

**Floods: Locals evacuated**  
**F.P. Report**

CHITRAL: A high-level flood in Ghot Gol stream in the Morkho area of Upper Chitral has forced the evacuation of local residents to safer locations. The flood was triggered by melting snow from the surrounding mountains. Local administration on Wednesday said the strong floodwaters caused significant damage to crops and several connecting roads near the stream.

**Water shortage hits Gwadar**  
**F.P. Report**

GWADAR: Additional Deputy Commissioner General Dr. Abdul Shakoor reviewed the water shortage in the city during his visit to the water storage tanks of the New Town Housing Scheme. Fluctuations in voltage at pumping stations have affected the water supply. During the visit, Dr. Shakoor spoke with the GDA's Project Director of Water.



ISLAMABAD: A US delegation, led by Mr. Eric Meyer, Senior Bureau Official and Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, US Department of State, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Trump pauses higher tariffs for countries — hikes China rate to 125%

WASHINGTON (AFP): President Donald Trump announced a 90 day pause on his sweeping tariffs Wednesday, giving all countries a 10 percent baseline except China, which will see even higher levies. "Based on the lack of respect that China has shown to the World's Markets, I am hereby raising the Tariff charged to China by the United States of America to 125%, effective immediately," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Saying that more than 75 countries had asked for negotiations over the tariffs, Trump said he "authorized a 90 day pause, and a substantially lowered Reciprocal Tariff during this period, of 10%, also effective immediately."

Meanwhile, China will impose 84 per cent tariffs on US goods from Thursday, up from the 34pc previously announced, its finance ministry said on Wednesday, firing the latest salvo in a global trade war sparked by US President Donald Trump. Trump's "reciprocal" tariffs on dozens of countries took effect earlier today, including massive 104pc duties on Chinese goods. The European Union is also preparing its own retaliatory measures for later today. Trump's punishing tariffs - which he says aim to end US trade deficits with many countries — have upended a global trading order in place for decades, raising fears of recession and wiping trillions of dollars off the market value of major firms.

Global markets took a pummeling today as Trump's eye-watering 104pc tariffs on China came into effect, and a savage selloff in US bonds sparked fears that foreign funds were fleeing US

assets. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, in an interview with Fox Business Network, said China's new tariffs were unfortunate.

"They have the most imbalanced economy in the history of the modern world, and I can tell you that this escalation is a loser for them," he said. This week has already brought crisis-era volatility to markets, wiping trillions of dollars off the value of stocks and hammering commodities and emerging markets. Shares of big US banks fell pre-market, extending tariffs-induced losses after China announced its 84pc tariffs on US goods. Oil prices extended their four-year lows. "The US and China are stuck in an unprecedented, and expensive, game of chicken, and it seems that both sides are unwilling to back down," said Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura.

Trump had nearly doubled duties on Chinese imports, which had been set at 54pc last week, in response to previous counter-tariffs from Beijing. The White House had no immediate comment on China's latest retaliatory move. Earlier on Wednesday, China called its trade surplus with the US an inevitability and warned it had the "determination and means" to continue the fight if Trump kept hitting Chinese goods. China's currency has faced heavy downward pressure, with the offshore yuan at record lows due to the tariffs. But sources told Reuters that the central bank has asked major state-owned banks to reduce US dollar purchases and would not allow sharp yuan declines.

## US delegation calls on Army Chief

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: A high-level delegation from the United States, led by Mr. Eric Meyer, Senior Bureau Official for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at General Headquarters on Wednesday.

Meeting came in the backdrop of Pakistan's Mineral Investment Forum. Appreciating the first-of-its-kind Forum, the delegation expressed confidence in Pakistan's policy to develop vast untapped mineral wealth through mutually beneficial partnerships.

Commenting on the US Administration's priorities where collaboration in mineral development with Pakistan is a core area of mutual interest, Mr. Meyer also expressed interest in Pakistan's steadily improving investment landscape.

The meeting also afforded an opportunity to both sides for sharing perspective on global developments and Pakistan's regional security imperatives. Both sides expressed confidence on the positive trajectory of bilateral relations and agreed on the need to explore B2B avenues in addition to expanding existing G2G and P2P cooperation for comprehensively strengthening the relationship.

## Pak's economy to grow 2.5% in FY2025: ADB

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's economy is showing signs of stability and recovery with growth in FY2025 (ending 30 June 2026), as the effects of tight macroeconomic policies and progress in economic reforms took hold.

According to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2025, the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) annual flagship economic publication, Pakistan's real gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow by 2.5% in FY2025, the same growth rate from FY2024.

ADB says Pakistan's growth is projected to tick up to 3.0% in FY2026. The growth outlook is being helped by a more stable macroeconomic position helped by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Extended Fund Facility

(EFF) arrangement that began in October 2024. Adherence to the economic adjustment program is critical for building resilience and enabling sustainable and inclusive growth.

"Pakistan's economy has benefitted from improved macroeconomic stability through robust reform implementation in areas such as tax policy and energy sector viability," said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Emma Fan.

"Growth is projected to persist in 2025 and to increase in 2026. Sustained implementation of policy reforms is vital to buttress this growth trajectory and fortify fiscal and external buffers," Fan added. In FY2025, growth is expected to be driven by a rebound in private sector investment linked to progress on reform measures, perceptions of greater economic stability,

## May 9: ATC issues arrest warrants

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) of Islamabad on Wednesday issued arrest warrants for PTI workers involved in May 9 vandalism for failing to appear before the court. Justice Tahir Abbas Sipra of the ATC conducted hearing of the cases against PTI founder Imran Khan, PTI Vice President Shah Mahmood Qureshi and several PTI workers.

The hearing couldn't proceed as Khan and Qureshi didn't appear before the court, prompting the judge to adjourn the hearing until May 9 while ordering arrest of absent PTI workers. The defendant's lawyer contended that case could not be proceeded citing unavailability of the incarcerated PTI founder while requesting exemption of PTI workers, who travelled from far-flung areas for the hearing.

# KP govt spending taxpayers' money on people: CM

**F.P. Report**

MARDAN: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, paid a day-long visit to Mardan district on Wednesday, where he inaugurated different development projects worth billions of rupees.

The Chief Minister inaugurated the newly constructed gymnasium at the Mardan Sports Complex and also laid the foundation stone for the upgradation and standardization of the sports complex. The gymnasium has been completed at a total cost of Rs. 335 million, while the upgradation project of the Mardan Sports Complex is estimated at Rs. 363.494 million.

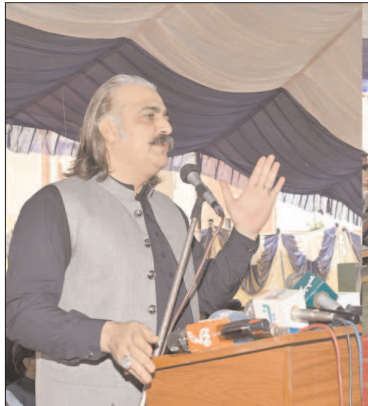
The project includes a boundary wall, cricket ground, footpaths, internal roads, walking track, ground for persons with different abilities, water filtration plant, cricket academy, and other allied facilities. The Chief Minister also inaugurated Children's Hospital in Mardan. The hospital, comprising 200 beds, has been completed at a total cost of Rs. 2,607 mil-

lion.

It includes emergency, OPD, laboratory, pharmacy, and all other allied facilities. Furthermore, the Chief Minister inaugurated sub-projects of the Kundal Dam in Swabi district. The dam stands 157 feet high and 1,047 feet long, with a total storage capacity of 10,395 acre-feet. The command area of the project is 13,340 acres. Around 40,000 people will benefit from the project in agriculture, and it will also supply water to about 30,000 people. Villages such as Kundal, Panjmand, Babeen, Jhanda, Boka, and Tatalia will be direct beneficiaries of the scheme.

Addressing a public gathering on the occasion, Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur said that it is the government's responsibility to provide facilities to citizens' at their doorstep. "We are working with the vision that hospitals must offer treatment, schools impart education and government offices provide services," he stated.

He emphasized that a hospital is defined by the availability of health-



care services, not merely by the structure of a building. He urged elected public representatives and the public to focus on the timely completion of development projects. "We are spending taxpayers' money on the people. Public money belongs to the people, and they must take ownership and help to ensure the quality of development projects," he added.

The Chief Minister mentioned that when he assumed office, medical



treatment under the Sehat Card plus was suspended and there were outstanding dues of Rs. 17 billion. Similarly, other departments had liabilities billions, which are now being cleared. Under the vision of PTI's founder chairman Imran Khan, his government took measures that have made Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the richest province in the country.

"We introduced reforms and recovered money that was getting



wasted in the system. Over the past 13 months, we have not taken a single rupee in loans—instead, we have repaid Rs. 50 billion in debt," he noted. He stressed that self-reliance is essential, and nations dependent on loans cannot be sovereign or dignified. The upcoming annual budget, he said, will be aligned with his vision, featuring only those projects that focus on public welfare and are completed within their stipulated time-

lines.

The Chief Minister further said his government is completing development projects that have been pending for years. Major development schemes will be included in the Annual Development Program (ADP), while elected representatives will be given Rs. 500 million each for smaller projects.

Additionally, every constituency will receive Rs. 2 billion in development funds in the next budget, he added. The Chief Minister asserted that under the National Finance Commission (NFC), the province is constitutionally entitled to an additional Rs. 256 billion annually, which is not being provided. He emphasized that the provincial government is actively pursuing this matter at every forum and called for collective effort to fight for their rights. By expressing optimism that the province is very close to securing its due rights and affirmed his belief that, through unity, they will make the province self-sufficient in every respect.

# PM to send team to US to discuss new trade tariff

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that Pakistan will send a high-level delegation to the United States for negotiations aimed at addressing tariffs and further strengthening bilateral trade relations.

The delegation will include prominent business figures and exporters from Pakistan, the prime minister said while chairing a meeting of the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) here. Praising the government economic team, the prime minister said the team successfully negotiated with International Monetary Fund (IMF) to convince it to reduce the electricity tariffs.

"With the reduction in power tariffs, the production cost of the industrial sector would also reduce, and as a result the exports of the country will go up." The prime minister pointed out that with reduction in the production cost of the local industries, the competition of the Pakistani products in the world market will improve.

He said industrial development was one of the top priority of the government that will help producing new employment opportunities. "Due to the comprehensive advisory process, the sustainable development goals will become possible soon," he said adding that the government was easing the process of investment and business by introducing reform measures in the taxation system and through information technology," he remarked.

The prime minister further added that the stability of the economy, reduction in inflation, significant decrease in interest rates, increased trust from global institutions, and investment from friendly countries are the results of the hard work of the government's economic team. He emphasized that experts from various

## PIA set to post first profit: Shehbaz

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that Pakistan International Airlines' return to earning profit after 20 years was a "major turnaround" after decades of losses. "Another good news! Alhamdulillah! PIA set to post its first profit in 20 years, a major turnaround after decades of losses. The skies ahead look brighter. Inshallah!" the prime minister wrote on his X timeline. He also lauded the team efforts led by Aviation Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif. According to media reports, PIA's board of directors approved its financial results for 2024, depicting an operational profit of Rs3.9 billion and a net profit of Rs2.26bn. The airline last achieved profit in the year 2003.

sectors included in the Economic Advisory Council will play an important role in national development through their valuable suggestions.

The meeting was attended by members of the Economic Advisory Council, including Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Ministers Ahmad Khan Cheema, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Attaullah Tarar, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Ali Pervaz Malik, Sardar Awaish Khan Laghari, Advisors Muhammad Ali, Syed Tagir Shah, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar, Governor State Bank Jameel Ahmad, and other relevant senior officials.

The participants presented their recommendations on the future course of action, particularly regarding the growth of Pakistan's economy and the increase in exports. They also appreciated the government's efforts in reducing the electricity tariffs provided to industries.

The participants lauded the special attention given to the recent Mineral Investment Forum and considered it an important milestone for the development of Pakistan's mineral and mining sector. The participants recommended focusing on the export of value-added products rather than raw materials in government policy making.

They also suggested strengthening the communication infrastructure for the transportation of goods from industries to ports, aligning the skills of the domestic workforce with international standards, improving the promotion of Pakistani goods through foreign embassies, establishing export promotional councils, and further improving facilities in special economic zones and industrial areas.

The participants also recommended comprehensive research on the production stages of exportable products and their raw material sources, which would help Pakistani manufacturers compete in the global market and increase exports. Furthermore, the participants proposed reforms in Pakistan's banking sector to facilitate exports.

They also appreciated the decision to send a high-level delegation to negotiate on the recent tariff imposition by the United States. They also commended the representation and inclusiveness of all sectors in the council. The prime minister directed the government's economic team to prepare a practical action plan based on the suggestions of the council members. He also instructed the formation of separate sub-committees under the Economic Advisory Council for different sectors, which will propose actionable suggestions regarding those sectors.

## 23 killed in Israel strike on residential block

GAZA CITY (AFP): Gaza's civil defense agency said an Israeli strike on a residential building in Gaza City killed at least 23 people Wednesday, most of them children or women, as the military said it targeted a "senior Hamas" militant.

