowing them to join the Schengen Agreement, which abolishes border control between member states.

The EU has also strengthened readmission agreements – bilateral deals that allow EU states to send people back to their country of origin or country of transit, pushing them to the edge of the EU or outside its borders, basically to offload migrants. As a result, the Balkans have become a dumping ground for people the EU wants to expel.

Croatian authorities have not published any reports on migration control since 2020, but Minister of Interior Davor Božinović said in January that border police prevented 71,000

"illegal entries" in 2024. The Bosnian Office for Foreigners reported that in 2023, Croatian authorities returned 4,265 people into Bosnian territory. Bosnia, with financial aid from the EU, removed 893 people to their countries of origin or countries that accepted them through interstate agreements, while 96 migrants left through the IOM's controversial "voluntary return" programme, which scholar Jean-Pierre Gauci has described as "disguised deportation".

Currently, Croatia has four detention and return hubs located in Jevo (near Zagreb), Tovarnik (by the Croatian-Serbian border), Dugi Dol (along the Croatian-Bosnian border) and Trilj (along the Croatian-Bosnian border).

NGOs and journalists have documented widespread rights violations inside these centres, including, inhumane living conditions and indefinite detention. It has also been a consistent practice of the local authorities to send foreign nationals to these centres for a few days and then to take them out and push them across the border with Serbia or Bosnia. There have also been cases of children and single women being detained in overcrowded men's facilities.

Since the beginning of this year, Croatian police have intensified their activities along the eastern border. Their officers will be joined by colleagues from Slovenia and Italy under a newly signed agreement for joint patrols of the Croatian border. At the same time, border police have received more surveillance cameras and police vehicles equipped with surveillance technology. After an EU ministerial meeting in Brussels earlier this month, Božinović declared that deportations are no longer a "taboo" topic in the EU and that the European Commission was looking into legislative proposals to speed them up.

Croatia's non-EU borders are already dotted with unmarked graves of people who have perished while on the move to seek safety and security. The new pact will only intensify the brutality asylum seekers face at Croatia's borders and in non-member states like

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia and elsewhere.

The new pact is allocating millions of euros for policies and technologies that will directly feed into the global politics of dehumanisation of people on the move. It is also empowering Frontex, which has long been accused of complicity in illegal pushbacks and human rights violations, to play an even bigger role in border control and deportations. Its annual budget for deportation-related expenses alone is 18 million euros (\$19.5m).

As we write this, alarm bells are ringing across the EU. In Germany, solidarity groups are trying to stop the deportations of Palestinians. In Italy, the government is still looking for ways to send unwanted migrants to centres built for that purpose in Albania. Austria has temporarily halted family reunions for asylum claimants. France has introduced more strict immigration policies and started to deport more people, which led to a row with Algeria due to a high number of deportees.

It is now increasingly clear that Western countries, led by the EU and the US, are using migrants as scapegoats to justify militarised border control. The EU's collaboration with Israel in developing advanced surveillance and AI technology is central to this strategy. The very systems used to track and control migrants today – drones, biometric databases and predictive policing – were tested in occupied Palestine before being deployed at European borders. Asylum seekers, Palestinians, and those in solidarity with them are the first targets, but they will not be the last.

If we fail to challenge these policies, this machinery of control will continue expanding, ensnaring more and more people in its grip. The only way forward is to build transnational solidarity networks that resist these injustices and hold those in power accountable while exposing the flawed political and economic systems that allow for the global dehumanisation of disadvantaged communities. The alternative is to remain silent and allow a future where no one is safe.

## Good news about debt

Allah Nawaz Khan

The public has been given good news that Pakistan is going to receive a loan from the IMF. By the way, negotiations between Pakistan and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) have just been successful. After these negotiations, a staff-level agreement has been reached between Pakistan and the IMF for the first review. Final approval will be made later, but the loan will be given because the IMF will get a lot of benefits in return for this loan. Pakistan will get \$1.3 billion under a twenty-eight-month arrangement to deal with climate change and disasters. This Extended Fund Facility arrangement will be for thirty-seven (37) months. A total of (2) two billion dollars is likely to be received. In Pakistan, obtaining a loan is considered a success, but in other countries, debt is considered a problem. Taking a loan is not a bad thing, but

***The assistance provided through the Benazir Income Support Program is destroying self-esteem. Women are being pushed for two or four thousand. Retailers also take bribes and humiliate them in exchange for withdrawing money, but no one is going to ask them. The money from the Benazir Income Support Program can also be given for better spending.***

..... it should be used for the betterment of the country. Corruption is rampant in Pakistan and a large part of the loan amount is lost due to corruption. Other countries spend the money for national interest. Pakistan gets the loan at a high interest rate and has to accept other conditions. These conditions demand the imposition of heavy taxes and there are other conditions as well. The reason for taxes and conditions The plight of the Pakistani people is being wiped out. The falling value of the Pakistani rupee is creating a huge crisis for the economy. It is a pity that better policies are not being made to improve the economy. If the best policies are adopted, Pakistan can become economically strong. There was a time when Pakistan was not so weak economically, but now it has reached the worst condition. Many institutions have been privatized and many institutions are about to be privatized.

The IMF has said that the economic situation in Pakistan has improved (it is another matter that the economic condition of the people has become very bad). The IMF statement also states that the goals of the Benazir Income Support Program have been achieved. The Benazir Income Support Program is apparently supporting many families, but its losses are also very high. The assistance provided through the Benazir Income Support Program is destroying self-esteem. Women are being pushed for two or four thousand. Retailers also take bribes and humiliate them in exchange for withdrawing money, but no one is going to ask them. The money from the Benazir Income Support Program can also be given for better spending. If it is necessary to give money, it can also be given through a mobile account, taking care of self-

esteem. According to the IMF, Pakistan is facing environmental threats, and it will help Pakistan against environmental threats and natural disasters. It has also been announced to support Pakistan's efforts for energy sector reforms. Now it is obvious that Pakistan has to make concessions. And in the name of development, loans will be given and the money will be recovered with heavy interest. The conditions will be different. Natural disasters keep happening in Pakistan. Sometimes floods, sometimes unseasonal rains and sometimes other disasters are faced by Pakistanis, but no preparations are made to combat these disasters. If Pakistan's economy always runs on debt, this country will never be able to develop. Whenever Pakistan gets a loan, it also comes with a conditionality. In the current conditions, there is a demand for a reduction in subsidies and a reduction in

..... expenses in relation to energy. To reduce expenses, it is necessary to reduce the privileges of the privileged class, but it is a pity that the public has to bear the entire loss. Electricity has been made very expensive, although it was announced that 200 to 300 units of electricity would be provided free of charge. Electricity bills have become unaffordable for the public. A condition has also been imposed by the IMF that income tax collection on agricultural income will be ensured from July 1, 2025. The agriculture sector is facing the worst conditions. The problem of agriculture needs to be resolved on a priority basis. If subsidies are given to agriculture and electricity or other sectors, it is important to ensure that the public benefits from this subsidy. Announcements are made that Pakistan is going to get rid of the IMF soon, but after some time, the announcements Those who are doing so are making requests for loans from the IMF. It is also often heard that Pakistan is going bankrupt. The public keeps wondering whether bankruptcy is better or the current situation? Bankruptcy may not be as harmful as the damage it is causing now. Taxes should be levied because the system of any country runs on the money obtained from taxes, but tax money should not be the focus of corruption. Pakistan is borrowing on debt and the people of Pakistan do not get the benefit of it, but the nation has to pay. For the economic stability of the country, it is necessary to pay immediate attention to agriculture and other sectors. The public thinks where the borrowed money is being spent? The entire Pakistan is running on debt and how long will it continue to run? Debt is draining the lifeblood of the Pakistani nation, so it can only move forward by getting rid of debt.

## Italy's surprising new political stability under Meloni

Andrew Hammond

Italy has long been famed for the large number of governments, almost 70, it has had in the post-war era. Yet this political instability might be changing under the country's first female prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, whose administration on Thursday became the fifth-longest-serving in the almost eight-decade history of the Italian Republic.

Certainly, 887 days in power is still relatively short by the standards of governments in many other European nations. It is nonetheless a key milestone in Italy that moved the Meloni government ahead of the first Romano Prodi administration, which lasted 886 days between May 1996 and October 1998.

Moreover, with the next Italian national election potentially not taking place until December 2027, Meloni could serve about half a decade in power before going to the polls.

That would be a significant feat, given that the average tenure of Italian prime ministers has been so much shorter in the post-war era.

It would not only see her government best the tenure of the fourth-longest-serving government, led by ex-Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, which served for 1,024 days from February 2014 to December 2016, she might even top the term of the longest-surviving administration, former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's second government, which served for 1,412 days between June 2001 and April 2005.

Not only might Meloni be a major exception to the long-standing pattern in Italy of constantly switching political leaders in office, she could also have a reasonable shot at reelection if she can remain in power.

Her rightist Brothers of Italy organization is currently polling at just below 30 percent, significantly

ahead of the left-of-center Democratic Party, its closest rival.

One of the several ironies of Meloni's political longevity to date is that few, if any, forecasters saw it coming. When she took office in 2022, many perceived her as little more than a probable footnote in the nation's history.

Yet she has not only become the country's key domestic politician; she is also helping Italy to "punch above its weight" on the international stage too. This is in part because of her ideological bond with US President Donald Trump and key members of his team, including Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who is informally leading the Department of Government Efficiency initiative in Washington.

Musk was a keynote speaker at the Brothers of Italy national political convention in 2023, and

Meloni was the only European national leader invited to Trump's second presidential inauguration in January.

If Meloni's political stock has not yet peaked, it is likely to happen during Trump's second presidency. Not only do the two share common policy goals, including clamping down on immigration, she also aspires to lead Europe's diplomacy with the administration in Washington and has asserted that "the US-EU axis (now) passes through Italy."

Certainly, Trump has other admirers in Europe, including Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. However, Meloni believes she is the political "bridge" between the Trump team and Europe as part of a populist alliance between Washington and Rome.

One key test of Meloni's ambition to become Europe's interlocutor with

the new administration in the US will be how much she shifts her stance on foreign policy in a Trumpian direction.

This includes the issue of Ukraine. While she has shown strong support for Kyiv so far, public opinion in Italy is more sympathetic to Russia than it is in much of the rest of Europe.

Meloni's political calculus on this issue is also shaped by the sympathy that anti-establishment political parties such as The League, which forms part of her Italian coalition, have had for Russia under President Vladimir Putin.

Beyond Ukraine, another area of foreign policy over which Meloni and Trump can bond is China. Trump's first administration was furious when, in 2019, Italy became the first G7 nation to sign up for Beijing's massive Belt and Road infrastructure project, a decision that was reversed by Meloni for security and economic reasons.

However, her global leadership credentials are undercut by the fact that Italy is one of the lowest spenders in the NATO alliance on defense. The nation contributed just 1.5 percent of gross domestic product in 2024, which is well below the 2 percent threshold NATO says members should spend, and far from the 5 percent demanded by Trump.

While Meloni's longevity in office so far owes much to her perceived pragmatism, she has shown some authoritarian tendencies, too.

This is reminiscent of her rightist political roots, including prior praise for the former Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini.

Yet Meloni has so far avoided major international controversy. At the same time, she has benefited from the perception that her brand of rightist populism has the political winds blowing in its sails internationally.



# A sad week for Israeli democracy

Democracies do not just suddenly disappear they are gradually eroded from within by their enemies, similar to the way in which cliffs are eroded by the ocean: wave after wave, sometimes gentle, sometimes ferocious, until they finally collapse.

Because democracy is a maze of ideologies, values, procedures, institutions, intentions and, above all, those people who deeply believe in it and are devoted to it, harming it requires an assault on all of them, and that is what the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been doing for more than two years now.

During this week of all weeks, however, it seems as though the “mere” tidal wave of antidemocratic measures has grown into a destructive tsunami. This was a week in which the government decided to move to dismiss one of the most crucial gatekeepers of the democratic system, Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, while continuing its efforts to remove from his post the head of security agency Shin Bet, Ronen Bar.

This was a week in which legislation that is at the heart of the government’s so-called judicial reform process but is effectively judicial vandalism, a law that grants the government unprecedented influence over judicial appointments, was passed in the Knesset while police brutality against pro-democracy protesters reached new and appalling levels.

This was a week in which Netanyahu shamelessly tried once again to avoid giving evidence in his corruption trial, and derail the investigation into allegations of corruption and breaches of security among his close advisers by exploiting the power of his office.