The strike took place in the Shujaiya neighborhood of Gaza City, the agency's spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP. "The death toll from the Shujaiya massacre has risen to 23 martyrs, including eight children and eight women," he said, adding that more than 60 people were wounded. "There are still people trapped under the rubble."

Ayub Salim, a 26-year-old Shujaiya resident, told AFP he witnessed the strike on the four-story block. He said the area was hit with "multiple missiles" and was "overcrowded with tents, displaced people and homes." "Shrapnel flew in all directions," he said, speaking of "a terrifying and indescribable scene."

"Dust and massive destruction filled the entire place, we couldn't see anything, just the screams and panic of the people," Salim said the dead were "torn to pieces." "Even now, emergency crews are still transporting the dead and the injured. It is truly a horrific massacre," he said.

A crew from the Gaza civil defense agency rushed to the scene, only to find several people trapped under the rubble, a rescuer said. "This house was home to many people who believed they were safe. It was blown up over their heads," Ibrahim Abu Al-Rish told AFP. He added that the strike hit while many children were playing inside.

"The house was directly bombed, and the entire residential area was destroyed," he said. "We pulled out the remains of women and children. There are still people buried under the rubble." When asked by AFP about the strike the military said it "struck a senior Hamas terrorist who was responsible for planning and executing terrorist attacks" from the area. It did not give the target's name and renewed its claim, denied by Hamas, that the militant group uses "human shields." Hamas condemned the strike as one of the "most heinous acts of genocide." "The terrorist Zionist occupation army has committed a bloody massacre by bombing a densely populated residential area filled with civilians and displaced people," the group said in a statement.

"These ongoing massacres against our defenseless people — with full support from the American administration, which is complicit in the aggression — represent a stain on the conscience of the international community." Israel resumed intense strikes on the Gaza Strip on March 18, ending a two-month ceasefire with Hamas. Efforts to restore the truce have so far failed.

The health ministry in the Hamas-run territory said on Wednesday that at least 1,482 Palestinians have been killed in the renewed Israeli operations, taking the overall death toll since the start of the war to 50,846. Hamas's October 2023 attack that triggered the war resulted in the deaths of 1,218 people on the Israeli side, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures.

## Marri rejects inquiry against Babar

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Shazia Marri, has stated that the FIA's inquiry against senior PPP leader and former Senator Farhatullah Babar is regrettable. She said it is extremely concerning that the FIA has initiated a baseless inquiry against Farhatullah Babar. For decades, Senator Farhatullah Babar has stood with the oppressed, raised his voice for human rights, and consistently demanded accountability from those in power with dignity and moral insight.

Shazia Marri said it is utterly ridiculous to accuse Farhatullah Babar of abuse of power. He has not held any public office for over a decade. She added that the inquiry, apparently initiated based on a private complaint, is not only untimely but also appears to be motivated by questionable intentions.

Shazia Marri emphasized that Babar's entire political career is a shining example of honesty, principled conduct, and commitment to democratic values.







# Governor voices concern over poor medical facilities in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday expressed concern over the lack of basic medical facilities for the province's population of over 40 million and emphasized the need for collaborative efforts in this regard.

A Health Policy Conference was organized at the Governor House to mark World Health Day. The event was hosted by the Peoples Doctors Forum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, graced the conference as the chief guest.

The conference saw participation from notable figures, including former Federal Minister Arbab Alamgir, President of Peoples Doctors Forum Dr. Janbaz Afridi, Dr. Fakhruddin, Dr. Bahr Karam Yousafzai, Dr. Sarfaraz Khan Afridi, Dr. Zahir Shah, Dr. Karim Khawaja, representatives from the Provincial Doctors Association and Young Doctors Association, along with medical experts from across Pakistan and abroad. During the session, prayers were offered for the speedy recovery of President Asif Ali Zardari and for the elevation of ranks of the late Senator Taj Haider.

Speakers at the conference shared a range of recommendations aimed at improving the healthcare system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They highlighted the current challenges in the health sector, issues related to patient care, and proposed comprehensive policy reforms.

Addressing the audience, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed concern over the lack of basic medical facilities for the people of the province. He appreciated Dr. Janbaz Afridi and the medical professionals for organizing the event and emphasized that such conferences provide valuable opportunities to evaluate challenges and pave the way for reform in the health sector.

The Governor said that the provincial government has allocated Rs. 232 billion for healthcare, yet problems such as inadequate hospital care, shortage of medicines, lack of doctors and hospital beds, and difficulties in availing the Insaf Health Card still persist.

He further pointed out that the situation in rural areas is worse, with diseases like childbirth complications, hepatitis, tuberculosis, heart disease, and diabetes claiming hundreds of lives annually.

Stressing the importance of healthcare infrastructure development, he said that international organizations recommend spending 5-10 percent of a country's GDP on health, whereas Pakistan's health spending has remained below 3 percent. He also lamented the trend of senior doctors leaving public institutions.

Governor Kundi emphasized the need for collaborative efforts among the government, institutions, medical experts, media, and the public to establish a modern, effective, and accessible healthcare system.

He assured full cooperation to all medical professionals and said that the doors of the Governor House are always open for them.

He added that the suggestions put forward by healthcare professionals, especially young doctors, would be presented to the federal government. Constructive criticism, he said, should be welcomed as a tool for improvement, and expertise-based governance could enhance performance across all sectors.

In conclusion, Dr. Janbaz Afridi presented a commemorative shield to the Governor, who also distributed shields and certificates among the organizers and panelists. Governor Kundi expressed hope that the conference would help set a clear and promising direction for improving the healthcare system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



PESHAWAR: A high level delegation from World Bank, led by Najj Benhassine, Country Director for Pakistan called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah

## PHC issues notice KP govt in cancellation of FIRs

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Aurangzeb has issued a notice to the provincial government regarding a petition filed by Provincial Law Minister Aftab Alam, seeking the cancellation of FIRs registered against him, on Wednesday.

The lawyer Alam Khan Adinzai states that nine FIRs were registered against the petitioner in various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the violent protests on May 9. The FIRs were filed by the caretaker government, allegedly due to Aftab Alam's affiliation with an opposition political party.

The lawyer argued that the FIRs were registered on political grounds and the petitioner was not involved in any vandalism. The court directed the provincial government to present the case records at the next hearing and adjourned the case.

## Qasim meets PESCO Chief Engineer



**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah held an important meeting with PESCO Chief Engineer Akhtar Hameed regarding electricity-related issues in his constituency.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on unannounced load shedding, overloading on various feeders, replacement of cables, and timely repair of transformers in the area.

On this occasion, the Provincial Minister highlighted the public's difficulties and demanded the

PESCO Chief to find immediate solutions to these problems so that relief could be provided to the people.

PESCO Chief Engineer Akhtar Hameed assured that all issues would be resolved on a priority basis. District Zakat Chairman Malik Jahanzaib Khan, General Secretary City West Ejaz Khan Saraf, and other workers from the constituency were also present during the meeting. Public circles have welcomed this meeting and expressed hope that electricity-related issues will be resolved soon.



PESHAWAR: Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi chairing a meeting on Wednesday.

## PBA elects new cabinet

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Bar Association (PBA) annual elections saw a clean sweep by the joint candidates of the Malgray Wakeelan and Insaf Lawyers Forum, securing all the seats for the 2025-2026 term. The newly elected cabinet including president Qaiser Zaman, General Secretary Zahidullah Zahid, Vice President Saifullah Khalil, Joint Secretary Nangial Zeb Hashnaghar and Finance Secretary Faizan Ullah Chamkani. The cabinet also comprising Ali Iqbal Qazilbash, Faisal Khan, Mahwash Sana Siddique, Shah Zeb Rahim Khan.

## WB delegation calls on CS

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: A delegation from World Bank, led by Najj Benhassine, Country Director for Pakistan, met with Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah. The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation, reviewing the progress of ongoing development projects, and aligning future initiatives with the province's long-term development vision. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing collaboration for sustainable development and inclusive growth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Women in technology to reduce gender gap in era of information

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: In connection with International Women's Day, the Business Incubation Center (BIC) at the University of Peshawar enthusiastically participated, demonstrating keen interest in learning about modern technological tools and digital entrepreneurship.

Then seminar organized by Karishma Zakaullah, supported by Women Techmakers by Google and co-hosted with Code BIC, bringing together young women from various institutes across Pakistan, with a special focus on students from art and design fields.

The seminar sought to empower young women by encouraging them to embrace digital technology and unlock opportunities for remote income generation, ensuring financial independence from within their homes. A significant number of female students from the University of Peshawar enthusiastically participated, demonstrating keen interest in learning about modern technological tools and digital entrepreneurship.

Addressing the audience, Dr. Shakeel, Director of the Business Incubation Center, remarked: "Our mission is to guide young women towards digital literacy and independence. Through such initiatives, we aim to equip students with the latest knowledge of digital tools that will empower them for the future."

Karishma Zakaullah, the visionary behind the program, stressed the importance of digital skills for women: "Women today face numerous challenges in stepping into the tech world, but by embracing digitalization, they can overcome these hurdles. I aspire to see the female students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa advance in both education and digital technology. Today's turnout proves there is immense potential among our young women, and it is our responsibility to nurture it."

The seminar also featured inspiring words from Afshan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's first female industrial entrepreneur. Sharing her journey, she said: "I began my path to success with digital marketing, which has led me to this point. I encourage all young women to explore this field and opened new doors to success and self-reliance."

Participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity, noting the growing need for women to stay abreast of technological advancements. "With new technologies emerging every day, it is vital for women to stay informed. Programs like this provide invaluable learning, and we hope such efforts continue," said one of the participating students.

The event concluded with a resounding message: initiatives like these are essential to paving the way for women's empowerment and should continue to inspire young women to lead in the digital age.

## Pakistan must engage in strategic dialogue with the US: Afzal

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Haji Muhammad Afzal, Regional Chairman of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has strongly endorsed the recent statement by former Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce, Mr. Gohar Ejaz, and Mr. SM Tanveer, Patron-in-Chief of the United Business Group (UBG), calling for urgent initiation of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations between Pakistan and the United States.

Mr. Ejaz emphasized that Pakistan could offer duty-free access to American products as part of a broader trade deal while simultaneously seeking significant reductions in tariffs and taxes on Pakistani exports to the US.

This proposal comes at a critical time. Just a day prior to Mr. Ejaz's statement, Trump imposed a baseline 10% tariff on nearly all US imports and levied even steeper duties on key trade partners including a 29% tariff on Pakistani goods. He accused Islamabad of slapping 58% tariffs on American products.

Highlighting these developments, Mr. Ejaz noted that one of the major objections from Washington has been the high tariff barriers Pakistan maintains on American products. "The United States has consistently complained that Pakistan does not allow its products free access to local markets."

## KMU hosts 5th International Public Health Conference: Day 1 focuses on NCDs and climate change

**FP Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) proudly inaugurated the 5th International Public Health Conference on April 9, 2025. The event brought together leading public health experts, clinicians, researchers, and policymakers from across Pakistan and abroad to deliberate on critical health challenges facing the region and the world.

Day 1 of the conference centered on two pivotal themes: Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and the Climate Change & Health Nexus, emphasizing the need for integrated and interdisciplinary strategies in public health. The conference opened with a dynamic plenary session on Non-Communicable Diseases. Professor Dr. Zia ul Haq, Vice Chancellor of KMU, delivered a compelling keynote on "The Role of Lifestyle Medicine in Handling the Pandemic of NCDs."

He stressed that the global burden of NCDs can no longer be managed without prioritizing prevention through behavior change, community-level interventions, and a shift in medical education toward lifestyle medicine. Following this, Professor Abdul Jalil Khan, Director of Family Medicine at KMU and a physician with extensive experience in the United Kingdom, presented "Bridging the Gaps: Insights from the UK for Tackling NCDs Globally."

He urged adaptation of scalable primary healthcare models that are sensitive to the needs of low- and middle-income countries. Dr. Munaira Abbasi, a triple board-certified U.S.-based physician, spoke on "Combating NCDs: The Role of Lifestyle Medicine in Public Health."

She emphasized the urgent need for clinicians to adopt a preventive and holistic approach, highlighting how clinical care must intersect with public health initiatives to combat rising NCD trends. A thought-provoking panel discussion followed, featuring Dr. Bilal Imtiaz from UNICEF Headquarters, Dr. Fawad Khan of WHO Sudan, Dr. Muhammad Khalil Akhtar from KP's Health Sector Reforms Unit, and Professor Dr. Zia ul Haq.

The panel collectively identified the urgent need to scale up NCD prevention efforts through multisectoral approaches. Dr. Imtiaz emphasized adolescent health and early intervention as essential to halting the generational cycle of



NCDs. Dr. Khan discussed the overlooked burden of NCDs in humanitarian crises and fragile states, where chronic disease care often collapses. Dr. Khalil Akhtar highlighted KP's efforts in developing integrated care pathways and strengthening provincial surveillance systems, while Dr. Zia ul Haq reiterated the importance of political will and policy coherence across sectors. Findings shared during this session noted that over 60% of Pakistan's disease burden stems from NCDs and that interventions such as digital health tools, lifestyle education, and early diagnosis remain underutilized.

The afternoon session shifted focus to the Climate Change and Health Nexus, with keynote speaker Dr. Jai Das, Associate Professor at Aga Khan University, delivering a compelling presentation titled "The Climate-Health Nexus: Impact, Shaping Adaptation and Resilience."

Dr. Das underscored the compounding impact of climate change on vulnerable populations, including women, children, and the urban poor. He called for integrated national policies that address environmental sustainability and public health in tandem, warning that failure to act now would undo decades of public health progress. Dr. Maria Ishaq Khattak, Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Dental Public Health at KMU, presented her research on "Understanding Climate Change and Health Vulnerability: Socio-Economic Incentives for Climate Resilience Among



Informal Sector Workers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa." Her findings shed light on the increased susceptibility of informal workers to climate-induced health risks such as heat stress, water-borne illnesses, and respiratory infections. She emphasized the role of social protection, health insurance, and targeted adaptation schemes to reduce climate-related health inequities in low-income communities.

The panel discussion that followed emphasized the importance of early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, and cross-departmental coordination among health, environment, and disaster management sectors. Parallel plenary sessions added diverse perspectives to the day.

The session on "Strengthening Primary Health Care Through the Family Practice Approach" focused on revitalizing Pakistan's primary healthcare system through the integration of family medicine. Experts emphasized that trained family physicians are essential for ensuring accessible, equitable, and continuous care.

Discussions included strategies for deploying physicians at the community level, integrating digital health technologies, and building sustainable support systems to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The "Dental Public Health" session shed light on the widespread burden of oral diseases and the urgent need for integrated, preventive oral health programs. Speakers stressed that oral health is often overlooked despite its strong associations with systemic diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular conditions.

The session advocated for school-based oral health programs, community interventions, and the establishment of national oral health surveillance systems. Another important session on "Integrated Nutrition Programs and Their Impact in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" addressed the longstanding issue of malnutrition in the region. Presenters shared data and success stories from nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions, particularly those targeting women, infants, and children. Key highlights included the role of multi-sectoral coordination between health, agriculture, and education departments, improvements in maternal and child nutrition indicators in selected districts, and the use of behavior change communication to promote healthier dietary practices.

Speakers emphasized the need to address urban-rural disparities in program access and called for sustained investment and policy continuity to ensure long-term nutrition gains. Day 1 of the 5th International Public Health Conference concluded with a collective call for equity, intersectoral collaboration, and innovation in addressing public health challenges. With a strong emphasis on research, education, and policy translation, KMU continues to lead the way in advancing public health systems in Pakistan and fostering global partnerships for health resilience.





## In brief

### Mobile network facility torched F.P. Report

WANA: In a shocking act of sabotage, unidentified assailants torched a Jazz mobile tower late Monday night in Karikot, Lower South Waziristan, plunging the entire region into a communication blackout. The incident occurred under the cover of darkness at Shaheed Mor, where armed men targeted the critical telecom infrastructure, causing severe disruption to mobile network services across Karikot and its surrounding areas. Local sources revealed that the tower's entire machinery was completely destroyed in the blaze, effectively severing mobile connectivity and leaving thousands of residents cut off from vital communication. The incident has triggered a wave of condemnation from political figures and the general public alike, who have denounced the attack as both cowardly and a direct violation of the community's right to stay connected. Imran Mukhlis Wazir, District General Secretary of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for Lower South Waziristan, strongly condemned the attack in a statement posted on social media, calling it an act of terrorism. "In this modern era, denying people access to such a fundamental facility is deeply troubling," he said, urging the government to take swift action and ensure the immediate restoration of services. Reactions on social media echoed the outrage, with citizens describing the attack not just as an act of vandalism, but a symbolic silencing of an already neglected region. "This isn't merely technical damage—it's a statement of how little we matter," one user commented. Others pointed to the glaring disparity, noting that while the world moves toward 5G, Waziristan continues to be deprived of even basic 3G access. So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, and authorities have yet to issue an official response or take visible action.

### World TB Day observed F.P. Report

KOHAT: Tuberculosis, commonly known as TB, indeed a fatal disease but curable, if it is timely treated. This was stated by the doctors and health experts while addressing a TB Symposium organized at KMU, Institute of Medical Sciences Kohat and DHQ Hospital Hangu, by the District TB Control Program and Association for Community Development (ACD) in Kohat and Hangu districts on the occasion of World TB Day. The symposium beside others, was also attended by the District TB Officer Dr. Muhammad Tufail, MS DHQ Hospital Kohat Tahir Ali Shah, Principal Dr. Musarat Jabeen, Dr. Tariq Aziz, RCAC Dr. Fida Muhammad, Regional Coordinator Tariq Bakhsh, DLS Safer Muhammad, Social Worker Shakeel Bangash, Journalist Basit Gilani and other dignitaries of the area and students in large number.

### KBA elects new cabinet for 2025 F.P. Report

KARAK: Karak bar association elected new cabinet for 2025 including cice president Khan Zad Gul, finance secretary Wajid-ur-Rehman, librarian Armaghan Bakht Khan Advocate, press secretary Khurram Rafiq, joint secretary Malik Mehranullah while 5 positions were nominated unopposed.



**D I KHAN:** Tehsil Mayor, Umer Amin Khan Gandapur addressing during the appreciation ceremony of Derajat festival.

## Fair conduct of exams plays key role

### F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has in light of the directions of the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa visited the examination halls established in the Government Higher Secondary School No.1 Kohat in connection with the ongoing matriculation examinations on Wednesday. Principal of the School, Luqman Bangash, also accompanied him. Commissioner Kohat on this occasion met the students present in the examination halls, the teachers in charge and other staff and expressed satisfaction with the examination arrangements. He said that peaceful, transparent and fair conduct of examinations not only guarantees the credibility of the education system but also plays a key role in highlighting the true potential of the students. He advised the examination staff to adopt a zero toler-

ance policy against negative activities like cheating and irregularities and adopt a strategy that is based on the principles of merit, honesty and transparency. Commissioner Kohat strictly directed the security personnel not to allow any unrelated person to enter the examination centers so that the examination atmosphere is calm, safe and orderly.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner Kohat Division also paid a visit to the control room established at the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Kohat for effective monitoring of the ongoing educational examinations in Kohat Division. Controller Examinations Malik Maqsoor Anwar, Control Room Incharge Naveed Ahmed, District Monitoring Incharge Tahir Khattak and other relevant officers and staff were also present on the occasion.

The Controller

Examinations briefed the Commissioner in detail about the activities going on in the control room, monitoring procedures, supervision of examination centers and steps taken for conducting transparent examinations.

Motasim Billah Shah closely reviewed the performance of the control room, security arrangements and supervision of the examination process and termed the arrangements made by the board as satisfactory and appreciated the efforts of the staff.

Commissioner declared that corruption or cheating will not be tolerated any way during the examinations and no compromise should be made on transparency and merit. He said that improving education and restoring public confidence in the examination system are the need of the hour, for which all institutions will have to discharge their responsibilities honestly.

## Health Centre opened in Rahim Yar Khan

### F.P. Report

RAHIM YAR KHAN: Ali Khan Tareen, Makhdoom Syed Murtaza Mehmood, Member National Assembly and Makhdoom Syed Usman Mehmood jointly inaugurated the Sultan Unnar Health Centre in Tillu Bangla, Rahim Yar Khan.

The Sultan Unnar Health Centre will provide free, round-the-clock basic healthcare services to residents of Tillu Bangla and surrounding areas. The facility ensures access to free medical check-ups and medicines. In addition to a team of doctors and medical staff, a female doctor will also be permanently available at the center.

Local residents expressed deep gratitude to Jahangir Khan Tareen, Ali

Khan Tareen, Makhdoom Syed Murtaza Mehmood, and Makhdoom Syed Usman Mehmood for establishing the health center.



Speaking at the occasion, Ali Khan Tareen said, "Rahim Yar Khan is our home, and we deeply love the people here. Sultan Unnar was very close to our hearts. He left us too soon - we pray that Allah grants

him the highest rank in paradise." He added that providing basic health and education services has always

been a top priority for them. Makhdoom Syed Murtaza Mehmood and Makhdoom Syed Usman Mehmood, in their remarks, said, "Selfless service to the people is our mission in life, and we will continue this journey of public service."

## Traders association Risalpur oath-taking ceremony next week

### F.P. Report

RISALPUR: Traders Association Risalpur cabinet to took oath of their offices in next week. The association aims to protect the lives, property, and businesses of shopkeepers, on Wednesday. The association argued the shopkeepers to be vigilant and report any unusual activity to ensure a safe business environment.

Traders are expected to operate in accordance with set price lists to maintain fair business practices.

The association's oath-taking ceremony is scheduled for next week, promising a grand event. The association has decided to address all market issues promptly to create a conducive business environment.

The decision took in a meeting chaired by president Muhammad Islam in which Senior Vice President Muhammad Zakir, General Secretary Amjad Ali, along with Wajid Khan, Safdar Khan, Zahid Sarwar, Farooq Khan, Abrar Khan, Wajid Ali, Irfan, Haji Ghulam Rasool and Musa Advocate participated.

## Young lawyers greet Qaizar Miankhel



### F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Young lawyers on Wednesday extended congratulations to Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Divisional President Qaizar Khan Miankhel on his sweeping victory, along with his group, in the District Bar Dera elections.

A young lawyers delegation led by Mahir Shah Garwaki Advocate, Advocate Wadood Kundi, Zeeshan Kundi Advocate and others met with the newly elected President Qaizar Miankhel and congratulated him over the winning. They expressed hope that the newly elected cabinet will work for the welfare of young lawyers and justice to poors.

## 'PTI leader united to obtain justice' Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: Member Provincial Assembly and District Development Committee (DDAC) chairman Zar Alam Khan has stated that all PTI leaders are united under the leadership of the party's founder, Imran Khan, and will follow his every order. He emphasized that discussing internal party matters at this time would be premature.

District Development Committee (DDAC) chairman claimed that PTI is the largest party in the country, and minor misunderstandings are common in large parties, but this does not mean that the party is dividing or deviating from its mission. Zar Alam Khan made these remarks while addressing a special ceremony in honor of PTI workers who were arrested on November 26 and later released from Attock Jail.

MPA state stated that if justice is not served, the workers will take to the streets again and stage protests wherever the party leadership directs, whether it's in front of Adiala Jail or at D-Chowk Islamabad.

He emphasized that the party workers have not lost their morale despite spending four months in jail; instead, their spirits have been boosted.

## Appreciation ceremony held for Derajat events

### F.P. Report

D I KHAN: An appreciation ceremony was held on Tuesday evening in connection with the successful organization of various events under the Derajat 2025. The ceremony commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by speeches from dignitaries who acknowledged the contributions of participating athletes and organizing departments. Speaking on the occasion, Tehsil Mayor Umar Amin Khan Gandapur expressed gratitude to all the athletes, particularly those who traveled from other districts, for their active participation and support in ensuring the success of Derajat.

He emphasized that despite facing challenges such as law and order issues, hosting such joyful and entertainment-filled events were a positive and commendable initiative. He lauded the efforts of all line departments, especially the Police and the Sports Department, for their role in organizing the festival. He also extended his special thanks to the media for their extensive coverage and publicity of the event. District Police Officer (DPO) Sajjad Ahmad Sahibzada, in his address, praised his force for their resilience and dedication.

He noted that Derajat was not only a public celebration but also a morale booster for the community, leaving a positive and refreshing impact on the minds of the people. Assistant Commissioner Muhammad Fasih Ishaq Abbasi said that the district administration made full use of all available resources and efforts to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. He credited Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Division and Deputy Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan for their leadership and support.

During the ceremony, medals, certificates, and cash prizes were distributed among outstanding performers in various categories including wrestling, horse riding, and other traditional sports. Special appreciation was given to the visiting female riders' group from Islamabad and various districts of Punjab. In the wrestling mega event, World Champion Inam Butt emerged victorious in his match, while an exciting bout between Asif Mochi Pehlwan and Basit Mahrah Pehlwan ended with a win for Asif Mochi,

earning loud applause from the audience. In horse riding, Asad Utra Group secured the first position.

The ceremony also featured an enchanting horse dance performance, and a special award was presented to wrestler Gul Muhammad Niazi for his power show. The event was attended by Director General Sports Department Abdul Nasir Khan, Deputy Director Operations Sports Department, Regional Sports Officer Dera Ismail Khan, officials from the Sports Department and district administration, local dignitaries, political and social figures, participating athletes, media personnel, and a large number of spectators.

**Art exhibition highlights Derajat 2025 activities:** As part of the ongoing Derajat 2025, a series of vibrant events organized by the Sports and Youth Affairs Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa took place on Wednesday. Among these, an art exhibition held at the District Auditorium emerged as a major attraction for the public.

The exhibition was formally inaugurated by Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abdul Nasir Khan. The two-day event showcases the creative works of around 75 senior and junior artists from Dera Ismail Khan, celebrating the region's rich artistic talent. The opening ceremony was attended by key officials including Administrator Peshawar Sports Complex Jaffar Shah, Director Sports Adnan Sohail, Deputy Director Operations Sports Jamshed Baloch, and Focal Person to the Provincial Minister for Sports, Hanif Dawar, along with other dignitaries.