This was a week in which the war in Gaza was resumed to ensure the stability of Israel’s governing coalition, at the expense of the people of Gaza and probably the hostages still

held by Hamas. It had nothing to do with the security of the country.

And it was also a week in which the government approved the construction of 13 new settlements to ensure that millions of Palestinians, through the occupation and the possible annexation of their land, will remain deprived of their political, human, and civil rights.

These were seven days that might change Israel forever. Seven days that raise serious doubts about the ability of its democracy to survive.

A country that is defined by its own Declaration of

Yossi Mekelberg

and personal needs — was stripped away this week.

I know, this has not been much of a shock to most of us. But at least the battle lines between the democratic and authoritarian camps are now clearer. Netanyahu’s level of cynicism in being prepared to lead his country, with ever-increasing haste, down the slippery slope of authoritarianism has been frightening in its pace and its nature.

Not a single sacred value, institution or role that protects the very foundations of Israel’s democratic system, which admit-

tedly has always been fragile, has been spared the rage of a politician who is clinging to power while abusing his position without compunction in an attempt to get off the hook in his corruption trial.

But increasingly there is also the impression that the trail of destruction caused by his unquenchable thirst for power is motivated by a hunger for revenge against his own people — political opponents, the gatekeepers of democracy, even those who loyally serve their country and are ready to sacrifice their lives for it — for daring to put him on trial or question his suitability for the job, let alone demand an independent inquiry into the Oct. 7 disaster.

Netanyahu rages, as do his minions in government

she struggles to preserve the principles of transparency and accountability. Netanyahu’s abuse of power is as manipulative as it is calculated. When Itamar Ben Gvir, the leader of the ultranationalist Otzma Yehudit party, left the coalition government over his opposition to the ceasefire deal with Hamas he demanded that the attorney general be sacked. Now Shin Bet has suggested that Khanists, Jewish supremacists who follow the deplorable racist ideology of assassinated ultranationalist politician Meir Khana (of whom Ben Gvir is one), have infiltrated police ranks to arrest and throw into jail Bar, the agency’s chief.

With the war in Gaza now raging again and the government moving to dis-

miss both Bar and Baharav-Miara, and declaring that any Supreme Court ruling that reverses the decisions will be ignored, Otzma Yehudit is back as part of the government, ensuring that Netanyahu’s coalition now enjoys the most support it has had in the Knesset since the prime minister returned to power two years ago.

This is the sad reality of Israel’s democracy this week. The nation’s parliament, which should be a bastion against the antidemocratic legislation and policies of the government, has been transformed into a rubber stamp for laws that discriminate against those who are most devoted to the country’s security and prosperity, in order to bestow privileges on those who contribute next to nothing and even harm the country.

This week the budget bill, which in Israel amounts to a vote of no confidence should it fail to pass, passed with a big majority. This means tax hikes and public service cuts, while billions of shekels are handed out to the ultraorthodox sector, the least productive in Israel, and more money is allocated to the expansion of settlements, a major tool for burying any hopes for a peace agreement with the Palestinians based on a two-state solution.

Netanyahu is doing all of this simply because it keeps him in power, which is the only ideology he adheres to. So, too, does his support for legalization of the draft dodging by the ultraorthodox, despite the unbelievable and intolerable sacrifices of everyone else who serves in the army as regular or reserve troops.

When the entirety of a country’s political and social systems exists merely to serve the needs and whims of a leader, democracy dies. It is left for those who believe that Israeli democracy can be salvaged to fight for that cause and, unlike their opponents, to do so while respecting the law.

# Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Tigray are sleepwalking into war

Hafed Al-Ghwel

alliance soured quickly after Addis Ababa and the Tigrayan authorities made peace.

Eritrea sees Ethiopia’s federal government and the TPLF’s interim administration converging, a scenario it has long feared. Some reports even suggest Eritrean leaders felt more threatened after the Pretoria deal because they believed it increased cooperation against Eritrean interests between the leadership in Tigray and Abiy’s government. With Abiy eyeing access to the Red Sea, and Tigray in turmoil, Eritrea might calculate that confrontation is looming.

Should Ethiopia and Eritrea relapse into war, the consequences would reverberate across an already

One of the immediate causes of the present meltdown in Tigray is a bitter power struggle within the leadership of the region. The TPLF has split into rival camps led by its long-time chairperson, Debretsion Gebremichael, and the federally appointed interim president, Getachew Reda.

This feud has now spilled over into open confrontation, with each side claiming to represent the true Tigrayan cause. The resulting divide has paralyzed governance and security in the region. The interim regional government — short on trust and beset by factional mutiny — is pleading for Prime Minister Abiy to intervene as armed loyalists on both sides jostle for control.

What was left of the Pretoria Agreement’s security framework is rapidly collapsing, with former comrades-in-arms now clashing, civilians again fleeing in fear, and Addis Ababa’s authority in the region becoming increasingly tenuous.

Neighboring Eritrea is watching these developments with growing alarm — and, naturally, some sense of opportunism. It remains deeply hostile to the TPLF, in any form, and seeks to prevent any resurgent Tigrayan power along its border.

Also at the heart of the Eritrean unease is Ethiopia’s revived push for access to the Red Sea coast. Abiy has repeatedly declared that regaining a seaport is an existential imperative for landlocked Ethiopia, which lost its coastline when Eritrea gained independence in 1993. Ethiopia currently pays about \$1 billion a year to ship goods via Djibouti, and Abiy’s government has openly stated that Ethiopia has a sovereign right to sea access.

To Eritrea, such discourse sounds like a direct, certainly an implied, threat to its territory, and in particular to the port of Assab, which Ethiopia covets.

The bad blood runs deep. Eritrea and Ethiopia fought a border war from 1998 to 2000 and remained bitter rivals until Abiy’s rapprochement in 2018. Eritrea then aligned with Abiy against the TPLF during the Tigray war. But this “enemy-of-my-enemy”

Even Egypt is possibly a part of the equation. Cairo has had reservations with Ethiopia over the waters of the Nile. Egypt has cultivated ties with Eritrea and Sudan as counterweights. This week, Eritrea’s foreign minister visited Egypt to coordinate their positions, with both governments pointedly asserting that Red Sea security should be led by coastal nations — implicitly sidelining Ethiopia.

Eritrea and Egypt share concerns about an ascendant Ethiopia, and a conflict could bring them into even closer alignment. Egypt might see an opportunity to press Ethiopia on the Nile issue if the country were bogged down with fighting on several fronts.

Tremors from any of these, and other, interconnected fault lines — the

**Eritrea sees Ethiopia’s federal government and the TPLF’s interim administration converging, a scenario it has long feared. Some reports even suggest Eritrean leaders felt more threatened after the Pretoria deal because they believed it increased cooperation against Eritrean interests between the leadership in Tigray and Abiy’s government. With Abiy eyeing access to the Red Sea, and Tigray in turmoil, Eritrea might calculate that confrontation is looming. Should Ethiopia and Eritrea relapse into war, the consequences would reverberate across an already fragile region. The ongoing civil war in Sudan would probably be the first arena of spillover; the Sudanese Armed Forces and its rival military faction, the Rapid Support Forces, each seek external support, and the conflict in Tigray has already aroused suspicions of meddling. The RSF at one point accused Tigrayan fighters of joining the fray on the side of the SAF. At the same time, Eritrea has reportedly been backing tribal militias in eastern Sudan to help contain the spread of the RSF near the border.**

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A full-on Ethiopia-Eritrea war could therefore entangle Sudan on several fronts: Ethiopia might lean on it for strategic access or support, while Eritrea could intensify its covert support for Sudanese factions for instance. Naturally, such proxy entanglements would demolish the fragile efforts to bring stability to Sudan, dimming hopes for peace in the short term.

Meanwhile, Somalia’s security woes would likely deepen. The country’s federal government relies heavily on regional support, including Ethiopian troops, to keep militants at bay. If Ethiopia becomes consumed by a war at home, its military deployments in Somalia could cease, providing insurgent group Al-Shabab with an opening.

Therefore, a wider conflict would be catastrophic at a time when cooperation against extremists and famine relief is crucial.

civil war in Sudan, South Sudan’s fragility, Somalia’s insurgency, Ethiopia’s rivalries with Eritrea and Egypt — would not stop at the borders of one country but would likely spread across the Red Sea corridor, potentially undermining security on African and Arabian shores.

With the Horn of Africa teetering on the brink, the window for preventive diplomacy is rapidly closing. The cost of inaction would be enormous. A renewed interstate war in the region could make other, existing flashpoints dramatically worse, and risk drawing in extra-regional powers.

Yet so far, external engagement has been dismal and inadequate, given the urgent need for high-level, proactive diplomatic interventions. A first step could be to press all sides to halt military build-ups and inflammatory rhetoric; essentially hitting the pause button on the march to war.

Above all, mediators need to be laser focused on internal reconciliation within Tigray. The feuding TPLF factions must be brought back to the negotiating table to prevent a political breakdown from sparking a full-blown civil war.

If the global community remains passive, Ethiopia and Tigray might well sleepwalk into a war that no one truly wants, in a region that has known enough bloodshed. With firm and farsighted diplomacy, however, another catastrophe can still be averted.

# Terrorism assessment for Afghanistan

According to the US government’s annual threat assessment, released by its intelligence community this week, Daesh remains the most significant terrorism challenge facing America and its partners.

The assessment is part of a broader report that addresses all threats to the US including, but not limited to, terrorism. Notably, this year’s report includes an alarming section about the role of Daesh in Afghanistan.

It states that Daesh’s Afghan branch, the so-called ISIS-K, “remains the most capable of carrying out external terrorist attacks and maintains the intent to conduct attacks in South and Central Asia, and globally, although its capabilities vary.” The report also warns that the group is “expanding capability beyond South Asia and ability to inspire individuals to conduct attacks abroad.”

The US is not alone in this assessment. A recent report by the UN Security Council similarly highlighted the growing threat from Daesh in Afghanistan. It stated that the group maintains a presence throughout South and Central Asia, even though its operational hub remains in Afghanistan.

The report included detailed intelligence on the group’s infrastructure, noting: “The recruits (for Daesh) received training

near the Yawan district of Badakhshan province, where a camp for fighters and suicide bombers was located.”

The fact that the UN report could provide such precise details without prompting meaningful international discussion about how to address the threat is deeply concerning.

But it is not only Daesh

Luke Coffey

various intelligence agencies, and the US drone strike that killed Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri in Kabul in July 2022.

According to the same UN report, Afghanistan is now a “permissive environment allowing Al-Qaeda to consolidate, with the presence of safe houses and training camps scattered across” the country. The report goes on to state that lower- and mid-ranking members of Al-Qaeda’s leadership have been granted sanctuary in Kabul, while senior members deemed high-value targets are sheltered in the provinces.

**Afghanistan is now a “permissive environment allowing Al-Qaeda to consolidate, with the presence of safe houses and training camps scattered across” the country. The report goes on to state that lower- and mid-ranking members of Al-Qaeda’s leadership have been granted sanctuary in Kabul, while senior members deemed high-value targets are sheltered in the provinces. Despite the warnings from the UN and the US intelligence community, no significant international response has emerged. Many observers are looking to Washington to take the lead, especially given the belief that the current crisis stems from the manner in which the US withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. Biden administration showed little appetite for re-engagement with Afghanistan after its chaotic exit from the country. President Trump, meanwhile, has commented several times on the country, but usually as a way to criticize Biden’s withdrawal of forces.**

that remains a concern. It is well known that Al-Qaeda has been allowed to reestablish its foothold in Afghanistan since the Taliban seized power in August 2021. This is evidenced by open-source intelligence gleaned from social media posts, publicly available assessments from

training camps scattered across” the country. The report goes on to state that lower- and mid-ranking members of Al-Qaeda’s leadership have been granted sanctuary in Kabul, while senior members deemed high-value targets are sheltered in the provinces.

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However, one point

# International Day of Zero Waste: turning waste into opportunities

For the third consecutive year, the world is observing International Day of Zero Waste, marked annually on March 30.

This year’s day, themed “Towards Zero Waste in Fashion and Textiles,” emphasizes the importance of reducing the impact of the clothing sector’s waste, and promotes sustainability and circularity.

**Textile waste: a growing crisis**

The textile industry is taking a heavy toll on the planet. It is responsible for 2 to 8 percent of global planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions and 9 percent of annual microplastic pollution ending up in oceans. The

industry also consumes 215 trillion liters of water per year and uses about 3,500 chemicals in production, many of which are toxic for both humans and the environment, including soil, water, animal health, and plant life.