DG Sports Abdul Nasir Khan visited the various displays at the exhibition, praising the artists for their imaginative and visually captivating pieces. He also interacted with the artists, appreciating their contributions and reaffirming the department's commitment to promoting local talent.

He emphasized that such events serve as important platforms for artists to showcase their skills and creativity, and assured that the department would continue efforts to promote their work at national and international levels. It is worth noting that the Derajat 2025 will continue until April 20, culminating in a thrilling off-road challenge event featuring renowned riders from across the country.

## JI, PTI, PPP-backed lawyers' panel wins Bar elections

### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The panel supported by Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and Pakistan People's Party won the district bar association elections held in Timergara, defeating candidates backed by JUI-F, PML-N, and ANP.

Saleem Khan Advocate was elected as President, Zakir Khan as General Secretary, Muhammad Karim as Vice President, Muhammad Bilal as Joint Secretary, Qazi Ghiyas as Finance Secretary, Gohar Rehman as Librarian, and Wajid Ali as Executive

Member.

The elections were held peacefully at the District Bar Room in Balambat under the supervision of Election Commissioner, Asfandiyar Advocate. In their post-election remarks, the newly elected President and General Secretary thanked the legal fraternity for their support and pledged to uphold the rule of law and advocate for lawyers' rights.

In Samarbagh, the Malgari Wakeelan (a lawyers' wing of the Awami National Party) swept all major positions. Zulfiqar was elected as president, Ehsanullah Advocate as

General Secretary, Nageen Khan as Vice President, Farman Khan as Joint Secretary, and Asadullah Advocate as Finance Secretary. In a separate development, Ali Muhammad Advocate of the Insaf Lawyers Forum was elected unopposed as Library Secretary.

The election process was supervised by Election Commissioner Mian Amjad Ali Advocate. Following the announcement of results, President-elect Zulfiqar Advocate expressed gratitude to his fellow lawyers for their support and pledged to work collectively for the progress and welfare of the Bar.



**HANGU:** A group photo of position-holder students with principal on the occasion of annual prize distribution ceremony at Hangu Grammar School.

## Govt initiated steps to uplift quality of life

### F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad has said that the Punjab government is undertaking various result-oriented initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life for citizens through comprehensive public welfare programs. DC stated that resolving public issues remains the top priority of the district administration. "Under the people-friendly vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, every possible effort is being made to ensure timely redressal of public grievances and improvement of civic services," he said.

He highlighted the success of the 'Suthra Punjab Programme', launched by the Chief Minister, under which urban and rural areas across the district have witnessed significant restoration of natural beauty through extensive cleanliness drives and removal of encroachments. "The district administration, in collaboration with the Waste Management Company, has ensured 100% cleanliness across

roads, streets, public parks, and other public spaces. This campaign reflects our commitment to creating a clean and livable environment," he added.

The Deputy Commissioner also mentioned the ongoing monsoon tree plantation campaign, which is in full swing across the district. "We aim to make Hafizabad pollution-free and provide a healthier atmosphere for future generations," he said.

To further beautify the city, decorative lighting has been installed at key locations, including Jinnah Chowk, Gujranwala Road, Katchery Bazaar, Jalalpur Road, and other main roads. "This initiative has added to the city's charm and reflects the government's focus on urban beautification," he remarked.

DC Abdul Razzaq further emphasized the implementation of an open-door policy in all government offices. "Citizens are welcome to visit my office without any recommendation or obstacles. Complaints are being resolved on a priority basis and

strictly on merit, in accordance with the Chief Minister's public-centric and transparent policies," he said.

He also listed several public welfare projects launched by the Punjab government that are being implemented transparently and on merit in Hafizabad. These include: Ramzan Relief Package, Suthra Punjab Programme, Apni Chhat Apna Ghar, Green Tractor Scheme, Kisan Card, Minority Welfare Cards, Asaan Karobar Programme, Himmat Card and Dhee Rani Program, "a large number of people in the district are already benefiting from these initiatives," he stated.

In response to a question regarding healthcare, DC Razzaq said that the Punjab government is taking concrete steps to improve medical facilities, particularly in rural areas. "Hospitals are being upgraded and transformed into Maryam Nawaz Health Clinics to ensure quality and free healthcare for all. I, along with other district officers, am regularly inspecting government offices, schools, and

hospitals to improve service delivery and educational standards," he said.

Regarding infrastructure development, the Deputy Commissioner informed that construction work is underway on a flyover at the bypass railway line, funded by the Punjab government. In addition, major road construction and rehabilitation projects are in progress, including: Hafizabad to Khanqah Dogran Road, Hafizabad-Sheikhupura Road, Lahore-Sargodha Road, Hafizabad to Head Khanqi Road, Gujrat Road, he concluded by reaffirming the administration's dedication to carrying forward the Chief Minister's development vision and ensuring that all ongoing projects are completed efficiently and transparently for the benefit of the people.

**Ignorance in municipal services faced residents with incidents:** In Mohallah Habib Gunj, the absence of covers on gutters and manholes near the railway line on Gali Masjid Quba Wali has led to unpleasant incidents and accidents.

Residents have strongly protested, stating that the gutter covers in the aforementioned street have been missing for several months, potentially causing fatal accidents at any time, but the Municipal Committee staff is not paying attention to this issue. They demanded

Commissioner Abdul Razzaq to install covers on the gutters and manholes in the street to protect the residents from accidents.

**AC Inland Revenue inspected markets:** Additional Collector Inland Revenue FBR Gujranwala, Hassan Mabroor, along with Inland Revenue Officers Ghulam Sajid, Nasir Ali Shah, Saqib Nazir Tarar and others, visited various markets in the city to review the installation of POS (Point of Sale) systems.

Additional Collector Inland Revenue, Hassan Mabroor urged traders and shopkeepers to ensure that every business center is connected to the FBR system, otherwise, strict legal action will be taken against them.

He further stated that some POS Tier-1 retailers are issuing

fake receipts to consumers. He urged consumers to report fake receipts through the "Tax Asaan" app, verify the QR code on the receipt through the "Tax Asaan" mobile app, and refuse to accept unofficial receipts from shopkeepers. Consumers should share their location if they receive a fake receipt. Take a picture of the receipt or the Tier-1 retailer or restaurant that issued it and post all this evidence through the FBR "Tax Asaan" app so that effective action can be taken against those responsible.

**Traffic laws enforcement directed:** On the instructions of District Police Officer, the traffic police conducted a vigorous operation against traffic law violators in just 6 hours. 271 drivers were fined for various violations, including 112 for violating one-way traffic, 23 for violating lane and line discipline, 5 drivers for using tinted glass, 18 vehicles for being driven without registration, 13 drivers for driving without a license and 4 individuals were fined for reckless driving.





KYIV: A mother crying at the coffin of her son Herman Tripolets, 9, killed by a Russian missile, during a funeral ceremony in Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine.

## Russia sees no reason to discuss peace with Japan, Kremlin says

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia sees no reason to discuss the possibility of signing a long-awaited peace treaty with Japan to formally end World War Two because of Tokyo's unfriendly stance towards Moscow, the Kremlin said.

Russia, the successor state to the Soviet Union, and Japan have never signed a treaty formally ending their hostilities during World War Two. Soviet troops took control of four islands off Japan's Hokkaido - known in Russia as the Kurils and in Japan as the Northern Territories - at the end of the war and they have remained in Moscow's hands since. The territorial dispute has prevented progress on signing a treaty.

"No, there are no contacts with the Japanese authorities at the moment," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, when asked about a Japanese Foreign Ministry report which said Tokyo was still committed to signing a treaty and hoped to return the islands. "You know that Tokyo has rushed to fully join in all unfriendly and hostile steps towards our country," Peskov added, referring to Japan's decision to join Western sanctions against Russia to punish it for its military action in Ukraine. Given "the real state of affairs" and Japanese sanctions on Moscow, Peskov said it was "hardly possible to talk about the possibility of any negotiations".

Meanwhile, the Kremlin said that it supported the idea of a truce in Ukraine but had many "questions" about how it would work, pushing back at US and European suggestions

that it was playing for time. US President Donald Trump has voiced growing frustration at the lack of progress towards a ceasefire in the three-year-long conflict, despite his administration holding talks with both Ukrainian and Russian officials. The US leader in March said that he was "pissed off" with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and told reporters: "We'd like them to stop. I don't like the bombing. The bombing goes on and on."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that "Putin does support the idea that a ceasefire is needed, but before that a whole range of questions have to be answered." "These questions are hanging in the air, so far no one has given an answer to them," he added, blaming the lack of progress on "the Kyiv regime's uncontrollability". Putin rejected a joint US-Ukrainian proposal for an unconditional and full ceasefire in March, while the Kremlin has made a US-proposed truce in the Black Sea dependent on the West lifting certain sanctions.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that Trump was not "going to fall into the trap of endless negotiations" with Russia, while French President Emmanuel Macron urged Moscow to stop using "stalling tactics". Russia has kept up its strikes on Ukraine unabated since Trump took office, despite the US president's promise to bring peace within "24 hours" once settled back into the White House. A Russian missile strike on Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelensky's home city of Kryvyi Rig killed 20 people, nine of them children, according to local authorities.

The Kremlin denied firing on civilian infrastructure. In a visit to Cairo, Macron urged Russia to accept the US push for a ceasefire. "For almost a month now, Russia has not only refused to accept the ceasefire, but has also stepped up its bombardment of civilians, with tragic casualties again a few days ago in Ukraine," he said. "It is urgent that Russia stops with the pretences and stalling tactics and accepts the unconditional ceasefire," Macron added. Both sides reported a new wave of overnight attacks.

Momentum towards a ceasefire in the more than three-year-old conflict has stalled since the latest round of talks between the US, Russia and Ukraine in Saudi Arabia in March. The White House said that both sides had agreed to a truce in the Black Sea, but Moscow said it would only take effect once the West lifted sanctions targeting its state-owned agricultural leader. The US has made support for Ukraine contingent upon receiving profits from its rare earth minerals, a deal for which fell through after an explosive meeting between Zelensky and Trump in the Oval Office in February. Ukraine announced earlier that it would send officials to Washington "this week" for talks on a deal. Trump wants the deal as compensation for the billions of dollars worth of military and financial aid given to Ukraine by his predecessor, Joe Biden.

## 'Europe, US should have zero tariffs between them'

STOCKHOLM (Reuters): Europe and the United States should have zero tariffs between them and Europe should aim for that in ongoing negotiations with the US, Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen said, in line with a proposal by the European Commission.

"Engaging in a global trade war is the surest way to achieve a global recession," Valtonen told a joint press conference with her Swedish counterpart in Stockholm. "But of course the European Union now has to react to what the US has put forward," she added. White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said that the EU would need to lower its non-tariff barriers, including those created by value-added taxes, if it wanted to reach a deal to lower US tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump.

Sweden and Finland, who have long cooperated closely on defence, both joined NATO in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and have pushed for a hard line on Moscow ever since, while also rapidly ramping up defence spending. The two Nordic countries have also been among the biggest contributors of military aid to Ukraine, with Sweden announcing its 19th and biggest package of spending on support for Ukraine last week. Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stennergard noted that economic growth would increase the possibilities to invest in the military and to support Ukraine. "If we impose more tariffs and barriers that lead to less economic growth or recession, then there will be less money to spend on these crucial things," Stennergard said.

## US must maintain its troop totals in Europe

WASHINGTON (AP): Republican and Democratic members of the House Armed Services Committee voiced sharp bipartisan criticism about reports the Trump administration is eyeing a reduction of US forces in Europe, saying America must stick with its NATO allies. Rep. Michael Rogers, R-Mich., the panel's chairman, said the US must not cut troop levels in Europe and added that he was opposed to any plan for the US to relinquish NATO command. The US historically has held the Supreme Allied Command Europe, or SACEUR, position. "US leadership in NATO is essential to ensure armed American forces, including our nuclear weapons, always remain under US command," Rogers said at the start of a hearing with Army Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli, commander of US European Command and the NATO commander.

Rep. Michael Turner, R-Ohio, added that "the idiocy of the fact that there was any discussion" about giving up the SACEUR role "is just beyond me." Katherine Thompson, who is doing the job of assistant defense secretary for international affairs, repeatedly told lawmakers that there is an ongoing Pentagon review of troop totals and no decisions have been made. But, asked again two hours into the hearing whether the US would give up the SACEUR job, she said, "my definitive answer is no."

That was the first time Pentagon officials have flatly denied the US will give up that post, which Cavoli said gives him a strong voice and American leadership at NATO. There have been roughly 100,000 US troops in Europe in recent years, a 20,000-troop increase since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Cavoli told the committee that he has recommended the US maintain its current force totals. He said that cutting American troops in Europe will increase the time it would take America's military to respond to any crisis there.

"Clearly moving things to the other side of the Atlantic increases the time-space challenge," he said. He added that the current size and capability of the US force, aided by allied contributions, "is deterring Russia" right now.