The linear business model of fashion and textile sector is fueling overproduction and overconsumption. Driven by an effective marketing machine that is being replicated by other sectors, coupled with lower prices, and the efficiency of online shopping, this trend is contributing to the global waste and pollution crises.

Each year, 92 million tons of textile waste are generated worldwide with

an estimate that every second, the equivalent of a garbage truck full of clothing is disposed of around the world. Only 8 percent of textiles fibers in 2023 were made from recycled sources, with less than 1 percent of the total fiber market coming from textile-to-textile recycling and around 13 percent of clothing being recycled to mostly lower-value uses such as insulation and cleaning cloths. This lack of fiber recycling practices is estimated to equate to an annual material value loss of more than \$100 billion.

**Circularity is key** Through its Textile Initiative, the UN Environment Programme is

focused on accelerating the transition toward a sustainable and circular textile value chain. The program has set out a roadmap for stakeholders to transform the sector using the life cycle approach, with the aim to generate business revenue from circular business models such as reuse, repair, and circular products, instead of selling products produced from virgin fibers.

Moreover, consumer awareness and behavioral change is essential to turn the tide on overconsumption and overproduction, along with transparency in information sharing as to

Sami Dimassi

what goes into each product, covering both environmental and social issues. To that end, UNEP has also developed a Sustainable Fashion Communication Playbook whereby it calls for a commitment to all communication to be evidence-based and data-driven.

In West Asia, UNEP established the West Asia Sustainable Fashion Academy in 2021, as an influential regional platform within the fashion industry to drive sustainability and circularity across the textile value chain in the region. WASFA has engaged with different stakeholders thro-

ugh capacity-building initiatives, behavioral change campaigns, as well as research.

**Composting: a sustainable solution for organic waste**

Zero waste is not limited to textile waste. In West Asia, over 50 percent of the municipal solid waste destined for land disposal is made of organic waste, 85 percent of which is food waste. Uncontrolled decomposition emits methane, a greenhouse gas, and waste is estimated to account for 20 percent of global methane emissions.

This is where composting offers a solution. It consists of transitioning organic waste away from landfill

disposal, and turning it into economic opportunities, transforming it through a natural recycling process into organic fertilizers improving soil quality and returning nutrients back to the soil.

The UNEP Regional Office for West Asia has developed a guide on “Composting Solid Organic Waste from Municipal Sources in West Asia” to promote the recycling of organic waste through locally tailored composting techniques, from planning, design, and operation of composting facilities.

**Way forward** Managing waste requires a multi-stakeholder approach. Governments

have a duty to enact stricter regulations to prevent waste generation and limit its production, while investing in sustainable infrastructure.

Businesses must adopt circular economy principles, reducing waste through recycling and repurposing.

Individuals must shift their mindset and embrace zero-waste by taking conscious and sustainable choices in their daily lives.

Our aim for the future is not to commemorate the International Day for Zero Waste by covering problems, but we hope to highlight achievements that will “build a fairer, and more sustainable planet.”





# Solar power gains momentum in Pakistan

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan's solar energy sector has gained momentum in recent years, with increasing investments in renewable energy infrastructure. The country has seen a steady rise in solar adoption across industrial, commercial, and residential sectors, driven by rising electricity costs, frequent power shortages, and government incentives promoting clean energy. Against this backdrop, global solar leader Trinasolar has further strengthened its commitment to Pakistan by signing MoUs with major distributors at

the Solar Pakistan 2025 exhibition in Lahore.

The agreements, signed with Mesol, Diwan, NMC Group, and Premier Energy, will facilitate the distribution of Trinasolar's 210mm n-type i-TOPCon Vertex N modules across Pakistan. These advanced solar modules, including the 725W (NEG21C.20), 645W (NEG19RC.20), and DUOMAX N 600W (NEG18C.20), offer high efficiency, better performance under extreme temperatures, and lower Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE), making them well-suited to Pakistan's diverse climate conditions.

Industry experts believe these partnerships will accelerate Pakistan's renewable energy transition by improving the availability of reliable and cost-effective solar solutions. Speaking at the signing, Edison Zhou, Head of Pakistan, Australia, and New Zealand said: "We are proud to collaborate with leading Pakistani distributors. These agreements mark an important step in expanding access to our latest Vertex N modules and supporting Pakistan's clean energy future."

Representatives from local distributors also highlighted the importance of

these collaborations. Yousuf Allahwala, Director of Mesol, stated that the partnership would bring "world-class solar technology" to Pakistan, while Saleem Diwan, CEO of Diwan, said it would help businesses achieve "maximum performance and long-term savings."

The industry remains at the forefront of the global solar industry, recently surpassing 170GW in 210mm module shipments, maintaining its position as a BNEF Tier 1 Energy Storage Manufacturer, and reinforcing its commitment to innovation and sustainability.

# PIAF for reforming tax system in consultation with traders

## F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Association Front (PIAF) stressed the need for reforming and simplifying the taxation system in consultation with the real stakeholders, as the FBR's tax shortfall widened to Rs725 billion in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, days after it committed with the IMF to achieving the target of increasing collections to 10.6% of the size of national economy.

The PIAF Chairman Fahimur Rehman Saigol, Senior Vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and Vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry in a joint statement said that the FBR's reforms initiatives are not bearing fruit, as the revenue collecting agency could increase the number of sales tax return filers by just 8 percent in first six months of the current fiscal year, mainly due to rise in the type of those filers, who haven't paid any tax, implying that bad governance and weak tax management of the tax department still persist. It is unfortunate that just 30 percent of the total sales tax

return filers are paying taxes while 70 percent of the filers have paid nil tax, he said.

In March alone, the government added more than Rs100 billion to the tax shortfall, putting in danger its commitment that the shortfall against the original annual target would not be more than Rs640 billion.

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) provisionally collected Rs8.44 trillion in taxes till the last working day of March, before the commencement of Eid holidays, according to tax authorities. The collection was around 28% higher than the previous fiscal year but was not enough to stay on track.

Revenues fell short of the July-March target of Rs9.17 trillion by Rs725 billion, they added.

Tax officials said that the collection may improve by over Rs7 billion on Saturday from ports but it would not be sufficient to bridge the yawning gap, which was far higher than the assurance given to the IMF last week.

The IMF's revision is solely on account of slower-than-estimated economic growth and inflation. The overall tax-to-GDP target

of 10.6% remains unchanged.

There has been over-emphasis on increasing taxes, which has shifted focus away from growing expenditures that are increasing at a pace of 24% during the current fiscal year despite single-digit inflation.

For March, the FBR's target was Rs1.219 trillion. However, despite taking advances and drastically slowing refunds, it could only cross Rs1.1 trillion till Friday evening.

The FBR paid Rs34 billion in refunds, down by Rs37 billion, or 52%, compared to March last year. Overall, the nine-month refund payments were Rs384 billion, hardly Rs6 billion more than last year.

The PIAF leaders said that the IMF has forced the country to impose new taxes, primarily burdening the salaried class and levying taxes on nearly all consumable goods, including medical tests, stationery, vegetables and children's milk.

For the July-March period, the FBR missed its targets for sales tax, federal excise duty (FED) and customs duty but exceeded the income tax target.

They said that the FBR half-heartedly pursued the Tajir Dost scheme but the IMF clarified that the scheme has remained operational. The IMF has cut the collection estimate of Rs50 billion from the Tajir Dost scheme.

Sales tax collection stood at Rs2.86 trillion, Rs656 billion less than the target of over Rs3.5 trillion. Sales tax remained the most difficult area for the FBR and one of the reasons for the low collection was less-than-estimated growth in large industries.

The FBR collected Rs537 billion in FED, Rs143 billion less than the nine-month target. Customs duty collection stood at Rs926 billion, Rs208 billion below target. The collection was hit by lower-than-projected import volumes. It was also marred by the manipulation of goods declaration forms by importers in connivance with corrupt elements.

They said that the government's new measures seem to be inadequate to convince people to file tax returns due to arm-twisting by the FBR, creating unnecessary controversy due to continuous raids on business premises.



RAWALPINDI: Families busy shopping for Eid at local market.

## USC to introduce new utility ghee brand

MULTAN (APP): Utility Stores Corporation (USC) is going to introduce its new utility ghee brand for citizens on cheaper rates as compared to local market for which tendering process has been completed.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, USC Zonal Manager Shahzad Khan said that applications had been sought from ghee mills/firms and tenders opened on April 4 at USC head office for the procurement of 65,000 metric tonne vanaspati and 32,500 metric tonne cooking oil. The ghee and cooking oil would be provided to various zones across the country as per demand, he added.

He hoped the new ghee brand would be available at stores after Eid. He informed that restructuring of 150 stores was being carried out across the zone. Shahzad Khan said that there were 350 stores across the zone and sale at USC stores had increased 100 percent during the holy month of Ramadan as compared to last month.

He said that sugar was available at stores with Rs 15 per kg less than the open market while dates, beverages, special gram flour, rice, ghee, and other items were also available. Efforts are being made to reduce the expenses and increase the sales, he said.

The online monitoring was being ensured at all stores for transparency and citizens' complaints being addressed promptly, he added.

## VP hosts Iftar dinner

SUKKUR (APP): A grand iftar dinner was hosted by Bilal Waqar Khan, Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), in Sukkur.

The event, attended by prominent personalities from politics, social, educational, trade, and journalism, aimed to promote social harmony and brotherhood. The dinner was attended by MNA Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah, Provincial Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Syed Kumail Hyder Shah and others.

The guests engaged in informal conversations, discussing various topics, including the country's political situation, economic issues, and social welfare.

# Call to empower SMEs to boost exports beyond 30%

LAHORE (APP): Convener of the FPCCI's Regional Committee on Food, Shahid Imran, has said that strengthening small and medium enterprises (SMEs) could significantly boost Pakistan's exports beyond 30pc, driving sustainable economic growth.

Speaking to a delegation, led by Mian Aftab Zia on Sunday, he highlighted the vital role of SMEs in economic resilience, job creation, and industrial diversification. Citing successful SME-driven models in Bangladesh and

Vietnam, he urged the government to prioritise targeted financial support to unlock the sector's potential.

He called for specialised credit schemes with subsidised interest rates, expanded microfinance access, and incentives for private banks to increase SME lending. Leveraging fintech for digital lending platforms, he added, could ensure easier credit access, particularly for informal businesses.

Shahid Imran stressed the need for regulatory reforms, including simpli-

fied taxation and streamlined business registration, to encourage SME growth. Despite contributing 40pc to GDP and employing nearly 80pc of the non-agricultural workforce, Pakistan's 5.34 million SMEs receive less than 7pc of total bank lending due to stringent collateral requirements and high interest rates.

"Addressing these financial barriers through strategic reforms and increased support is crucial for Pakistan's long-term economic stability," he concluded.

# Boosting local auto parts production may save \$3b in imports: Iftikhar Malik

LAHORE (APP): Former SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Iftikhar Ali Malik has said that increasing local production of automobile parts could significantly reduce Pakistan's \$3 billion annual import bill, conserving foreign exchange and strengthening the economy.

Welcoming the government's push for local manufacturing, he highlighted the potential benefits, including the development of ancillary industries, job creation, and enhanced

competitiveness. He noted that Pakistan could emerge as a regional export hub for auto parts, tapping into markets in Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

To achieve this, Malik stressed the need for policy reforms, vocational training programs, and investor-friendly incentives such as tax exemptions, reduced tariffs on raw materials, and subsidies for technology upgrades. He also called for greater investment in research and development (R&D) and industry-academia collaborations to drive

innovation.

As Chairman of Guard Group of Companies, he shared his company's success in manufacturing international-standard auto parts locally, previously imported from countries like Japan and Germany. He urged the government to support indigenous brands to expand Pakistan's presence in global markets.

"Expanding local manufacturing will diversify the economy, boost GDP, and strengthen Pakistan's position in international trade," he concluded.

# High tobacco prices created lucrative black market

SYDNEY (AFP/APP): Sky-high tobacco prices in Australia have created a lucrative black market, analysts say, sparking a violent "tobacco war" and syphoning away billions in potential tax revenue.

Faced with a pack of 25 cigarettes costing up to Aus\$50 (US\$32) or more -- including Aus\$1.40 in tax on each stick -- many smokers have instead turned to readily available illicit tobacco.

At the same time, authorities have cracked down on vapes, restricting legal sales to pharmacies

and opening up another illegal market for people in search of affordable nicotine. In March, the government cut its budget forecast for tobacco tax revenue in the period to 2029 by Aus\$6.9 billion.