## China says it will 'fight to the end'

BEIJING (AP): China said it would "fight to the end" and take countermeasures against the United States to safeguard its own interests after President Donald Trump threatened an additional 50% tariff on Chinese imports. The Commerce Ministry said the US's imposition of "so-called 'reciprocal tariffs'" on China is "completely groundless and is a typical unilateral bullying practice."

China, the world's second-largest economy, has announced retaliatory tariffs and the ministry hinted in its latest statement that more may be coming. "The countermeasures China has taken are aimed at safeguarding its sovereignty, security and development interests, and maintaining the normal international trade order. They are completely legitimate," the ministry said. "The US threat to escalate tariffs on China is a mistake on top of a mistake and once again exposes the blackmailing nature of the US China will never accept this. If the US insists on its own way, China will fight to the end," it added. Trump's threat of additional tariffs on China raised fresh concerns that his drive to rebalance the global economy could intensify a financially destructive trade war. Stock markets from Tokyo to New York have become more unstable as the tariff war worsens. Trump's threat came after China said it would retaliate against US tariffs he announced last week.

"If China does not withdraw its 34% increase above their already long term trading abuses by tomorrow, April 8th, 2025,

the United States will impose ADDITIONAL Tariffs on China of 50%, effective April 9th," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "Additionally, all talks with China concerning their requested meetings with us will be terminated!" If Trump implements his new tariffs on Chinese products, US tariffs on Chinese goods would reach a combined 104%. The new taxes would be on top of the 20% tariffs announced as punishment for fentanyl trafficking and his separate 34% tariffs announced last week. Not only could that increase prices for American consumers, it could also give China an incentive to flood other countries with cheaper goods and seek deeper relationships with other trading partners, particularly the European Union. On the streets of Beijing, people said they found it hard to keep track of all the announcements, but expressed belief in their country's ability to weather the storm. "Trump says one thing today and another tomorrow. Anyway, he just wants benefits, so he can say whatever he wants," said Wu Qi, 37, who works in construction.

Others were less sanguine. Paul Wang, 30, who sells stainless accessories, including necklaces, bracelets, and tongue studs to Europe, said the European market was now more important after the extra US 50% tariffs and he would be watching to see which other firms in his field would be competing in that space. Jessi Huang and Yang Aijia, whose companies import chemicals from the US, said the tariffs, including potential

Chinese retribution, could force them to close up shop. "It would be very hard and very likely to have a layoff, maybe even closing," Huang said, "I might not be able to find another job if I get laid off." China still has a range of options to strike back at the Washington, experts said, including suspending cooperation on combating fentanyl, placing higher quotas on agricultural products and going after the US trade in services in China such as finance and law firms. US total goods trade with China was an estimated \$582 billion in 2024, making it the top trader in goods with the US. The 2024 deficit with China in goods and services trade was between \$263 billion and \$295 billion.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian appeared to give short shrift to talk of dialogue with the Trump administration. "I don't think what the US has done reflects a willingness for sincere dialogue. If the US really wants to engage in dialogue, it should adopt an attitude of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit," Lin said. In Hong Kong, where stocks were slightly higher, Chief Executive John Lee blasted the latest US tariffs as "bullying," saying the "ruthless behavior" has damaged global and multilateral trade and brought great risks and uncertainties to the world. Lee said the city would link its economy closer to China's development, sign more free trade agreements, attract more foreign companies and capital to Hong Kong, and support local enterprises in coping with the impact of the tariffs.

## Ukrainian city mourns children killed by missile

KRYVYI RIH, Ukraine (AP): Anger and outrage gripped the hometown of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as it held funerals for some of the 20 people, including nine children, killed by a Russian missile that tore through apartment buildings and blasted a playground.

More than 70 were wounded in the attack on Kryvyi Rih. The children were playing on swings and in a sandbox in a tree-lined park at the time. Bodies were strewn across the grass. "We are not asking for pity," Oleksandr Vilkul, the head of the city administration, wrote on Telegram as Kryvyi Rih mourned. "We demand the world's outrage." The UN Human Rights Office in Ukraine said it was the deadliest single verified strike harming children since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. It was also one of the deadliest attacks so far this year.

Ukraine has consented to a ceasefire proposed weeks ago by Washington. But Russia is still negotiating with the United States its terms for accepting a truce in the more than three-year

war. US President Donald Trump has voiced frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the continued fighting, and Ukrainian officials want him to compel Putin to stop. Trump vowed during his election campaign last year to bring a swift end to the war.

"We're talking to Russia. We'd like them to stop," Trump told reporters. "I don't like the bombing." Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov reaffirmed that Putin supports a ceasefire proposed by Trump but wants Russian conditions to be met. "President Putin indeed backs the ceasefire idea, but it's necessary to first answer quite a few questions," Peskov said.

In Kryvyi Rih, 59-year-old teacher Iryna Kholod remembered Arina and Radyслав, both 7 years old and killed in strike, as being "like little suns in the classroom." Radyслав, she said, was proud to be part of a school campaign collecting pet food for stray animals. "He held the bag like it was treasure. He wanted to help," she told The Associated Press. After "two desks in my classroom were empty forever,"

Kholod said, adding that she still has unopened birthday gifts for them. "How do I tell parents to return their textbooks? How do I teach without them?" she asked.

Russian missile and drone tactics continue to evolve, making it harder to shoot them down, Yuriy Ihnat, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian air force command, said on national television. Russia's Iranian-designed Shahed drones have undergone significant upgrades, while Moscow is also modernizing its ballistic missiles, he said. Only the US Patriot missile defense system can help prevent attacks like the one in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy said. He said he had instructed his defense and foreign affairs ministers to "work bilaterally on air defense, especially with the United States, which has sufficient potential to help stop any terror." Ukraine will send a team to Washington this week to begin negotiations on a new draft of a deal that would give the US access to Ukraine's valuable mineral resources, Economy Minister Yuliia Svyrydenko told The Associated Press.

## Trump admn fires senior Navy female officer at NATO

WASHINGTON (AP): US Navy Vice Adm. Shoshana Chatfield, the only woman on NATO's military committee, was fired over the weekend by the Trump administration, US officials said. Although no reason was given, officials said it was apparently tied to comments she has made that supported diversity in the force. According to the officials, Chatfield got a call from Adm. Christopher Grady, the acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and was told the administration wanted to go in a different direction with the job.

The officials said they believe the decision was made last week by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, but it was unclear whether he received any direction from President Donald Trump. Three US officials spoke about the firing on condition of anonymity to discuss personnel matters. Chatfield is the third top female officer to be fired since Trump took office. Hegseth announced in

February that he was firing the chief of naval operations, Adm. Lisa Franchetti. And Trump fired Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Linda Fagan just a day after he was sworn in. Trump and Hegseth have been vocal in their insistence that so-called woke policies are dead. There has been a vigorous campaign to remove leaders who promoted diversity, equity and inclusion, and to erase DEI programs and online content. Chatfield was on a list of senior military officers targeted as "woke" by the conservative American Accountability Foundation, which sent a letter to Hegseth saying that "purging the woke from the military is imperative."

Chatfield, a Navy helicopter pilot who also commanded a joint reconstruction team in Afghanistan, had been serving as one of the 32 representatives on NATO's military committee. The panel is the primary source of military advice to the North Atlantic Council and NATO's Nuclear

Planning Group, according to NATO. It serves as the link between the political decision-makers and NATO's military structure. Sen. Mark Warner, a Democrat from Virginia, said he was "deeply disturbed" by the firing. "Trump's relentless attacks on our alliances and his careless dismissal of decorated military officials make us less safe and weaken our position across the world," Warner said in a post on X. The campaign to erase DEI programs and online content has been met with questions from lawmakers, local leaders and citizens angered by the removal of military heroes and historic mentions from Defense Department websites and social media pages.

The accountability foundation complained in the letter to Hegseth that those responsible for DEI policies "must be dismissed," adding that military leaders should be focused on cultivating lethality, not on fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in the ranks.

## US court blocks Trump from removing Democrats from labor boards

WASHINGTON (Reuters): A federal appeals court blocked US President Donald Trump from removing Democratic members from two federal labor boards, setting aside its earlier ruling. The decision by the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit further complicates a pair of cases that are emerging as key tests of Trump's efforts to bring federal agencies meant to be independent from the White House under his control.

The full D.C. Circuit in a 7-4 decision set aside a three-judge panel's March ruling that paused lower court decisions blocking

Trump from removing Gwynne Wilcox from the National Labor Relations Board and Cathy Harris from the Merit Systems Protection Board. Decision puts back in place two judges' decisions that upheld federal laws barring the president from removing members of the labor boards at will.

White House spokesman Harrison Fields argued the US Constitution gives Trump the power to remove officials "who exercise his executive authority." "The Trump Administration plans to immediately appeal the decision, and looks forward to ultimate victory on

the issue," he said. The cases will likely end up at the US Supreme Court, which could use them to revisit a 90-year-old ruling that upheld restrictions on the president removing officials from multi-member agencies. That would have major implications for a number of agencies like the Federal Reserve and the Federal Trade Commission whose members are appointed by the president but have for decades acted independently of the White House. Along with a lawsuit over Trump's firing of two Federal Trade Commission members, the case is being eyed closely by Federal

Reserve watchers for any indication that it could open the door for Trump to intervene in the Federal Reserve over political or policy disagreements, which would significantly undercut its independence. Harris in a statement provided by her lawyer said that until Trump, presidents had for decades respected the removal protections that Congress adopted for members of the labor boards. "Today the Court restores the constitutional equilibrium," she said. Deepak Gupta, a lawyer for Wilcox, said the ruling allows the NLRB to continue protecting the rights of workers.



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## China prepares for war of attrition over tariffs

**BEIJING, feeling boxed into a corner by the United States' intensifying tariff assault on China and any country that buys or assembles Chinese goods, is bracing for an economic war of attrition.**

Washington last week imposed import tariffs of at least 10% on almost the entire world, and much higher levies on countries such as Vietnam, where Chinese factories have been shifting production. This drew retaliation from China, followed by new threats of escalation from US President Donald Trump.

China has no great options, though. It will court other markets in Asia, Europe and the rest of the world, but this may not be much of an escape valve.

Other countries have much smaller markets than the US, and local economies are also taking a hit from the tariffs. Many are also wary of allowing more cheap Chinese products in.

Domestically, a currency devaluation would be the simplest way to cushion the tariffs' impact but that could trigger capital outflows, while also alienating trade partners China may try to court. China has so far allowed very limited yuan depreciation.

More subsidies, export tax rebates or other forms of stimulus could be on the cards, but this also risks exacerbating industrial overcapacity and fuelling more deflationary pressures.

Analysts have advocated for years for policies that would boost domestic demand.

So far China has responded to last week's additional 34% US tariffs with a similar blanket counter-levy. As Trump threatened escalation with an extra 50% hike, Beijing vowed to "fight to the end". Besides its own sweeping tariffs, Beijing can use its control over some strategic commodities and parts of the corporate world to hit Washington where it hurts the most, according to a Reuters report.

China offered a taste of that on Friday, when it added seven rare earths to its export control list, a move that threatened to cut off the supply of materials US defence and technology sectors depend on.

Beijing retains the option to expand the controls to 10 other rare earths or ban exports to the US outright. In the corporate world, Trump has expressed interest in a spin-off of short video app TikTok's US business.

But China also has leverage there, thanks to rules it implemented in 2020 that require the company to obtain a technology export licence before transferring its "secret sauce" algorithm abroad. China indicated it would not approve the deal following the tariff announcement, sources told Reuters. Beijing can also target US companies with sanctions or add them to an unreliable entity list, which so far includes mainly firms which it says sell arms to Taiwan.

With Washington and Beijing trying to inflict increasing pain on each other and the rest of the world seen as collateral damage in their trade war, it is hard to imagine how a grand deal to de-escalate would look like.

Economists say Trump's goal of balancing trade with China is unfeasible in the short-to-medium term, given that one side is the world's leading producer while the other is the biggest consumer.

If a quick deal proves elusive, then it may turn into a battle of political wills, where some analysts believe Beijing has the upper hand.

Thousands of protesters gathered in Washington and cities across the US at the weekend to protest against Trump, who is also facing heavy criticism from Wall Street for the global market turmoil his tariffs caused.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is unlikely to face similar resistance in his tightly controlled country, and can line up monetary and fiscal stimulus for later this year to ease some of the social stress if needed. Zhiwu Chen, professor of finance at HKU Business School, said, "Trump has to face, or at least Republican politicians have to face a lot of electoral pressure, and the American media are still pretty much free," he said. "So I think Trump's ability to fight politically with China is not that great."

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# White Collar Class: Silent Suffering Segment

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

**I**NFLATION in Pakistan has reached an alarming level, affecting every segment of society, but its impact on the middle class, particularly white-collar workers, has been devastating. These individuals, who form the backbone of the country's economy and administration, are facing immense financial strain yet remain silent, bound by societal expectations and personal dignity. Unlike daily wage earners or laborers who can voice their struggles openly, the white-collar worker suffers in silence, unwilling or unable to seek help despite dire circumstances.

For the middle class, especially those employed in offices, banks, educational institutions, and various government departments, survival has become a daily challenge. Their incomes remain stagnant while the cost of living continues to rise at an unprecedented pace. Food prices have soared, utility bills have become unbearable, and transportation costs have significantly increased. Despite working tirelessly, they find themselves unable to maintain the lifestyle they once took for granted.