"We've got a challenge here and too many people are avoiding the excise," Treasurer Jim Chalmers conceded after revealing the figures.

He announced an extra Aus\$157 million for a multi-agency force battling organised crime groups involved in the market and a string of "tobacco war"

fire-bombings.

The situation was a "total disaster", said James Martin, criminology course director at Deakin University in Melbourne.

"We have taken a public health issue, smoking, and our tobacco control policies have transformed it into a multi-fronted crisis," he told AFP.

"It is a fiscal crisis, so we are losing billions and billions of dollars in tobacco tax excise but also, more concerning for me as a criminologist, it has turned into a major crime problem."

# Slow internet, digital payment challenges for SMEs to tap global market

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry' Businessmen Panel (BMP) has said that unreliable internet and digital payment barriers have slowed down the growth of the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as they have been facing serious challenges in their attempt to tap growing global market.

The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar, observed that despite having an annual growth rate of 17%, with non-textile exports and online businesses slowly gaining traction, fundamental obstacles like disruption in internet and lack of consumer trust are slowing progress.

Referring to a report, Mian Anjum Nisar said that

Pakistan's digital payment adoption has improved, with figures showing 84% of in-store mobile payments in FY24, but online transactions remain a challenge. Most Pakistani online shoppers, especially those in urban areas, continue to prefer cash-on-delivery, reflecting deep-rooted skepticism about online shopping. This has been compounded by several high-profile cases of undelivered products, which further erode customer confidence.

Experts argue that the absence of secure, user-friendly payment systems and proper infrastructure is holding Pakistan's e-commerce potential back. Countries like India and Bangladesh, with strong mobile payment systems such as UPI and bKash, have seen substantial growth in their digital markets.

The BMP Chairman said that Pakistan's e-commerce sector was valued at \$7.7 billion in 2024, with retail e-commerce accounting for \$5.4 billion, according to a report of PCMI.

Anjum Nisar said that in addition to payment system issues, Pakistan's internet infrastructure is another major hurdle. Ranking 97th globally in mobile internet speed, Pakistan's connectivity is far behind its regional counterparts, with rural areas suffering from even worse connectivity issues. This not only affects website access but also delays product uploads leads to lost sales and cancelled orders.

Despite government initiatives like the Digital Pakistan Policy and the National E-Commerce Council, which are aimed at bridging these gaps, progress remains slow. The cou-

ntry's tax incentives for IT exports and new conversations with global payment platforms like Google Pay have seen limited success. The lack of access to digital marketing workshops and e-commerce tools outside major urban centers further limits growth for rural entrepreneurs.

Experts agree that, for Pakistan to capitalize on the global e-commerce boom, basic infrastructure improvements such as reliable internet access and affordable logistics must be prioritized. Without these foundational changes, SMEs will continue to struggle in an increasingly digital world, risking their position in the growing global market.

This growth is driven by a young, tech-savvy population and the rise of business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) platforms such as

Daraz, Alibaba and Shopify. For SMEs, which make up over 90% of Pakistan's businesses and contribute 40% to its GDP, going digital is not just an option, it is now becoming a survival strategy. Yet, many business owners say the path to success is far from smooth.

Today, 60% of our sales come from overseas Pakistanis in the Middle East and Europe. "However, customers abroad want to pay through PayPal, which is not available here. SMEs have to use bank transfers, which take days in process or opt for cash-on-delivery, which sometimes leads to order cancellations," they added.

According to PCMI, in Pakistan 75% of online shoppers prefer cash-on-delivery. This phenomenon is still common as it was 10 years ago. While the digital payment volume, according

to figures quoted by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), jumped to 84% in FY24, most of those were in-store mobile payments and not online sales.

Economists argue that without secure, user-friendly payment systems, e-commerce growth will stay limited. "Pakistan's Raast system is a good start, but it needs to scale faster," they added. The internet itself is another stumbling block. Pakistan ranked 97th globally in mobile internet speed in February 2025, with an average speed of 25.39 Mbps, far behind India, ranked 20th with 144.33 Mbps and Bangladesh, at 87th place with 37.98 Mbps, according to Ookla's Speedtest Index. In rural areas, the problem is even worse.

Such decade-old issues put Pakistan's SMEs and their online presence at a

disadvantage compared to regional neighbours. India's e-commerce market, worth \$123 billion, thrives on cheap data and widespread digital literacy, while Bangladesh's \$7.5 billion sector benefits from tax breaks for online exporters and a robust mobile money ecosystem.

Government initiatives, like the 2019 Digital Pakistan Policy and the National E-Commerce Council, are aimed at bridging these gaps. Recent moves include tax incentives for IT exports and talks with global payment platforms. Google Pay has initiated its services from Pakistan recently but it is a one-way method.

Nevertheless, SME owners say progress is too slow. "We hear about workshops on digital marketing and B2B methodologies, but they are only held in big

cities. How will a craftswoman in Swat or a farmer in Sindh learn these skills," they asked.

Others demand better infrastructure. "The government should treat internet access like electricity or water, it's a basic need for businesses now," they said, neglecting the fact that electricity and water are still not available in far-flung areas.

They added that logistics and shipping costs are also key issues both for domestic and global shipments. Apart from that, with low consumer spending due to hyperinflation, there is a need for SMEs and online businesses to find new markets to survive.

There is a huge young population spending most of their time on smartphones. Many like to buy online in every part of the world.





In brief

Pakistan in Hamilton

HAMILTON (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's cricket team has arrived in Hamilton from Napier as part of their ongoing tour of New Zealand. The team is scheduled to participate in a practice session tomorrow at 10 am local time. The much-anticipated second ODI between Pakistan and New Zealand is set to take place on April 2 in Hamilton. After a competitive first match, both teams are gearing up for another thrilling encounter. Fans are eagerly awaiting the showdown as Pakistan looks to strengthen its position in the series. The team management is focused on refining strategies ahead of the crucial fixture.

Roglic claims triumph

BARCELONA (AFP): Slovenian veteran Primoz Roglic won the Tour of Catalonia on Sunday by powering to a solo triumph in the seventh stage in Barcelona. The 35-year-old, who won the race in 2023, trailed home favourite Juan Ayuso by one second going into the finale, but eased to victory by 28 seconds. Spaniard Enric Mas came in third overall, 58 seconds behind the dominant Roglic. "Beautiful, I had great fun here," said Roglic. "I figured it out, I'm ready, the legs are ready so I was pretty much enjoying this week. "A bit of holidays and then slowly start to build up towards the Giro (d'Italia)." Four time Vuelta a Espana winner Roglic was among the favourites after last year's winner, his compatriot Tadej Pogacar, decided not to defend his title. After winds played havoc with the sixth stage on Saturday -- the route was modified significantly, with only 25 kilometres of racing permitted -- weather conditions were good for the 88.2 kilometre finale starting and finishing in Barcelona. "The big mountain stage I was hoping for yesterday was cancelled," said Roglic. "It came down to the last stage, the team was working well, we were racing well and I really enjoyed this week." Roglic claimed the intermediate sprint with Ayuso third, eking out a second's advantage overall on the Spaniard.

RB Leipzig fire coach

BERLIN (AFP): RB Leipzig have fired coach Marco Rose, days out from a German Cup semi-final clash at Stuttgart, the club said in a statement on Sunday. Jurgen Klopp, Head of Soccer at parent company Red Bull, was not named in the statement and has said previously he would not step in as coach, whether on a permanent or interim basis. Later on Sunday, Leipzig named Zsolt Low as Rose's replacement on an interim basis until the end of the season. Low has previously served as an assistant coach at Leipzig, as well as Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea. Leipzig slipped to sixth in the table after Saturday's 1-0 loss at Borussia Moenchengladbach, their sixth successive away match without a win. The Saxony club are three points behind a place in the top four and Champions League qualification for next season. They face a tight battle for the remaining two spots, with league leaders Bayern Munich and defending champions Bayer Leverkusen all but assured of a place in next season's competition.

Bangladesh to play T20Is only on Pakistan tour, scraps ODIs

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to drop the ODI series from their upcoming tour of Pakistan, opting instead to play only T20Is. The decision was made in coordination with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) as both teams focus on preparations for the upcoming Asia Cup and the ICC T20 World Cup.

Originally, Bangladesh was scheduled to tour Pakistan in May for three ODIs and three T20Is under the Future Tours Programme (FTP). However, both boards have now agreed to replace the ODIs with a five-match T20I series, allowing their teams to fine-tune their squads for the global tournaments ahead.

The 2025 Asia Cup will be hosted by India in September and will be played in the T20 format, aligning with the preparations for the T20 World

Usman Khan ruled out of second ODI with hamstring injury

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan batter Usman Khan was ruled out of second ODI against New Zealand due to hamstring. According to details, Khan was injured in the series opener while fielding.

Khan's injury was reported following the MRI scan. Pakistan will take on the Black Caps in the second ODI on April 2. It is pertinent to note that Mark Chapman, Muhammad Abbas and Nathan Smith had dismantled the Green Shirts in the first ODI.

Cup, which is set to take place in India and Sri Lanka in 2026.

In addition to the Pakistan tour, Bangladesh will also host a three-match T20I series against Pakistan in July. This series, which was finalized during the recent ICC Champions Trophy discussions between the PCB and BCB presidents, is not part of the FTP but has been scheduled to further

strengthen both teams' World Cup preparations.

"We have decided to play T20Is instead of ODIs in the upcoming tour of Pakistan as part of our preparation for the next T20 World Cup and Asia Cup," a BCB official told Cricbuzz. "When Pakistan travels to Bangladesh, they are scheduled to play three T20Is on July 20, 22, and 24 in Dhaka, just before their tour of the West Indies," he added.

Argentina win first Hong Kong Sevens to mark new era at \$3.85bn stadium



HONG KONG (AFP): Argentina won their first ever Hong Kong Sevens on Sunday when they out-muscled France 12-7 in the final to kick off a fresh era for the famous tournament at the city's new \$3.85 billion Kai Tak stadium.

The World Sevens Series leaders' defeat of the Olympic champions meant a new name was engraved on the venerable old trophy first contested in 1976. Los Pumas extended their lead at the top of the men's World Rugby Sevens standings to 12 points over Fiji with a third consecutive tournament win, adding Hong Kong to their Vancouver and Perth crowns.

It was a magical moment for Argentina's coach Santiago Gomez Cora, who came to Hong Kong as a player in 2004 and suffered the agony of losing in the final to England.

"It was one of my dreams to win this one," said Gomez Cora. "When you talk about sevens it's all about Hong Kong. When you win here as a coach or a player it is like nothing else. "After 20 years, we're in a final again, but we won this time. That's it, that's life and that's why we love this sport." After a scoreless first

half Argentina took advantage when France's Liam Delamare was sent to the sin-bin for a high tackle.

Santiago Alvarez bulldozed over from a crash ball for the opening try.

Less than a minute later, Marcos Moneta galloped through a tiring and depleted French defence. Joaquin Pellandini converted for a 12-0 lead.

Gregoire Arfeuil got a consolation after the hooter. Australia took the bronze after beating Fiji 22-21 in a third-place playoff thriller decided by Sidney Harvey's try after full-time. "That was insane," said Harvey who capitalised on James Turner's pass.

"It's so special"

"I'm just glad I caught the ball. I'll never forget that moment. It's so special." The women's event saw New Zealand win in Hong Kong for the third year running, beating Australia 26-19 in the final. Canada beat France 21-17 for bronze. It was the climax of three days of action at the city's shiny new waterfront sports park, a venue dubbed "incredible" by the head of World Rugby despite a number of teething troubles.

The 50,000-seat stadium, which boasts a futur-

istic purplish facade and a retractable roof, is purpose built for rugby sevens, with 24 separate changing rooms. "I think it's just amazing for rugby. It's just such an incredible facility," World Rugby chairman Brett Robinson told reporters.

However not everything went to plan after the move from the old 40,000-seater home where the tournament had been played for more than 30 years. Long queues formed for food and drink on Saturday afternoon as stadium outlets struggled to keep up with demand from a record attendance of more than 100,000 over the three-day tournament.

Hong Kong is bidding to re-establish the city as a hub for international sports, culture and entertainment with the sports park on the site of the old Kai Tak airport at the heart of the plans. As a nod to the site's history, a Cathay Pacific A350 Airbus flew low on Sunday around the stadium which sits at the north end of the former runway. But spectators inside were disappointed that the jet did not pass directly over the pitch and the only glimpse they got was on giant stadium screens.

Starc bags five as Delhi beat Hyderabad in IPL

VISAKHAPATNAM (AFP): Australia's Mitchell Starc claimed his first five-wicket haul in T20 cricket to help Delhi Capitals down Sunrisers Hyderabad for their second straight win in the Indian Premier League on Sunday.

Starc, a left-arm quick, returned figures of 5-35 as Delhi bowled out Hyderabad for 163 in 18.4 overs in their second home at Visakhapatnam.

South African veteran Faf du Plessis then smashed 50 off 27 balls and put on 81 runs for the first wicket with Australian batter Jake Fraser-McGurk, who hit 38, as Delhi achieved their target with four overs and seven wickets to spare.

Hyderabad's innings started badly as Abhishek Sharma was run out early for one when he was involved in a mix-up with fellow opener Travis Head. Starc then struck twice

in one over to send back Ishan Kishan and Nitish Reddy and then got fellow Australian Head caught behind for 22 as Hyderabad slipped to 37-4 in 4.1 overs.

Indian batter Aniket Verma, who top-scored with 74, and South African wicketkeeper-batsman Heinrich Klaasen then put on an attacking stand of 77 in an attempt to hit back.

Klaasen fell on 32 off 19 balls to Mohit Sharma, but Aniket kept up the charge in an eye-catching 41-ball knock laced with five fours and six sixes. Fraser-McGurk ended Aniket's blitz with a stunning catch at deep mid-wicket when he timed his jump to pluck a travelling ball out of the air and hand spinner Kuldeep Yadav a prized wicket.

Kuldeep, a left-arm wrist spinner, claimed figures of 3-22 before Starc completed his five to wrap up the Hyderabad innings.

In reply, Du Plessis came out firing as he smashed India fast bowler Mohammed Shami for a six and three fours in a 15-run third over to set up the chase.

Du Plessis fell after his 50 to Indian leg-spinner Zeeshan Ansari who took a beating at the hands of Fraser-McGurk but hit back with his second wicket in the same over.

Ansari later bowled KL Rahul round his legs before Abhishek Porel, on 34, and Tristan Stubbs, on 21, steered the team home in an unbeaten stand of 51.

Delhi, under new skipper Axar Patel, have rebuilt the team in their hunt for a first IPL title and brought in England great Kevin Pietersen as mentor.

Hyderabad, winners in 2016 under David Warner, have two losses and one victory in three outings this season.

Rashford double fires Villa into FA Cup semis

PRESTON (AFP): Marcus Rashford's first goals for Aston Villa inspired a 3-0 win against Preston that sent his side into the FA Cup semi-finals for the first time in 10 years on Sunday.

Rashford struck twice in the second half at Deepdale to end Preston's stubborn resistance before Jacob Ramsey wrapped up Villa's long-awaited return to the last four. Revitalised since joining Villa on loan from Manchester United during the January transfer window, Rashford is beginning to show the form that made him one of England's brightest stars prior to his steep decline over the last two years.

Amid concerns over his attitude and off-field behaviour, Rashford was deemed expendable by United manager Ruben Amorim, after also clashing with former Old Trafford boss Erik ten Hag.

The 27-year-old hadn't scored since netting for United against Everton on December 1. Deployed in the central striker's role that often seemed to dent his confidence at United, Rashford was too dynamic for second-tier Preston to handle in the latest sign that his career might not be destined to end in disappointment after all. While struggling United have been mired in turmoil, Rashford has benefited from moving to upwardly mobile Villa. Emery's side have enjoyed a



memorable run to the Champions League quarter-finals, where they face Paris Saint-Germain in April.

They also have an outside chance of qualifying for next season's Champions League. Rashford could be part of a memorable climax to the campaign for Villa, who haven't won the FA Cup since 1957, with their last final ending in defeat against Arsenal in 2015.

Nottingham Forest and Crystal Palace booked their places in the Wembley semi-finals on Saturday, with Manchester City travelling to Bournemouth for the last quarter-final later on Sunday. Sitting 14th in the Championship, Preston

were playing in the quarter-finals for the first time since 1966.

Paul Heckingbottom's side were unbeaten in their previous 15 home games in all competitions, but the 1889 and 1938 FA Cup winners were no match for ruthless Villa. Rashford's free-kick forced Preston goalkeeper David Cornell into action before Ezri Konsa's glancing header whistled just wide from Marco Asensio's cross.

Stefan Thordarson wasted a golden opportunity to give Preston a shock lead when he poked wide. Rashford was equally prolific after half-time, shooting straight at Cornell from inside the area. But Villa

broke the deadlock in the 58th minute as Rashford timed his run perfectly to meet Lucas Digne's low cross with a clinical finish from 12 yards. Morgan Rogers was denied by Cornell moments later as Villa went for the kill.

And it was Rogers who earned Villa's penalty in the 63rd minute when the England midfielder was tripped by Andrew Hughes. Rashford stepped up to send Cornell the wrong way with a nerveless spot-kick. Ramsey put the result beyond doubt eight minutes later, surging towards the Preston area and drilling a powerful strike past Cornell for his fourth goal this season.

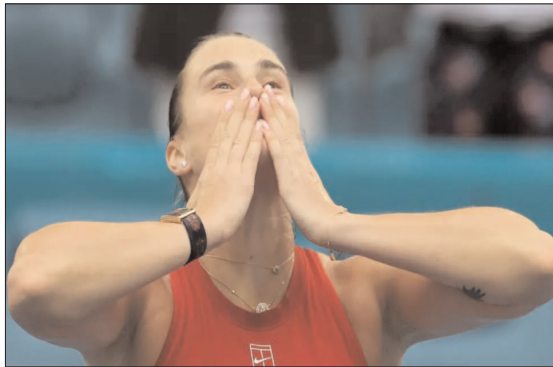
Sabalenka sinks Pegula to win Miami Open

MIAMI GARDENS (AFP/APP): World number one Aryna Sabalenka won the Miami Open on Saturday, beating American Jessica Pegula 7-5 6-2 in the WTA 1000 final at Hard Rock Stadium.

The title was the Belarusian's first at Miami and her second of the season following her January triumph in Brisbane.

Having lost the final at Indian Wells to Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva earlier this month, Sabalenka was determined not to fall at the last hurdle again. "Winning this trophy is super special," said Sabalenka, who paid tribute to Pegula's performance after repeating her win over her from last year's US Open final.

Both players struggled to hold their serve in the first set, which saw seven breaks of serve, with Pegula causing Sabalenka some trouble when she



brought her up to the net.

But the momentum shifted when Pegula was serving to stay in the set at 6-5 down and Sabalenka produced a delicate forehand drop and then a superb down the line winner to take the set.

Once she recovered from being broken on her first service game of the second set, it was easier going for Sabalenka, whose bid for a third straight Australian Open

title was thwarted in the Melbourne Keys earlier this year. Sabalenka broke twice to go 3-1 up and never looked in danger from that point on as she wrapped up the win in one hour 27 minutes.

"I think I was able to completely forget about (it being) the final, about the outside things and I was just so focused on the game," said Sabalenka.

In her last 14 matches

against top 10 players, Sabalenka has won 12 and she credited her ability in the clutch moments for her record. "It is all about those key moments of the match, about playing aggressive and staying with the game plan, going for shots without being afraid of losing the point," she said.

It was the third time that Pegula has faced Sabalenka in a final and she has lost on all three occasions. The 26-year-old Sabalenka has now won eight WTA 1000 titles and 19 titles on the WTA Tour overall - 17 of which have come on hard courts including all three of her Grand Slam singles titles -- the 2023 Australian Open, the 2024 Australian Open and the 2024 US Open. The men's final on Sunday will feature Novak Djokovic up against Czech 19-year-old Jakub Mensik with the Serb looking for his 100th professional title.

Man Utd beat Everton to close in on Champions League



LONDON (Agencies): Manchester United moved closer to qualifying for next season's Champions League with a routine win against Everton.

Dominique Janssen took advantage of a major mistake from Everton goalkeeper Courtney Brosnan to put United ahead midway through the first half, before Grace Clinton produced a brilliant finish shortly after the break.

Everton came into the game having never beaten United in the Women's Super League, but it was Brian Sorensen's side that started on the front foot.

Katja Snoeijis thought she had given the visitors the lead inside two minutes, but referee Phoebe Cross spotted a handball during a scramble in the box.

A lengthy injury stoppage for United's Jayde Riviere slowed the rhythm of the game, though Toffees striker Kelly Gago did force Phallon Tullis-Joyce

into a smart stop from a tight angle. Everton's strong start was undone in the 22nd minute when Brosnan spilled what looked to be a routine catch from a free-kick, with Janssen on hand to convert into the empty goal.

United grew in stature thereafter and twice went close in first-half injury-time, Celin Bizet forcing Brosnan into a superb low save before Maya le Tissier crashed a long-range strike off the crossbar. Clinton doubled United's lead less than 90 seconds into the second half when she met Leah Galton's low cross with a clever flick into the bottom corner, the second time this season she has scored against her former club.

United largely coasted through the remainder of the afternoon with Melvine Malarid denied a third by a terrific Brosnan save, though injuries suffered by Bizet and Galton could be cause

for concern. United briefly moved up to second in the table before Arsenal defeated Crystal Palace, but still only need two wins from their final four games to secure a top-three finish and a return to the Champions League next season.

United continue to impress

Through no fault of their own, United's achievements this season have gone slightly under the radar. With four games left to play Marc Skinner's side are already 14 points better off than the whole of last season, and it would now take a stunning collapse to prevent them qualifying for next season's Champions League.

With an FA Cup semi-final against an injury-hit Manchester City coming up next month, United have a great opportunity to defend the title they won last season. But even if they finish the year without silverware, the improvement of Skinner's side has been

clear for all to see.

The United boss singled out Ella Toone and Elisabeth Terland for praise pre-match, but it was Galton, Clinton, Janssen and Bizet who impressed most on Sunday afternoon.

That kind of strength in depth is something Skinner hasn't always had at his disposal, while a surprise 3-1 defeat by Liverpool earlier this month does not have appeared to have knocked his side off their stride. A strong end to the campaign coupled with an active summer window could well allow United to compete for the title next season.

Everton lacking up top  
Everton manager Sorensen said before kick-off that his side are now in a better position to challenge teams above them in the table, and you could see his point. The Toffees were full of energy in the opening stages and forced Tullis-Joyce into action early on, but as the game wore on their attacking forays became less frequent and more disjointed.

Gago was looking to continue her excellent start to life at the club, but three yardward backheels in the space of five minutes summed up her side's frustrations. While Everton have improved massively since the winter break, the fact that they have failed to win any of their last 26 WSL matches when conceding first will remain a point of concern for Sorensen.





## In brief

### PHA finalizes arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) has made special arrangements for the convenience of people visiting the parks during the Eid-ul-Fitr days. On the special instructions of Director General PHA Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, instant maintenance of major parks was ensured and steps were also taken to educate the citizens about the importance and promotion of tree plantation. Ranjha said that a hygienic environment would be provided to people visiting parks and recreational places during Eid days. He added that the best security arrangements had also been made, while the best kind of facilities had been ensured for the public convenience.

### 2 arrested for snatching cash

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Saddar Beruni Police on Sunday arrested two accused who had snatched cash from the staff of a petrol pump at gunpoint three days ago. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesperson, the petrol pump staff was on the way to the bank to deposit the cash when the armed accused looted the amount and fled. City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani took notice of the incident and ordered the immediate arrest of the suspects. The Saddar Beruni Police registered a case of the incident and traced and arrested the suspects through technical means and human intelligence with the total looted amount of Rs 1,922,640. The arrested suspects included a pump employee Faizan and Anzar Gul alias Bora, an Afghan national. Senior Superintendent of Police Operations Kashif Zulfikar handed over the money recovered from the robbers to the plaintiff. CPO Hamdani congratulated the SP Saddar, ASP Saddar, and Station House Officer Saddar Beruni and his team for the arrest of accused within three days of the incident and 100 percent recovery of the snatched amount. The plaintiff of the case expressed gratitude to Rawalpindi Police for the arrest of the accused and full recovery of the looted money.

### Police continue crackdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have intensified their crackdown against passenger vehicles involved in overloading and overcharging. According to Motorway police spokesperson, so far, Rs 47,27,000 excess fares has been returned to the passengers. Meanwhile, overloaded vehicles have been fined a total of Rs 20.3 million. To ensure smooth travel during peak traffic, additional police personnel have been deployed. A road safety awareness campaign is also in full swing across media platforms and toll plazas, where safety messages and gifts were being distributed. He advised travelers using personal vehicles to check engine oil, water, tire pressure, and brakes before starting their journey. Seat belts, speed limits, and safe driving practices should be followed. Drivers should also rest after every two to two and a half hours to avoid fatigue. For assistance, passengers can contact the Motorway Police Helpline at 130. The NHMP remains committed to ensuring safe and hassle-free travel for all, he added.