One of the most pressing concerns is the education of their children. Quality education, once considered a basic necessity for middle-class families, is now a

luxury. School fees, tuition charges, and the cost of books and uniforms have escalated beyond affordability. Parents are forced to either downgrade their children's education by shifting them to less expensive schools or compromise on other essential household needs. The thought of depriving their children of good education weighs heavily on their minds, yet they have little choice.

Medical expenses add another layer of distress. With healthcare costs rising exponentially, even a minor illness can disrupt an entire month's budget. Private hospitals and clinics charge exorbitantly, while public hospitals remain overcrowded and underfunded. Many middle-class families have resorted to self-medication or delaying medical treatments, risking their health due to financial constraints.

House rents and utility bills have further compounded their troubles. Many employees, despite working in well-reputed organizations, struggle to pay monthly rent, forcing them to move to smaller homes in less desirable neighborhoods. Electricity, gas, and water bills continue to increase, leaving families with little to spare for other necessities. Despite their hard work and dedication, the fear of financial

collapse looms over them.

Unlike those from lower-income groups who might receive financial aid or support from charities, the middle class has no safety net. They are ineligible for government subsidies or social welfare programs, as their official incomes make them appear financially stable. In reality, they live paycheck to paycheck, sacrificing personal comforts and sometimes even necessities to maintain appearances. Their silent suffering is often overlooked, as they do not protest or demand relief, fearing social stigma or professional repercussions.

Social obligations add another burden. Weddings, family gatherings, and even religious events demand expenses that they cannot afford but are forced to bear. The pressure to maintain societal status leads many into debt, taking loans they struggle to repay. The concept of saving for the future has become nearly impossible, with many living in constant financial anxiety, unsure of how they will manage unforeseen emergencies.

The psychological impact of this economic pressure is profound. Stress and anxiety have become constant companions of white-collar workers, affecting their mental and

physical health. The fear of losing their job, the inability to meet family expectations, and the daily struggle to stretch every rupee lead to emotional distress. Many suffer in silence, unable to share their burden even with close friends or family members.

Despite these hardships, the resilience of the middle class is commendable. They continue to work diligently, hoping for better days. Their silent perseverance is a testament to their strength, yet it is also a reflection of a society that has failed to acknowledge their struggles.

Policymakers must recognize this hidden crisis and take concrete steps to provide relief to this crucial segment of the population. Controlling inflation, ensuring fair wages, and offering financial assistance for education and healthcare could help ease their burden.

The middle class has long been the pillar of stability for the nation, contributing to economic growth and social progress. If their struggles continue to be ignored, the consequences will be far-reaching. A demoralized, financially strained middle class could lead to decreased productivity, brain drain, and long-term economic stagnation. It is time to address their concerns before their silent suffering turns into a crisis that affects the entire nation.

## The UN in Gaza: When an institution becomes useless

Hani Hazaimeh

**T**HE ongoing Israeli war on Gaza has once again exposed the UN as a paralyzed, ineffective institution incapable of upholding its own charter, let alone protecting the innocent. More than 110,000 Palestinians — most of them women and children — have so far been killed in an onslaught that has reduced the Gaza Strip to rubble. More than 110,000 people have been injured, while over 14,000 remain missing and are presumed dead.

Entire neighborhoods have been flattened. Hospitals, schools and UN shelters have been obliterated. And what has the UN done in response? Issued statements. Held meetings. Released press releases. In other words, nothing meaningful.

The international community is witnessing, in real time, the systematic destruction of a civilian population. Israeli forces have targeted hospitals where wounded children lie in intensive care. Journalists and humanitarian workers have been killed despite being clearly identified. UNRWA facilities — schools, clinics and warehouses — have been struck repeatedly, often despite prior notification of their coordinates to Israeli forces. More than 180 UN workers have been killed since Oct. 7, 2023 — the highest death toll of humanitarian workers in any conflict in the organization's history.

And yet, despite these blatant violations of international law, the UN remains frozen in its tracks, incapable of taking decisive action. Why? Because the institution has become a hostage to geopolitics. The Security Council — designed to ensure global peace and security — has become a theater of power politics. Any

resolution that dares to criticize or attempt to restrain Israel's actions is immediately vetoed by the US, rendering international law effectively toothless.

This is not a failure of oversight. It is a failure of will, a failure of structure and a failure of purpose. The very mechanisms designed to hold aggressors accountable have been hijacked by those determined to protect them. In this case, the US government has used its veto power to shield Israel from scrutiny and responsibility — effectively making the UN complicit in its silence.

Meanwhile, UNRWA — the only lifeline for more than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza — is being dismantled from within. Western nations, under Israeli pressure and based on unproven allegations against a few employees, have suspended or cut funding to the agency altogether. The result? Starving families. Collapsing healthcare. Children deprived of education. These are not just policy decisions — they are death sentences for an already besieged population. Instead of defending its own agency and the people it serves, the UN appears to be surrendering.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has issued repeated warnings about the catastrophe in Gaza, but they have fallen on deaf ears. When he invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter in December 2023 — the first such move in decades — to draw attention to the crisis, the UNSC still failed to act. A US veto blocked a ceasefire resolution supported by more than 150 countries. The message was clear: even genocide can proceed uninterrupted, so long as one superpower permits it.

The consequences of this moral collapse are profound. Not only is the UN failing the Palestinians, but it is also sending a dangerous message to oppressed peoples everywhere: that international law is selective and human rights are negotiable. What faith can anyone have in the global order when it tolerates collective punishment, ethnic cleansing and the targeting of civilians? What good are the Geneva Conventions if there is no one to enforce them?

This failure also carries long-term costs. The credibility of the UN — already in question — is now in freefall. In the Global South, where memories of colonialism and double standards still linger, the UN's impotence in Gaza is seen as further proof of its irrelevance. Countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America are increasingly asking whether the current global order truly serves their interests or merely those of the powerful few.

It is time to confront an uncomfortable truth: the UN, in its current form, is no longer fit for purpose. If the UN cannot act when its own buildings are bombed, when its staff are killed and when an entire population is pushed to the brink of extermination, then what exactly is it for? Diplomatic theater? A stage for the powerful to polish their image while atrocities rage on?

There must be a reckoning. The UN must either undergo fundamental reform — starting with the abolition of the UNSC veto — or it must accept that it has become a relic of a bygone era. An institution born from the ashes of the Second World War, with the solemn promise of "never again," now finds itself watching helplessly as "again" unfolds in real time.

What does reform look like? It means empowering the General Assembly to override UNSC vetoes in cases of mass atrocities. It means insulating humanitarian agencies like UNRWA from political manipulation. It means establishing mechanisms to enforce international law that do not rely on the will of superpowers. Most of all, it means recognizing that the current structure rewards inaction, breeds impunity and undermines the very ideals the UN was created to uphold.

The people of Gaza do not need more speeches. They need action. They need protection. They need justice. As bombs continue to fall and families are buried in mass graves, the clock is ticking — not only on their survival but on the moral relevance of the international community itself.

The world does not need another powerless institution issuing empty statements while war crimes are broadcast live. It needs structures that can act, enforce the law and protect the defenseless. If the UN cannot do that, then it must step aside and make room for new mechanisms of accountability. Regional organizations, coalitions of conscience or even emerging international tribunals may ultimately take up the mantle the UN has so shamefully dropped.

In Gaza, we are witnessing not just a humanitarian disaster, but the collapse of the global order's moral foundation. Unless the UN finds the courage to act — not merely speak — it will be remembered not as the guardian of peace and justice, but as a bystander to genocide.

Until then, Palestinians will continue to suffer and the UN will remain what it has tragically become: an institution that watches but never acts.

## PSL X set to begin on April 11 in Rawalpindi

Shahid Afridi

**T**HE tenth edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) will officially begin on April 11, 2025, with the opening match between Islamabad United and Lahore Qalandars at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Islamabad United the most successful team with three championship titles has never successfully defended its crown. This year Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium will host the opening ceremony which is scheduled to begin at 7:00 PM on Friday, April 11.

This season's matches will be held across four venues like National Bank Stadium Karachi, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore, Multan Cricket Stadium, and Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Over the past decade, many records have been set in the PSL. Leading the batting charts is Babar Azam widely regarded as the league's finest batter.

He has played 90 matches scoring 3,504 runs in 88 innings at an average of 45.50 with a highest score of 115. His tally includes two centuries and 33 half-centuries representing Islamabad United, Karachi Kings and Peshawar Zalmi.

Fakhar Zaman ranks second having scored 2,525 runs in 84 matches for Lahore Qalandars at an average of 30.42. His highest score is also 115 and he has hit two centuries and 19 half-centuries. Fakhar also holds the record for the most sixes in PSL history (104).

Third on the list is Mohammad Rizwan with 2,403 runs in 83 matches at an average of 41.43. He has one century and 20 fifties to his name with a best of 110\* while playing for Karachi Kings, Lahore Qalandars and Multan Sultans.

Shoaib Malik stands fourth with 2,336 runs in 91 matches at an average of 33.37, including 15 fifties and a highest score of 73. He has represented Karachi Kings, Multan Sultans and Peshawar Zalmi.

Rilee Rossouw completes the top five having scored 2,015 runs in 84 matches for Multan Sultans and Quetta Gladiators at an average of 31.98. He has two centuries and ten fifties with a best of 121. Among bowlers Wahab Riaz tops the wickets chart with 113 wickets in 88 matches for Peshawar Zalmi. Hasan Ali follows with 108 wickets in 82 games playing for Islamabad United, Karachi Kings and Peshawar Zalmi.

Shaheen Afridi is third with 103 wickets in 71 matches for Lahore Qalandars. Shadab Khan ranks fourth with 91 wickets in 84 matches for Islamabad United while Faheem Ashraf is fifth with 78 wickets in 72 games for the same team.

In terms of best bowling figures in a match Ravi Bopara leads with 6/16 for Karachi Kings against Lahore Qalandars on February 12, 2016. Faheem Ashraf claimed 6/19 against Lahore on March 9, 2019, followed by Umar Gul's 6/24 for Multan Sultans versus Quetta Gladiators on March 7, 2018. Usama Mir's 6/40 for Multan against Lahore on February 27, 2024, and Shaheen Afridi's 5/4 against Multan on March 9, 2018, also feature among the top performances. The highest team total in PSL history belongs to Multan Sultans who scored 262/3 against Quetta Gladiators on March 11, 2023. In response, Quetta made 253/8, making it the second-highest total. Islamabad United scored

247/2 against Peshawar Zalmi on June 17, 2021. Peshawar Zalmi scored 242/6 against Multan on March 10, 2023, and Lahore Qalandars made 241/3 versus Peshawar on February 26, 2023. Karachi Kings' best total is 201/4 against Peshawar on February 21, 2020.

On the flip side the lowest total in PSL history is 59, made by Lahore Qalandars against Peshawar Zalmi on February 12, 2017, in Dubai. Quetta Gladiators scored just 73 against Multan in Abu Dhabi on June 16, 2021.

Islamabad's lowest is 82 against Karachi on March 1, 2017, in Sharjah. Karachi Kings' lowest is 108/9 against Peshawar on June 15, 2021, in Abu Dhabi. Multan were bowled out for 113 by Islamabad on February 25, 2018, in Dubai and Peshawar's lowest is 123 against Multan in Multan on February 26, 2020.

Islamabad United won the inaugural edition held in the UAE, beating Quetta Gladiators in the final by 6 wickets. Dwayne Smith was named Player of the Match.

In 2017 Peshawar Zalmi clinched the title by defeating Quetta by 58 runs in the final held at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore. Darren Sammy earned Player of the Final, while Kamran Akmal was named Player of the Tournament. Islamabad United won their second title in 2018, beating Peshawar Zalmi by 3 wickets in Karachi. Asif Ali's quick 26\* off 6 balls was crucial. In 2019 Quetta Gladiators lifted their maiden trophy by defeating Peshawar by 8 wickets. Luke Ronchi scored 52 and was named Player of the Match. Karachi Kings claimed their first title with a five-wicket win over Lahore Qalandars in 2020. Babar Azam scored 63 and was named Player of the Match and the Tournament. In 2021 Multan Sultans won first time defeating Peshawar Zalmi by 47 runs. Shoaib Maqsood earned both the Player of the Final and the Tournament. In 2022 Lahore Qalandars secured their first title by beating Multan Sultans by 42 runs. Mohammad Hafeez was Player of the Match, and Mohammad Rizwan won Player of the Tournament. Lahore repeated their success in 2023 narrowly defeating Multan by 1 run in the final. Captain Shaheen Afridi's all-round performance (44 off 15, 4 wickets) earned him Player of the Match. In 2024 Islamabad United won their third title beating Multan in a thrilling final by just 2 wickets on the last ball. Imad Wasim who took 5 wickets and scored 19 runs was named Player of the Final. Babar Azam scored the most runs (569) and won the Hanif Mohammad Cap. Usama Mir was awarded Bowler of the Tournament.

PSL has played a vital role in reviving international cricket in Pakistan and is now ranked among the most prestigious T20 leagues in the world. Islamabad United remains the only team with three titles though they've never defended it successfully. Lahore Qalandars after years of disappointment, are the only side to win back-to-back titles in 2022 and 2023.

Karachi Kings, Multan Sultans, Peshawar Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators have each won the trophy once.

Writer is a senior sports journalist and Secretary General of Sports Writers Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa





# Trump’s tariff onslaught against China launches a battle the US may not be able to win

President Donald Trump just ignited a direct showdown with the one nation that might be able to beat the United States in a trade war.

Trump’s escalation against China — which is about to face tariffs of at least 104% on goods entering the US — is the most serious pivot yet in his global tariff onslaught and has the most potential to inflict severe blowback on American citizens in soaring prices.

The confrontation follows years of US attempts to address perceived trade abuses by China. It’s also the culmination of a decade or more of worsening relations prompted by an aggressive and nationalistic shift by a Pacific competitor turned hostile superpower that now seems itching to challenge US might.

And it’s a dark landmark in a diplomatic relationship that will help define the 21st century and a breakdown for a long US project to prevent tensions erupting into a full-on trade war — or potentially much worse — between two giants.

On Wednesday, China responded by unveiling retaliatory tariffs of 84% on imports of US goods.

The US has been trying to manage China’s emergence for more than 50 years — since President Richard Nixon’s pioneering visit to Chairman Mao Zedong to “open” an isolated and impoverished nation and to drive a wedge between its leaders and their communist brethren in the Soviet Union. It’s been nearly a quarter-century since another milestone: when the US ushered China into the World Trade Organization in hopes of promoting democratic change and locking it into a rules-based, Western-oriented economic system.

The ultimate failure of those well-intentioned efforts is being laid bare in Trump’s second term. The president rose to power on a populist wave that was partly a reaction to globalization that exported US industrial jobs to China and left blight in its wake.

Trump claims that scores of nations are eager to make trade deals to defray painful US tariffs.

But China isn’t joining their ranks.

Beijing rebuffed Trump’s warning not to retaliate against an earlier 34% tariff on top of a first round of duties — warning that it was ready to fight to “the end.” The US leader, caught up in a fast-spiraling clash with President Xi Jinping, then had to preserve his credibility by making good on his threat to impose a gargantuan import tax from goods from the world’s second-largest economy

on Wednesday.

“Countries like China who have chosen to retaliate and try to double down on their mistreatment of American workers are making a mistake,” White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Tuesday. “President Trump has a spine of steel, and he will not break, and America will not break under his leadership.”

The vast stock of personal and political capital Trump has now invested in the faceoff with Xi makes this the most serious lurch of a volatile week since the US president announced his “Liberation Day” tariffs

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**If the US president assumed that what he almost daily hails as his “great relationship” with Xi would yield a quick Chinese climbdown, he’s wrong. The prospect of a trade agreement with Beijing similar to the one in the first Trump term, which largely fell apart during the pandemic, seems distant. Trump’s claims that the US has been “raped” and “pillaged” by trade partners are hyperbolic. But his grievances about Beijing’s behavior have been shared by multiple presidents. Tensions often flare over import dumping, market access for US firms, intellectual property theft, currency manipulation and industrial espionage. Previous White Houses pursued targeted enforcement and other penalties to try to reshape China’s behavior. Years of acrimony in the relationship have fueled the shared bipartisan doctrine in Washington that Beijing is the preeminent military and economic threat to US power. But Trump’s aggression is unparalleled. He believes he has a unique and perhaps final opportunity to transform the US dynamic with what the US Trade Representative’s office describes as the world’s largest trading nation. “We have one shot at this,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Monday. But his method is impulsive and indiscriminate; it lacks a clear strategy. It also shows little respect for Chinese dignity and power — a recurring theme in the administration’s dealings with other countries.**

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in the White House Rose Garden.

China is showing every sign that it thinks it can outlast Trump in their clash, for which it has been preparing for years. And it’s not clear Trump and his top officials are fully prepared for the extent of China’s resilience or the pain it can impose on American consumers.

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Stephen Collinson

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China’s rhetoric, meanwhile, is peppered with assumptions that the US is trying to devastate its economy and political system. Liu Pengyu, spokesman for China’s embassy in Washington, for instance, condemned US tariffs on Tuesday as “abuse” and as an infringement of China’s “legitimate rights.”

In Beijing, as in Washington, hubris is stoking the antagonism.

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show of strength. Trump’s second presidency and the political chaos he incites are seen as symptoms of weakness.

Trump’s histrionics and attacks on US allies, including in Southeast Asia, also play into China’s argument that the United States is not a reliable partner, and that China’s brand of capitalism twinned with political control is a better model.

China’s confidence ahead of what could be a dragged-out trade battle with the United States is also rooted in Xi’s reorientation and modernizing of the Chinese economy.

“I think if you are Xi Jinping right now, you’re thinking, ‘Well, hey, on the metrics that I care about — technological resilience and self-reliance, we are doing ok, these tariffs may not immediately impact us,” said Lily McElwee, adjunct fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Xi may also believe that beyond China’s core strength, it has “retaliatory tools that (it) can impose that will be costly to the United States as well,” said McElwee, who is also president and CEO of the Phoenix Committee on Foreign Relations.

As a real authoritarian leader, Xi, unlike Trump, has no worries about the impact of a trade war on looming elections — such

as the congressional midterms next year. And while public opinion is still important in China, Xi may reason he can afford to inflict more pain on the Chinese than Trump can on Americans.

If US inflation soars and sets off a recession, it may be the Americans who sue for trade peace on conditions favorable to Beijing.

Pain is coming for American consumers.

China has been the top foreign supplier of goods to the US, accounting for up to 16% of total imports in recent years, according to the USTR. It dominates the market in smartphones, computers and toys — likely to be hit by massive price hikes that take them out of reach of many Americans when the new tariffs come into force. Taken together with Biden administration tariffs on China, which expanded on Trump first-term duties, China now faces an effective average tariff rate of 125%.

Beijing can also inflict other penalties on the United States, such as halting export licenses for rare earth minerals that are vital to the US tech industry — one reason why Trump may have been so obsessed in finding alternative sources of supply in places like Ukraine and Greenland.

After seeing the severe inflationary impact in the US of supply chain crunches during the pandemic, Chinese leaders could choose to impose new artificial curbs on the flow of goods to the US. American law and commercial firms might be restricted from operating in China. And Beijing could jolt the US agricultural heartland by limiting the import of soy beans and Sorghum. Each of these steps would hurt Chinese as well as Americans — but they’d demonstrate Xi’s power of retaliation.

Small businesses are also vulnerable. While giants like Apple can seek alternative manufacturing bases — in India, say — US firms that rely on goods and components from China will be left hugely exposed.

“If you are a small business, particularly on the import side or the input side, there’s going to be pain,” said Alex Jacquez, a former special assistant for Economic Development and Industrial Strategy to President Joe Biden. Broader economic consequences will follow. “You’re looking at a drag on GDP that is going to be a drag on the labor market. You are looking at inflationary pressure,” Jacquez said.

“One of the concerns here is there is not rational thought or direction to the strategy.”

— CNN

# America’s AI iron curtain hurting allies

Sona Muzikarova

technologies this year. And in February, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk signed a memorandum of understanding with Alphabet (Google) CEO Sundar Pichai to speed up AI adoption in cybersecurity, health, energy and other sectors.

By relegating Central and Eastern Europe to second-tier status, the US has threatened the region’s economic future in at least three ways. First, the restrictions will make it more difficult to upgrade legacy industries such as auto manufacturing at a time when Europeans need to press ahead with autonomous and self-driving vehicles, AI-augmented manufacturing and predictive maintenance technologies.

Second, now that the region’s AI aspirations depend on the whims of policymakers in Washington, long-term planning and many new investments are on hold. As import-dependent US companies are also recognizing, there is nothing worse for business than

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**By relegating Central and Eastern Europe to second-tier status, the US has threatened the region’s economic future in at least three ways. First, the restrictions will make it more difficult to upgrade legacy industries such as auto manufacturing at a time when Europeans need to press ahead with autonomous and self-driving vehicles, AI-augmented manufacturing and predictive maintenance technologies. Second, now that the region’s AI aspirations depend on the whims of policymakers in Washington, long-term planning and many new investments are on hold. As import-dependent US companies are also recognizing, there is nothing worse for business than persistent policy uncertainty. Third, with high-performance chips out of reach, Central and Eastern Europe’s budding AI startup ecosystem may be forced to migrate to tier-one countries, crippling a strategic sector before it has the chance to mature. If its startups leave or wither away, the region will be set back at least a decade. No wonder public discontent has rippled across European capitals, from Brussels and Prague to Riga and Warsaw. Of course, US policymakers would say that they are making a calculated trade-off: safeguarding America’s technological edge and national security interests, even if that means causing friction with long-standing allies. But the AI chip restrictions also risk fracturing NATO’s cohesion and stalling its military modernization.**

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causing friction with long-standing allies. But the AI chip restrictions also risk fracturing NATO’s cohesion and stalling its military modernization. The war in Ukraine has shown that combat increasingly revolves around AI capabilities — from cyber defenses to drones. Given that the Trump administration wants NATO’s European members to step up and do more, it makes no sense to maintain limits on Central and Eastern Europe’s ability to develop these technologies.

True, most countries in the region cannot yet reach the quota imposed by the AI Diffusion Rule anyway, owing to a lack of computing power and other requirements. But as their capacities grow, they may begin to look for other partners. In 2023, Hungary alone absorbed 44 percent of Chinese foreign direct investment in Europe — eclipsing France, Germany and the UK combined. Similarly, despite Poland’s strong Western orientation, China is already one of

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— Arab News

# Israeli aggression pushing Syria into Turkiye’s arms

Mudhafar Al-Jbori

**ISRAEL last week bombed Syrian military bases, claiming that it was a warning for Turkiye to keep its assets away. However, Tel Aviv does not understand that its belligerence only increases Syria’s need for Turkish protection.**

Syria condemned the unprovoked and unjustified strikes. However, Israel does not care. Its military success — namely decapitating Hezbollah’s leadership — has increased its confidence and arrogance. The Israelis now feel they can subjugate everyone around them. In addition to its military success, Israel is backed by a new US administration that will empower it like no other administration before. Therefore, it plans to take advantage by maximizing its gains and setting new parameters over the course of the four-year window it now has.

Subjugating neighboring states and emerging as the regional hegemon is becoming increasingly clear as Israel’s intended goal. This way, it will impose its will on everyone and be free to move whenever and wherever it wants within the neigh-

borhood. Israeli leaders have even bluntly spoken about a new Middle East — a Middle East that they shape and control.

Though its declared enemy is Iran, Turkiye is also bad news for Israel. In fact, any strong country in the neighborhood is bad news for Israel. Last week’s strike was supposed to be a warning for Turkiye to keep its hands off Syria and leave the country as a playground for Israel. Tel Aviv is flexing its muscles in front of the Turks, while its discourse is saying it does not seek confrontation. However, Israel’s actions are inviting a confrontation. Its continuous harassment of Syria and breaches of the country’s sovereignty make Turkish intervention a necessity and not a luxury for Damascus.

The Israeli aggression started as soon as the rebels took Damascus. Turkiye was not in the picture at that stage. Its allied forces were still in the northeast. According to one Western diplomat I spoke to, Israel went into Syria because it could. The fact that the world remained silent in the face of its atrocities in Gaza, while the West, particularly the US, kept

supplying it with arms despite the civilian death toll, gave Israel the impression it could do whatever it wanted whenever it wanted to.

This is bad news for the region, even those countries that have good relations with Israel.

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Israel is so arrogant that it feels it does not need to have a good relationship with anyone. It can just impose its will on anybody it wants. Though it is in the best interest of Israel to have a good relationship with Egypt, it simply does not seem to care. It is now putting pressure on Cairo to dismantle its military structures in Sinai, while there is a serious threat from

the Israeli side to push the Palestinians into that region.

Egypt therefore faces a double threat from Israel. Israel, supported by the Trump administration, has declared its intention

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to transfer the Gazans to Egypt — and yet they are asking Cairo to remove its reinforcements at the border. Israel last month set up an agency to advance the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza. Is it now asking Egypt to clear the way for forcible displacement? In fact, the actions of Israel only make Egypt want to further increase its reinforcements in the Sinai.

Israel is burning bridges with everyone. Countries that were thinking of normalizing with it are now thinking of strengthening ties with their neighbors in order to contain Israeli expansionism.

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Syria in order to encourage separatism. This effort did not start with the collapse of the Assad regime, it has been ongoing for several years. It was hoping that the Druze would declare independence, or seek autonomy of some sort,

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would engage with the Kurds and the Druze and create a permanently weak and unstable country. Fortunately, these Israeli calls have not been answered.

Turkiye will not accept a federal Syria. For Ankara, this would be an existential threat. A federal Syria would empower Kurdish separatism at home. When the rebels took over Damascus, Turkiye was reluctant to get involved, but it has now been pushed to interfere. Syrians, on the other hand, were fed up with the Iranian and Russian interference in their country as they want Syria to be a sovereign, independent state.