RAWALPINDI: Women busy shopping on Chaand Raat in preparation for Eid ul Fitr at local market. —APP Photo

## Unity essential to combat terrorism: Khurram Dastgir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khurram Dastgir Sunday stressed the need for unity in the fight against terrorism, emphasizing that a collective effort is essential to combat this menace and ensure national security. While strongly condemning the targeting of innocent Pakistanis by enemies of the state, Khurram Dastgir termed it "unacceptable" during an interview with PTV News

Channel.

Khurram Dastgir reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to combat terrorism, stating, "We are committed to fighting against terrorism."

He stated that there would be no excuses and that they are ready to cooperate with the governments of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) to achieve this goal. Khurram advised Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) to utilize their resources effectively to eliminate terrorism.

Dastgir emphatically stated that Pakistan stands united and is determined to defeat its external and internal enemies, reaffirming the nation's unwavering resolve to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He also emphasized the importance of unity and dialogue in Pakistan's political landscape, specifically advising Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to engage in constructive dialogue that prioritizes the country's interests above all else.

### Eid-ul-Fitr prayer timing announced at Faisal Masjid

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Dawah Academy of the International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) has announced that the Eid-ul-Fitr prayer at Faisal Masjid will commence at 7:30 a.m. on the day of Eid. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, the Director General of Dawah Academy, will deliver the "Khutaba-e-Eid-ul-Fitr" and lead the prayer.

Following the prayer, a special supplication will be held with a focus on peace and unity. The announcement emphasizes the importance of community gathering during this significant occasion.

### RWMC's Eid cleanliness drive underway

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) has launched a special Eid cleanliness drive in Rawalpindi and its tehsils, including Taxila, Gujjar Khan, Kahuta and Kallar Syedan, which would continue till Eid Ul Fitr.

Spokesman of RWMC told on Sunday that special arrangements had been made to sweep the surroundings of mosques and open places where Eid prayers would be offered. He said that RWMC workers were carrying out the cleaning duties in three shifts and remain present near every mosque or Eidgah to ensure cleanliness.

All graveyards of the Rawalpindi and its tehsils would be provided special services, and surroundings would be kept free from waste during these days. At the same time, sanitary workers would be deployed in parks and recreational places across the city to ensure the waste picking, he told.

He added that all waste would be lifted from the city areas before the Eid prayer, and lime powder would also be sprinkled around all masjids, Eidgahs and public places while RWMC's helpline 1139 would remain alert with all resources to address waste-related complaints during Eid days.

He said that the cleanliness of bazaars and commercial areas was also being maintained on Chand Raat and Eid days.

## Security on high alert in Islamabad for Eid-ul-Fitr 2025

ISLAMABAD (DNA): Islamabad police have implemented a comprehensive security plan, keeping the federal capital on high alert during Eid-ul-Fitr. More than 3,500 officers and personnel will be deployed for patrolling and crime prevention from Chaand Raat until the third day of Eid.

Inspector General of Islamabad Police, Syed Nasir Ali Rizvi, stated that aerial firing and hooliganism will not be tolerated, and the law will take immediate action against illegal activities.

To ensure foolproof security, checkpoints have been established at 18 entry and exit points of the city. The police have finalized plans to prevent street crimes, disturbances, and aerial firing. Measures are also in place to provide a peaceful environment for families visiting recreational spots.

Ensuring a Safe Environment for Families IG Islamabad confirmed that the two major parks, Lake View Park and Daman-e-Koh, have been designated as family parks. Special police deployment, including gate security and

bicycle patrols inside the parks, will ensure a safe experience for visitors.

Over 500 traffic personnel will be on duty to maintain smooth traffic flow. Tourists traveling to and from Murree will be provided with necessary facilities to avoid congestion or roadblocks. The Islamabad police will monitor the city through body-worn cameras, ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) systems, and trackers. Officers and personnel will conduct round-the-clock patrolling to prevent any illegal activities.

## Govt working to reduce power tariff: Rana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah on Sunday said that the incumbent government was making efforts to reduce power tariff and provide maximum relief to common man. Steps have also been taken to improve economy of this country, he said while talking to a private

television channel.

There is also need to make collective efforts to steer the country out of present challenges, he added. In reply to a question about canals issue, he said there has been discussion with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

He further said that prime minister has stressed

the need for resolving the matter of canals through negotiations.

He also urged the Pakistan Peoples Party leader to restrict the people of Sindh to criticize the Center over canals issue.

We should work together to steer the country out of present challenges including terrorism, he added.



ISLAMABAD: An attractive view of flowers flourishing and blooming at greenbelt along Expressway in Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## ICT admin ramps up anti-begging crackdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad's district administration has launched accelerated raids to dismantle organized begging networks in the Federal Capital ahead of Eid, detaining 91 individuals in different raids across major intersections.

In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon warned area officials of accountability if begging persists in their zones, urging residents to report offenders via a 24/7 helpline. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, special anti-begging squads mobilized by the district administration conducted swift operations before eid, focusing on traffic signals and commercial corridors where beggars frequently congregate.

He said that within 60 minutes, 35 individuals were detained from high-visibility locations, including busy intersections and shopping districts. The crackdown follows directives from Deputy

Commissioner (DC) Irfan Memon to escalate enforcement as Eid approaches, a period marked by increased public movement and charitable giving. DC Memon issued a stern warning to officers, stating that officials overseeing areas where beggars are found will face disciplinary action. "Negligence will not be tolerated. Each zone's performance will be reviewed daily."

Meanwhile, the district administration calls for residents to report beggars through the district's 24/7 helpline or in-person complaints at municipal offices. "Citizens must act as our eyes and ears. Immediate reporting ensures swift action," Memon emphasized. The administration has deployed additional patrol units to respond to alerts, though some residents argue the approach overlooks systemic issues like poverty. Furthermore, in another raid last week, 56 individuals were detained in a single day from areas such as F-6, F-7, Blue Area, and

Margalla Road. Of those, 22 were arrested near traffic signals after residents flagged their presence.

While the campaign focuses on clearing public spaces, DC Memon acknowledged the need for long-term solutions. "Arrests alone won't resolve this. We're collaborating with social services to offer vocational training and shelter to those coerced into begging," he said.

The district's 24/7 helpline has seen a 30% increase in calls since the campaign began. Officials advise against direct cash donations, urging the public to contribute through registered charities. "Random giving perpetuates the cycle. Structured support is more effective," said a social welfare spokesperson. The administration plans to extend the campaign post-Eid, with proposals to install surveillance cameras at high-risk zones. Memon emphasized that sustained public cooperation is vital to maintaining progress.

## Eid travel rush: ICT admin takes action

ISLAMABAD (APP): As thousands flock to bus terminals in Islamabad to reunite with families for Eid, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration is launching surprise inspections to curb fare overcharging.

In this regard, special teams, led by the district administration, are monitoring terminals, verifying ticket prices with passengers, and penalizing transporters violating government-set rates.

To ensure compliance with official fares, the Islamabad district administration has formed special squads to conduct unannounced visits at bus terminals. Teams, including magistrates and transport officials, are interacting directly with passengers to confirm fares and inspect

tickets, said the spokesman of ICT administration.

On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon stated, "All buses must display fare charts on their windshields. Terminals caught overcharging will be shut down immediately." Four buses have already been suspended for violating rules.

Meanwhile, DC Memon, alongside the Secretary of the Islamabad Transport Authority, personally visited the Faizabad terminal, questioning passengers about fares and tickets. "We've deployed teams at all terminals since Friday to handle the Eid rush," Memon added.

Officials have mandated that fare lists be visibly posted at terminals and inside buses. Transporters

charging extra face fines, terminal closures, or legal action. Authorities urge travelers to report overcharging via a dedicated helpline. "Complaints are being acted on immediately," said Memon.

Terminals violating fare rules risk immediate sealing, and transporters may face detention. "Eid in custody awaits those exploiting passengers," warned Memon. The crackdown aims to balance fare compliance with smooth travel during the holiday rush.

DC Memon reiterated, "Report overcharging instantly. Your input is critical to enforcing fairness." As Eid approaches, the administration remains on high alert to protect passengers from price gouging while ensuring timely reunions for families.

## IG Rizvi chairs zoom meeting with SHOs on Eid security

ISLAMABAD (APP):Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, here on Sunday chaired a zoom meeting with all Station House Officers (SHOs) to discuss special security arrangements for Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr. An official told APP that the IG directed for taking strict security measures across commercial centers, markets, shopping malls, and parking areas in Islamabad. Over 3,000 police officers will be deployed for Eid prayers and throughout the three-day celebrations to ensure the security of mosques and Imambargahs. Security personnel will also be stationed at parks and recreational sites, where entry will be restricted to families only, he said. IG Rizvi ordered a strict crackdown on hooliganism, one-wheeling, and aerial firing on Chand Raat, with legal action against violators. Additionally, Islamabad Police will take firm action against unruly behavior in residential areas.



RAWALPINDI: Artisan applies henna to girls' hands as they prepare for Eid ul Fitr celebrations. —APP Photo



### Salang Pass closed

KABUL, (Amu TV): The Taliban-run Ministry of Public Works said that the Salang Pass has been temporarily closed to large vehicles and cargo trucks due to heavy snowfall and treacherous road conditions. In a statement, the ministry said the decision was made to prevent human and financial losses, citing dangerous levels of ice and ongoing snowfall in the area. The pass was previously closed on Thursday night because of poor weather.

### Afghan team leaves for Nepal

KABUL (Pajhwok): The national under-19 cricket team left for Nepal on Sunday to play three one-day matches. The Afghanistan Cricket Board on its Facebook page wrote that the country's U-19 cricket team left for Nepal to play three one-day matches against the Nepal U-19 national team. The Afghan team will also participate in the U-19 World Cup qualifiers there, the cricket board said. The Afghan team is scheduled to play its first one-day match against Nepal on Thursday.

## ‘IEA ready for positive interaction with world’

KABUL (Amu TV): Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban's deputy chief minister for economic affairs, called on the international community to open the door to engagement with them, asserting that the country is now secure under Taliban control.

Speaking during Eid al-Fitr prayers at the presidential palace in Kabul on Sunday, Baradar claimed that the Taliban had proven over the past three years that Afghanistan is “completely secure” and ready for diplomatic and economic cooperation with the world.

“We have adopted an economy-focused policy and are prepared to improve relations with all countries,” he said.

Baradar's remarks come amid a noticeable uptick in violence across Afghanistan in recent months, challenging Taliban claims of nationwide stability. A series of deadly suicide bombings and armed attacks have shaken several provinces, including major incidents in Kabul and Kunduz.

Among the most high-profile attacks were a suicide bombing near the Kabul Bank branch in



Kunduz, an explosion inside the Ministry of Urban Development, and a blast at the Ministry for Refugees and Repatriations that killed Khaleel-ur-Rahman Haqqani, a senior Taliban official. The Islamic State's affiliate in Afghanistan, known as ISIS-K, has claimed responsibility for several of these attacks.

In a separate development on Sunday — the first day of Eid al-Fitr — Taliban authorities suspended mobile phone networks in Kabul and several other provinces. While no official explanation was given, sources told Amu

that the move was in response to security threats. The Taliban have repeatedly asserted that they have restored peace to Afghanistan since returning to power in August 2021. However, the international community remains reluctant to formally recognize the Taliban's rule, citing ongoing concerns over human rights abuses, particularly the treatment of women and girls, and the presence of extremist groups within the country.

**Pajhwok adds:** Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's supreme leader Haibatullah Akhonzada led Eidul Fitr payers in southern Kand-

ahar province on Sunday.

IEA spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the supreme leader led Eid al-Fitr prayers held at the Eid Gah mosque in Kandahar City.

“Today, Eidul Fitr prayers were offered under the leadership of Amir al-Mu'mineen, may God protect him, in Kandahar's Eidgah Mosque, which was attended by thousands of compatriots.”

It is worth noting that Sunday was the first day of Eidul Fitr was celebrated in many countries around the world, including Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

### Taliban cut mobile networks in Kabul

KABUL (Amu TV): Mobile phone networks were shut down in Kabul and several provinces on Sunday, the first day of Eid al-Fitr in Afghanistan, according to multiple local sources.

Residents told Amu that mobile services were suspended around 6 a.m. local time. The Taliban authorities have not issued a statement explaining the disruption, which left many citizens unable to communicate during one of the most important religious holidays of the year.

“This has caused serious problems for people trying to reach loved ones on Eid,” one Kabul resident told Amu, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The blackout mirrors similar actions taken by the Taliban last year, when they disabled telecommunication services during the early hours of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.

In those instances, service typically resumed around midday.

Although no official explanation has been provided, some sources suggest the suspension may be linked to security concerns, though the nature of any potential threat remains unclear.

The move comes despite repeated claims by Taliban officials that they have established “nationwide security” since returning to power in 2021.

### Two Afghan workers die in Tehran

TEHRAN (Amu TV): Two Afghan nationals died after falling into a 35-meter-deep well at a construction site in Tehran, Iranian officials said.

Seyed Jalal Maleki, spokesperson for the Tehran Fire Department and Safety Services, said emergency crews were dispatched to the scene early Saturday morning after receiving a distress call. The incident occurred at a nearly completed building where a deep well had been excavated in the courtyard.

The victims, identified as two Afghan workers aged 27 and 40, had been working at the site when they fell into the well. Authorities said a request for help was made after the men could no longer be reached.

“Firefighters secured the area and descended into the well, where they discovered the bodies of both men,” Maleki said. Emergency medical teams later confirmed that both had died at the scene.

While the exact cause of death has not yet been determined, Maleki noted that oxygen deficiency, gas inhalation, or related factors may have contributed to the incident. A full investigation will be carried out by forensic experts, he said.

Iran hosts one of the largest populations of Afghan migrants and refugees, many of whom work in construction and other labor-intensive sectors, often under hazardous conditions.

Safety measures at work sites remain a concern, particularly in informal or undocumented employment settings.

## Heightened security measures implemented

KABUL (TOLONews): Security officials have announced the implementation of heightened security measures across the country coinciding with the arrival of Eid al-Fitr, ensuring that citizens can celebrate the holiday in a safe environment.

According to security authorities, checkpoints and mobile patrols have been increased so that people can observe the Eid holidays in a secure atmosphere.

Mohammad Taher Mobarez, Deputy Security Chief of Nangarhar Police, stated: “Guests will be warmly welcomed in Nangarhar. The Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate will be your companions, guiding and protecting you.”

Najibullah Badakhshi, police chief of Laghman, said: “Our security forces are at your service, and we assure the people of Laghman that they can celebrate Eid and live their lives in a secure environ-

ment.”

Dost Mohammad Ubaida, deputy security chief of Badakhshan Police, speaking about the province's Eid security plan, said: “Our plan covers all of Badakhshan. A joint plan has been created, and in the provincial center, where the crowds are larger, our measures will be more intensive.”

During Eid and other public holidays, many domestic tourists visit the country's natural attractions. Security officials assure these travelers they can enjoy Eid peacefully.

Mohammad Yousuf Jamalzai, police chief of Nuristan, said: “We assure all tourists that security is ensured across all areas and highways of Nuristan, and they can travel safely.”

Ziaulhaq Hamed, police chief of Kunar, said: “Residents of Kunar can celebrate Eid in a peaceful environment, and visitors from other areas are welcome to explore all parts of

Kunar and enjoy the holiday.”

Zabihullah Hakim, spokesperson for Takhar Police, said: “We assure our people they can celebrate Eid and their ceremonies without concerns. We, the security forces, are at their service.”

Meanwhile, some citizens have called for strict action against those disrupting public order and peace.

Mohammad Rasool, a resident of Badakhshan, told TOLONews: “We request that the Islamic Emirate forces prevent aerial gunfire, and people should also refrain from using firecrackers to avoid disturbing others during Eidul Fitr.”

This comes as, following the rise of the Islamic Emirate and improved national security, large numbers of domestic tourists have been visiting natural and historical sites during Eidul Fitr and other holidays.

## ‘Cultural City’ to be launched in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Information and Culture announced the upcoming establishment of a new center named the “Cultural City” in Kabul, aimed at addressing matters related to the printing and publication of books, the Holy Quran, and paper-related issues in the capital.

Khobaib Ghafar, spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture, said that 90% of the work on this Cultural City has already been completed in Kabul and that it will soon begin operations.

“The Ministry of Information and Culture plans to address the publication and printing of books, the Holy Quran, and paper by designating a central area in Kabul as a ‘Cultural City,’ which is already 90 percent complete,” he said.

Some residents of Kabul



view the creation of the Cultural City as an effective step toward promoting reading culture.

Abdul Rahman, a Kabul resident, told TOLONews: “Working to promote the culture of reading and study is a positive step and should be taken. This effort will encourage youth to read.”

Another resident, Faisal, said: “If this Cultural City includes a library that

young people can use, it would be very beneficial.”

The Ministry of Information and Culture said the lack of a large center for publishing, reading, and selling books in the capital is a challenge and describes the establishment of this cultural center as a vital need for book publication and promoting the culture of reading and study.

## US citizen detained in Afghanistan freed

KABUL (Ariana News): American citizen Faye Hall said she had been released by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) after being detained in Afghanistan last month, Reuters reported.

“I’ve never been so proud to be an American citizen,” Hall said in a video posted by President Donald Trump on Truth Social. “Thank you, Mr President,” she added. “God bless you.”

Hall's release was announced earlier by former US Special Representative to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad on X.

A US official said Adam Boehler, the special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, along with Qatari

officials and others, negotiated her release. Hall was arrested in February with a British couple, Barbie and Peter Reynolds, read the report.

British media reported that the couple, in their seventies, had been running projects in schools in Afghanistan for 18 years, deciding to stay even after the IEA returned to power in 2021. There was no mention of the couple, whose family has pleaded for their release amid concerns over

their health. A source said earlier that Hall was freed on Thursday following a court order and with logistical support from Qatar in its role as the United States' protecting power in Afghanistan.

Hall was received at the Qatari embassy in Kabul and confirmed to be in good health after undergoing medical checks, the source said.

Several Americans are still detained in Afghanistan, Reuters reported.

## Clerics ordered to promote leader’s Eid message

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban's Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs has instructed mosque clerics across Afghanistan to include the Eid al-Fitr message of the group's reclusive leader, Hibatullah Akhondzada, in their sermons during Eid prayers.

In a statement issued, the ministry directed clerics to not only discuss traditional Eid themes, but also highlight what it called the “major sections” of Akhondzada's message.

In the message, released through Taliban-affiliated media, Akhondzada claimed that “security has been established across Afghanistan, and people should be grateful.” The remarks come amid ongoing reports of insurgent attacks, crackdowns on dissent, and an intensifying humanitarian crisis.

International organizations, including the United Nations, have repeatedly condemned the Taliban for widespread human rights violations, particularly

those targeting women and girls. For over three years, females have been banned from secondary and higher education, as well as most employment.

Akhondzada's Eid message made no reference to the ongoing education ban on girls. Instead, he emphasized that education “must be aligned with Sharia and based on Islamic beliefs,” referring only to “youth” in general terms. Notably, he addressed his greetings exclusively to “brothers,” omitting any mention of women. He also dismissed the ancient Nowruz festival — a New Year celebration widely observed across the region — as a “celebration from the era of ignorance.”

Since returning to power in August 2021, the Taliban have implemented sweeping restrictions on women's public presence and personal freedoms, including barring their voices from being broadcast, labeling them “awrah,” a term referring to something that must be hidden.

## Children in Herat orphanage learn vocational skills

HERAT (TOLONews): An orphanage in Herat has created opportunities for hundreds of orphaned and unaccompanied children to learn vocational skills.

The orphanage, which is financially supported by philanthropists and the public, accommodates 500 boys and girls. In addition to learning trades, the children also receive formal education and religious studies.

Asadullah Mutawakil, the head of the orphanage, said: “We have launched tailoring, plumbing, electri-

cal, mobile repair, and motorcycle repair classes for boys so that, alongside religious and academic subjects, they can acquire a trade and become productive members of society in the future.”

These children are kept at the orphanage full-time. Due to their families' poverty, many were unable to attend school and had no clear future before.

Mohammad Tayeb, a student at the orphanage, said: “I am happy that these classes are being created for orphaned children so

they can study and be able to support themselves in the future.”

Another student, Abdul Baqi, said: “I am happy that these classes are being held so we can learn and serve all the people of Afghanistan.”

The orphaned children are enrolled in vocational training programs to help them establish careers and earn an income in the future.

“The great Prophet of Islam said that whoever takes care of an orphan will be with me in the hereafter,

close together like two fingers,” said Sayed Hamidullah Sadat, a religious scholar.

Khalil Ahmad Shaheedzada, a representative of a charitable organization, told TOLONews: “We must make sure that our orphans do not grow up to be poor, but rather become teachers, doctors, and athletes.”

Many of these children lost their fathers in wars or traffic accidents. This orphanage now offers them the chance to gain education and vocational training for a better future.

## Khost volunteers scatter wild tree seeds in mountains

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): A group of young volunteers in southeastern Khost province are working to restore forests by scattering wild tree seeds across mountains, deserts and barren lands.

They say their initiative aims to raise public awareness and protect the country from harmful effects of climate change.

One of the volunteers, Naqibullah Zaland, has been actively planting various wild tree seeds in the region's mountains and deserts.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News that people should collaborate with the government to restore forests and enhance the country's natural beauty.

“As long as we have the strength and ability, we will continue planting seeds in as many barren lands as possible. Our goal is to turn these lands green—not only to beautify the area but also to con-



tribute to the overall development of society and achieve a greener Afghanistan,” he added.

Another volunteer, Farhad Shpon, has also committed himself to this cause.

He emphasized that if the government and citizens worked together, the country's damaged forests could be revitalized in a short time.

“We urge other young people in Khost to take the initiative and green those areas that have been neg-

lected and remain barren,” he said.

Meanwhile, provincial officials praised the efforts of these young volunteers, acknowledging their role in forest restoration and pledging continued support for such initiatives.

Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Director Sher Mohammad Zabih described the seed-scattering effort commendable.

He assured that various programmes were underway to prevent deforesta-

tion and green barren areas in the province.

“Planting saplings in mountains, providing water and constructing check dams are among the initiatives we are implementing. Those who contribute to such efforts deserve support and cooperation,” he stated.

Much of Afghanistan's forests were destroyed during past conflicts. However, in recent years, both the government and citizens have stepped up efforts to restore them.

## \$406m auctioned last year to keep afghani stable

KABUL (Pajhwok): Da Afghanistan Bank (central bank) auctioned 406 million US dollars last year to keep the afghani stable; a move economic experts consider effective in short term, asking the government consider other ways as well.

According to information published on DAB website, the bank auctioned a total of 406 million US dollars last year, except four months.

DAB spokesman Hasiullah Noori told Pajhwok Afghan News that the bank had been able to keep the afghani stable and maintain its value well through dollar auctions in the country's markets over the past year.

He said the bank also

implemented rational monetary policies and did not allow sharp fluctuations in this regard.

According to him, the bank uses various monetary policy tools to achieve its primary goal, which is domestic price stability.

Meanwhile, some economic analysts consider dollar auctions by the central bank effective for short-term stability of the afghani.

However, they recommend increasing exports, attracting foreign capital, establishing political stability, and strengthening economic institutions for long term stability of the local currency.

Economic analyst Noorullah Aziz told Pajhwok it was one of

DABS's responsibilities to maintain the value of the afghani and implement plans and programs.

He said a stable afghani prevented inflation.

He noted although DAB had implemented some programs from time to time to stabilize the afghani, still there was high demand for dollars in Afghan markets as many people exchange their afghanis into dollars to import goods from abroad.

He added DAB should focus on all those programs and policies that could have a positive impact the stability of the afghani.

According to him, dollar auction is a solution in the short term, but in the long term, the government

needs to consider other ways, such as increasing exports and attracting foreign capital.

Another economic analyst, Sayam Pasar, told Pajhwok Afghan News a stable afghani was important for the country and depends.

He said political situation in the country affected the stability of the afghani and it was essential that the afghani was also used in business.

He said the auction of dollars in the market by Da Afghanistan Bank from time to time has an impact on the stability of the afghani in the short term, but was not a solution in the long term.

According to him, the long-term solution is to

fight poverty, reduce unemployment, create jobs for the people, establish political stability, and use the afghani in all aspects of business.

Faizi Zadran, deputy spokesman for the Kabul Shahzada Sarai Money Changers told Pajhwok Afghanistan's monetary system was a management system.

He said dollar auctions maintained a balance between the dollar and the afghani.

Referring to announcements issued by Da Afghanistan Bank, he said that the bank has sufficient reserves and that the bank has been able to protect the national currency within the framework of its management system.

### 70 tribal feuds resolved in Ghor last year

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Over 70 political, social differences, murder and family feuds were resolved during the past one year in western Ghor province through mediation and jirgas, local officials said.

Mullah Mohammad Hassan Furqani, provincial Tribal and Borders Affairs director, told Pajhwok Afghan News the number of cases resolved during the past one year was significantly high. “We succeeded to resolve over 70 different cases in Ghor of which seven were murder feuds.”

Local officials keep their efforts on to put an end to all the existing differences among people so that all could live in an atmosphere of brotherhood, he further added.





LAHORE: People boarding on train at Railway Station to leave for their hometowns to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr with their loved ones.

## Murad visits Sindh govt-funded new Indus Hospital

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here on Sunday visited the under-construction Indus Hospital, established by the Sindh government in collaboration with Indus Hospital and Health Networks (IHNN) at Korangi Crossing, to be inaugurated shortly. Chairman IHNN Board, Abdul Karim Paracha, Chairman of the Resource Generation Committee Salim Razak Tabani, the Board of Directors Khalid Khanani, President Dr Abdul Bari Khan, CEO Dr Syed Zafar Zaidi, Executive Directors Dr Muhammad Amin Chinoy, Dr Muhammad Shamvil Ashraf, Syed Shahab Akhtar, and Syed Mashhood Rizvi received the CM. Murad Ali Shah visited different wards of the hospital, including

Adult Wards, Operating Rooms, Surgical ICUs, Family Medicine Clinics, Consultant Clinics Tele-Emergency, Emergency Wards, Blood Center. Dr Bari told the CM that in the first phase, a 90-bed emergency department has been launched, with plans for the hospital to expand to a capacity of 1,380 beds in the near future. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah visited the hospital and received a briefing on the project. During the visit, CM Murad Ali Shah stated that the Korangi Indus Hospital would be the third major healthcare facility in Karachi, following Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and Civil Hospital. "This hospital will provide free treatment to patients," the chief minister affirmed. Dr. Bari highlighted that

the Korangi Indus Hospital would operate as a paperless facility and would feature specialised wards for neurosciences and adult oncology. "This project would not have been possible without the support of the Sindh Chief Minister," Dr. Bari acknowledged. CM Murad Ali Shah also announced that a separate Mother and Child Block would be constructed at Badin Hospital, which is also managed by the Indus Hospital Network. "The Indus Network is providing top-quality healthcare services, and we are committed to enhancing medical facilities across Sindh," the CM added. The chief minister further emphasised his vision to promote nursing as a vital profession to inspire more young people to pursue careers in this field.

## Iran rejects direct negotiations with US

DUBAI (AP): Iran's president said Sunday that Tehran had rejected direct negotiations with the United States in response to a letter from President Donald Trump over its rapidly advancing nuclear program. The remarks from President Masoud Pezeshkian represented the first official acknowledgment of how Iran responded to Trump's letter. It also suggests that tensions may further rise between Tehran

and Washington. Pezeshkian said: "Although the possibility of direct negotiations between the two sides has been rejected in this response, it has been emphasized that the path for indirect negotiations remains open." It's unclear, however, whether Trump would accept indirect negotiations. Indirect negotiations for years since Trump initially withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018

have been unsuccessful. Trump's overture comes as both Israel and the United States have warned they will never let Iran acquire a nuclear weapon, leading to fears of a military confrontation as Tehran enriches uranium at near weapons-grade levels — something only done by atomic-armed nations. Iran has long maintained its program is for peaceful purposes, even as its officials increasingly threaten to pursue the

bomb as tensions are high with the US over its sanctions and after the collapse of a ceasefire in Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Since Trump returned to the White House, his administration has consistently said that Iran must be prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons. A report in February, however, by the UN's nuclear watchdog said Iran has accelerated its production of near weapons-grade uranium.

## South Korea, China, Japan agree to promote regional trade

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea, China and Japan held their first economic dialogue in five years on Sunday, seeking to facilitate regional trade as the three Asian export powers brace from U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs. The countries' three trade ministers agreed to "closely cooperate for a comprehensive and high-level" talks on a South Korea-Japan-China free trade agreement deal to promote "regional and global trade", according to a statement released after

the meeting. "It is necessary to strengthen the implementation of RCEP, in which all three countries have participated, and to create a framework for expanding trade cooperation among the three countries through Korea-China-Japan FTA negotiations," said South Korean Trade Minister Ahn Duk-geun, referring to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The ministers met ahead of Trump's announcement on Wednesday of more tariffs in what he calls "liber-

ation day", as he upends Washington's trading partnerships. Seoul, Beijing and Tokyo are major U.S. major trading partners, although they have been at loggerheads among themselves over issues including territorial disputes and Japan's release of wastewater from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant. They have not made substantial progress on a trilateral free-trade deal since starting talks in 2012. RCEP, which went into force in 2022, is a trade

framework among 15 Asia-Pacific countries aimed at lowering trade barriers. Trump announced 25% import tariffs on cars and auto parts last week, a move that may hurt companies, especially Asian automakers, which are among the largest vehicle exporters to the U.S. After Mexico, South Korea is the world's largest exporter of vehicles to the United States, followed by Japan, according to data from S&P. The ministers agreed to hold their next ministerial meeting in Japan.

## Talal attends Border Security Summit 2025 in London

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Interior, Talal Chaudhry, is visiting the United Kingdom to participate in the Border Security Summit 2025 on the directive of the Prime Minister and Interior Minister.

The high-profile summit, taking place in London, has gathered delegations from 40 countries, including Pakistan, to discuss global strategies for border security and immigration control. Speaking on Pakistan's stance, Talal Chaudhry

reaffirmed the country's commitment to international cooperation against organized immigration crimes. During his visit, the minister also took part in Eid-ul-Fitr prayers in London and spent time with the Pakistani com-

munity, emphasizing the government's dedication to engaging with overseas Pakistanis. This visit is expected to strengthen Pakistan's role in global security efforts and foster international partnerships in tackling cross-border challenges.

## Denmark's prime minister to visit Greenland on April 2-4

COPENHAGEN (Reuters): Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen will visit Greenland on April 2-4 for talks with the semi-autonomous territory's new government, she said on Saturday, amid U.S. interest in taking control of the Arctic island. "I look forward to continuing the close and trusting cooperation between

Greenland and Denmark," Frederiksen said in a statement. During a visit to a U.S. military base in the north of Greenland on Friday, U.S. Vice President JD Vance accused Denmark - which has controlled Greenland since 1721 - of not doing a good job of keeping the island safe and suggested the United States would better protect

the strategically located island. He made his remarks hours after Greenland formed a new broad government coalition, led by Jens-Frederik Nielsen, who called Denmark its closest ally. Frederiksen, who has said it is up to the people of Greenland to decide their own future, said on Friday that Vance's

description of Denmark was not fair. "I have the deepest respect for how the Greenlandic people and Greenlandic politicians are handling the great pressure on Greenland," she said in the statement on Saturday. "It is a situation that calls for unity across political parties and across the countries in the Realm."

# Pakistan to attract major foreign investment within six months, says Fatemi

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Syed Tariq Fatemi has said that Pakistan is likely to see significant foreign investment in the next three to six months and expressed optimism about the country's economic indicators in the light of support from major global lenders. In an exclusive conversation with Geo News, the premier's aide said that the meetings with the Trump administration were "comprehensive and friendly", with substantial discussions on strengthening the Pak-US relations. He also added that despite the changing US administration, the fundamental issues between Islamabad and Washington remained unchanged, highlighting the continued importance of bilateral ties. Fatemi reaffirmed that PM Shehbaz prioritises economic cooperation with neighbouring countries, particularly the United

States. He said that trade and investment were top priorities in the discussions. According to the PM's aide, the US recognition of Pakistan's progress in tackling terrorism and improving economic conditions had strengthened ties. He further highlighted that the US president's recent statements on counterterrorism were highly significant. He pointed out that Pakistan had clearly communicated to the US that terrorism would never be tolerated. He also said that Pakistan recently captured and handed over a key terrorist and the main suspect in the 2021 attack on Kabul Airport, wanted by the US, an act which was praised by the US administration. Mohammad Sharifullah alias Jafar, a Daesh-Khorasan operative, was arrested by Pakistan on intelligence provided by America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Fatemi stressed that

Pakistan's commitment to fighting terrorism had come at great sacrifice to its people and law enforcement agencies. Earlier this week, the prime minister's assistant also held high-level meetings in Washington, DC, with senior US officials, including Lisa Kenna, Acting Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and Senior Director for South and Central Asia at the National Security Council, Ricky Gill. These discussions focused on advancing trade and investment relations between the two countries, especially in sectors such as textiles and infrastructure. During his meetings with the American leaders, Fatemi highlighted the economic priorities of the government. He said that the efforts of the government have resulted in a clear improvement in economic indicators. "The recognition of the improvement of economic indicators by the

International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is proof that the economy was moving in the right direction," he said. The special assistant said that there exists immense potential for promoting trade and economic relations between the two nations, which will not only benefit the businesses of both countries but will also have a positive impact on the economy of the region. Fatemi's visit to the United States included addressing the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he emphasised the historical relationship between the two nations and urged greater US investment in Pakistan's economy, Radio Pakistan reported. His remarks underscore Pakistan's focus on boosting its ties with the US, both in terms of economic cooperation and counterterrorism efforts, while highlighting the country's ongoing sacrifices in the fight against terrorism.

## Russian drone attack kills two in Ukraine's Kharkiv

F.P. Report

KHARKIV, Ukraine (Reuters): A Russian drone strike on Ukraine's second-largest city killed two people and wounded 35 late on Saturday, officials said, as President Volodymyr Zelenskiy urged Kyiv's partners to respond to such attacks while seeking peace in the three-year-old war. The strike on the eastern city of Kharkiv, which damaged a military hospital among other structures, came as Ukraine seeks strong backing from Western allies to pressure Russia into ending its full-scale invasion of its smaller neighbour.

## KP takes steps for lasting peace in Kurram: Saif

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Advisor on Information, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's sincere efforts to restore peace in Kurram are yielding positive results. As part of these efforts, an agreement has been reached between the concerned parties to further enhance the security of routes in the region. This agreement is a sub-agreement under the larger Kohat

Peace Accord. In a statement, Barrister Dr. Saif emphasized that the primary objective of this agreement is to ensure the safety of the Tall-Parachinar highway. He further stated that under the leadership of the Chief Minister, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is making rapid progress towards a permanent resolution of the century-old dispute in the region. As part of the Kohat Peace Accord, efforts are underway to rid Kurram of

bunkers and illegal weapons. So far, nearly 900 bunkers have been dismantled, and the process of collecting weapons will begin soon after the completion of bunker demolitions. Barrister Dr. Saif reiterated that the elimination of bunkers and illegal arms is essential for lasting peace in Kurram. To ensure the successful implementation of this initiative, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur is personally overseeing all matters.

## Make nuclear deal or face 'bombing': Trump tells Iran

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump on Sunday /bombings and secondary tariffs if Tehran did not come to an agreement with Washington over its nuclear programme. In a telephone interview with NBC News, Trump said US and Iranian officials were talking but did not elaborate. "If they don't make a deal, there will be bombing," Trump said. "But there's a chance that if they don't make a deal, that I will do secondary tariffs on them like I did four years ago." In his first 2017-21 term, Trump withdrew the US from a 2015 deal between Iran and world powers that placed strict limits on Tehran's disputed nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. Trump also reimposed sweeping US sanctions. Since then the Islamic Republic has far surpassed the agreed lim-



its in its escalating programme of uranium enrichment. Tehran has so far rebuffed Trump's warning to make a deal or face military consequences. Iran sent a response through Oman to Trump's letter in which he urged Tehran to reach a new nuclear deal, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi was cited as saying by the official IRNA

news agency on Thursday. Western powers accuse Iran of having an clandestine agenda to develop nuclear weapons capability by enriching uranium to a high level of fissile purity, above what they say is justifiable for a civilian atomic energy programme. Tehran says its nuclear programme is wholly for civilian energy purposes.



LONDON, ENGLAND: Muslim worshippers take part in the Eid al-Fitr morning prayer to mark the end of the Holy month of Ramadan in Burgess Park on March 30, 2025 in London, England. The crescent moon has been seen so Eid al-Fitr celebrating the end of Ramadan takes place on March 31st/ April 1st this year.