They want to live in a peaceful state. As soon as Ahmad Al-Sharaa took over, he announced that he would comply with the 1974 Disengagement Agreement with Israel. Nevertheless, Israel immediately started bombing the country, destroying its military installations.

The aggression did not stop there. Israel encroached into the southern part of the country. Hence, with such a belligerent neighbor, the Syrians can have no stability without a

protector that can create a deterrent to Israel.

The Syrians, like everyone else, know that Israel does not abide by any agreement. They saw how Tel Aviv last month unilaterally broke the Gaza ceasefire at the end of phase one. How will they believe in any deal with Israel when they are facing an arrogant foe that reneges on its commitments whenever it suits its interests? The logical thinking of Al-Sharaa or anybody else is in his place is to seek to balance them out. Al-Sharaa definitely does not want to be at the mercy of a merciless neighbor. Does Israel think that by bombing Syria it is going to block a defense agreement between Turkiye and Syria? On the contrary, it has pushed Syria to want such a deal even more and to accelerate its implementation.

While Israel is thinking that it can subjugate its neighbors — foes and friends alike — it is pushing everyone on to the same page to face its expansionism. All countries in the region know that, if Syria is subjugated, it will only be a matter of time until they are next.



During the meeting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed that there are currently no direct competitors from Tanzania in the sports and surgical instrument sectors against Pakistan.





Women’s World Cup qualifiers

Baig sets up Pakistan’s win against Ireland

LAHORE (ESPNCricinfo): Hosts Pakistan had their bowlers, led by senior seamer Diana Baig, to thank for securing them a 38 run win over Ireland in the Women's World Cup Qualifiers.

Pakistan trudged through their innings to score 217 and Ireland were bossing the chase on 96 for 1 in side 24 overs. Left-arm spinner Nashra Sandhu took three wickets in four overs to leave Ireland's middle-order exposed before Baig took care of the tail. She finished with figures of 4 for 35 in her first appearance for the team since their opening match of last year's T20 World Cup and got Pakistan's campaign off to a winning start.

Ireland will have the same amount of recovery time - physically and emotionally - after believing they had done enough against Pakistan. Jane Maguire removed Gull Feroza early and Sidra Amin found run-scoring tough which meant the dot ball mounted up. Muneeba Ali tried to keep the score-board moving but Pakistan were 79 for 1 after 20 overs and going nowhere. Sidra was on 29 off 61 balls. Muneeba fell trying to get things going and was replaced by Aliya Riaz.

Aliya showed more initiative and was scoring at a run-a-ball when Amin finally got to 50 off 110 balls and was then dismissed at the end of the 36th over. Pakistan were 153 for 3 after 36 overs and a score over 200 looked some distance away. Natalia Pervaiz came in ahead of captain Fatima Sana but was run-out for 12, by which time Aliya was also dismissed. Pakistan did not have the batters for a last ten-over push and lost 6 wickets for 42 runs from Aliya's dismissal. They were bowled out with an over to spare for 217.

That total didn't look enough despite Baig's new-ball breakthrough. She had Sarah Forbes given out lbw in the ninth over but a 69-run second wicket stand between Lewis and Amy Hunter started to take the game away. Ireland were 96 for 1 when Sandhu trapped Lewis on the back pad and dragged Pakistan into the game. Both Hunter and Delany played on, leaving Ireland 119 for 4 and Pakistan had the opportunity to burst through.

Sadia Iqbal got rid of Leah Paul before Baig was brought back and removed



Christina Coulter Reilly, Louise Little and Arelen Kelley in three overs. Cara Murray's run-out confirmed Pakistan's win. They will take on Scotland on Friday.

Meanwhile, Scotland pulled off the first upset of the Women's World Cup Qualifiers by denying Hayley Matthews, who single-handedly kept West Indies in the game despite leaving the field twice with severe cramps, and beating

the side by 11 runs. Matthews became only the fourth player to take four wickets and score a century in an ODI but West Indies' over-reliance on her cost them. She took four of the first five Scotland wickets and forced herself to return to the crease twice - once off a stretcher to keep batting when West Indies were nine wickets down - but it was not enough. Scotland were the side that rallied around

Sarah Bryce's 55 (off 56 balls) and her 82-run fifth wicket stand with Megan McColl and then their spinners. Offspinners Katherine Fraser and Darcy Carter and legspinner Abtaha Maqsood took six wickets between them to defend 244 and get their first points on the board.

Temperatures were close to 40 degrees Celcius with humidity at around 60% and conditions took their toll across both

games in Lahore. West Indies used cooling collars made of ice packs during drinks breaks. Scotland took shelter under umbrellas and Ireland's Gaby Lewis received treatment on field three times for cramps during her 96 minutes of batting against hosts Pakistan.

West Indies chose to bowl first on a green top at the LCCA Ground but Scotland were up to the task. Abbi Aitken-

Drummond and Carter put on 48 inside 12 overs, in an innings laced with three boundaries each. Matthews brought herself on in the 12th over and had Aitken-Drummond and Kathryn Bryce caught behind in successive overs and Carter dismissed in her third and suddenly, Scotland were 69 for 3. When Chinelle Henry's direct hit ran out Ailsa Lister West Indies finally looked like they had another player on the field and could run through Scotland.

Sarah Bryce held the innings together but when she edged to slip, Scotland went into freefall. They lost 6 for 62 and were bowled out in 45 overs, as both Aaliyah Alleyne and Karishma Ramharack took two wickets each.

The chase started poorly when Qiana Joseph gifted a caught-and-bowled to Carter. Zaida James was in at No.3 in the second over. She batted slowly but carefully and shared a 113-run stand with Matthews, which put West Indies well on track. They were 120 for 2 in the 27th over when James tried to hit Chloe Abel over fine leg but found the fielder at 45 and then chaos ensued.

West Indies lost

Shemaine Campbell, Stafanie Taylor and Henry in the space of 23 deliveries and of those, Taylor's run-out was key but the required run-rate still manageable. West Indies needed 53 runs off 72 balls and Matthews was still batting, but only just.

When Shabika Gajani was caught behind, Mathews was on 95 and hobbling. Cherry-Ann Fraser was out in the next over and it was clear Matthews was forcing herself to keep going but couldn't. She left the field.

Afy Fletcher lasted six balls and was dismissed for duck so Matthews came back on and hit four off the next ball she faced. She was on 99 and running out of partners. She fell to the ground wailing and then was stretched off the field.

Ramharack gave Fraser another caught and bowled to leave West Indies nine down when Matthews rolled herself off the stretcher and returned to bat. She brought a century and kept West Indies in the hunt but Alleyne couldn't stay with her. She was out lbw in the 47th over, with West Indies 11 runs short. They have a day's break before playing Ireland on Friday.



KARACHI: Players of Pakistan and France in action during the first round of Under-23 World Squash Championship being played in Karachi

U-23 World Squash Championship begins in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Under-23 World Squash Championship matches are in progress at Karachi's Creek Club. The mega event is a new competition introduced by World Squash and is being organized by Pakistan Squash Federation under the patronage of CAS PAF, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu as it's President. The prestigious

tournament features 34 male and 22 female players from 22 countries including Pakistan, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, England, France, Hong Kong China, Iran, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and United States who are competing for the coveted title from 06-10 April, 2025.

Hosting the Under-23 World Squash Championship will result in Pakistan hosting more high profile international sports events in future enabling vast opportunities for domestic players to compete with the world's best talents. As the patron of sports in the country, Pakistan Air Force has consistently promoted sporting activities at both national and international levels. Under the patronage and

special guidance of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, the sport of Squash has witnessed remarkable progress providing a platform for young talent to shine globally. The successful hosting of the Under-23 World Squash Championship signifies that Pakistan is a sports loving & perfectly peaceful country to host international sports events.

Rice scores twice as Arsenal stun Real Madrid

LONDON (BBC): Declan Rice stunned Real Madrid with two brilliant free kicks - the first scored in his career - as Arsenal took a commanding 3-0 first leg lead in their Champions League quarter-final.

Mikel Arteta had asked the Arsenal fans to arrive early to create an impressive atmosphere inside the stadium, and the team responded by starting the game quickly with a number of dangerous crosses into the Madrid penalty area.

It took until the 20th minute for Madrid to have their first real chance, when Vinicius Jr curled an effort wide.

But Rice took control of the tie for Arsenal in the second half.

The Gunners were the better side all evening and took the lead in the 58th minute, when Rice curled the first of two excellent free-kicks round the Real Madrid wall into the corner of the net past Thibaut Courtois.

Rice scored his second of the night with a free-

kick of equal quality 12 minutes later, bending another long-range effort into the top right-hand corner to leave Madrid stunned.

Mikel Merino then made sure it was a memorable night for Arsenal when he curled a shot into the bottom corner from inside the area just five minutes later.

Things only got worse for Madrid when Eduardo Camavinga was sent off in stoppage time for picking up a second yellow card.

Arsenal have not reached the semi-finals stage of the Champions League since the 2008-09 season, but they have given themselves a huge chance of progressing to the last four with this result.

Arsenal came into this match as the less-experienced side in European competition, compared with serial winners Madrid, but showed a ruthlessness and quality which Carlo Ancelotti's side could not match.

Arteta has been dealt a

series of blows this season with injuries to key players and the focus before the game was on who would partner William Saliba at centre-back, with Jakub Kiwior ultimately getting the nod.

But those issues seemed trivial once the game got under way as Arsenal started the match so impressively. Bukayo Saka caused David Alaba all sorts of problems and one of his crosses should have been turned in during the first half.

Rice's two free-kicks nearly lifted the roof off of the Emirates before Merino added a third to seal the win, taking on the mantle of striker in the absence of Kai Havertz.

Merino has now scored five goals in his past nine appearances for Arsenal.

It could have been even better for Arsenal as Jude Bellingham and Alaba had to clear balls off the Madrid goal line.

In a season where injuries have robbed Arteta of many key players, he has managed to lead his

team to a place where they can start dreaming about a Champions League semi-final.

Real Madrid were not in their best form coming into this match, with just two wins in their previous five matches.

Goalkeeper Courtois had said he was aware of the threat Arsenal possessed from set-pieces, but the 15-time winners of the competition looked uncomfortable throughout.

The flair and sharpness in play expected of Ancelotti's team was missing and their best effort from Kylian Mbappe was saved by David Raya.

Madrid have kept just two clean sheets in their past 11 games in all competitions and will need to keep Arsenal out and score four at the Bernabeu next week to secure what will be an unlikely win.

However, Madrid have produced some moments of magic in this competition and Arsenal will know another solid performance is needed to ensure their progression.

Peshawar Zalmi release short film ‘Zalmi X Legacy’, anthem for PSL 10

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The short film culminates in a powerful reflection on Zalmi's transformation over the past decade. From humble beginnings to becoming one of the most iconic franchises in the PSL, Zalmi's journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. But it's not just about the victories on the cricket field; it's about the victories in the hearts of its fans.

For the past ten years, Zalmi has stood as a symbol of hope, resilience, and unity. It has been more than a team-it has been a movement that has united Pakistan through the shared love of cricket, the spirit of community, and the power of dreams. Each victory, each challenge overcome, and each milestone achieved has been a testament to the strength of the Zalmi legacy.

As we celebrate a decade of Zalmi, the story continues to unfold. The short film not only Honors

the incredible journey so far but also sets the stage for the future. The anthem, the music video, and the entire experience serve as a reminder that Zalmi's legacy is ongoing, and the best is yet to come.

Through every triumph, every challenge, and every step taken, Zalmi has proven that it's more than just a team-it's a story, a movement, and a legacy. The next decade promises to be even more remarkable, as Zalmi continues to inspire future generations and bring together fans from all walks of life.

The anthem may be a tribute to the past, but it is also a call to action, a call to continue the journey together, united as one.

In this ten-year short film, every moment is history, every victory is a chapter, and every heartbeat of the nation echoes the legacy of Zalmi-where dreams are built, and legacies live on. Through every ball bowled, every boundary hit, and every cheer from the stands, Zalmi's

legacy will continue to inspire the future, shaping a new generation of dreamers, believers, and champions.

Zalmi is not just a team. It's a living, breathing legacy that will live on through every fan, every player, and every dream that dares to rise.

The centrepiece of this celebration is Zalmi's short film which resonates deeply with every Zalmi fan. Featuring music icons Aima Baig, Mustafa Zahid, Bilaal Avaz, Mustafa Kamal Khan, Altamash Sever and Wajid Layaq, the soundtrack of the short film is a seamless blend of Pashto, Urdu, and English, reflecting the multicultural and multi-lingual identity of Zalmi's fanbase. It isn't just a short film; it's a statement of pride and unity, underscoring the resilience of the team and the nation that supports it.

Accompanied by a visually striking music video, the anthem becomes a living narrative of Zalmi's

journey. Directed by the acclaimed filmmaker Hassan Dawar, the video combines nostalgic moments from the past ten years with current energy and excitement.

Mahira Khan, Zalmi's beloved brand ambassador, appears alongside Zalmi's star players Babar Azam & Saim Ayub representing the spirit of the franchise and its deep connection with the fans.

Zalmi's anthems have become more than just promotional tracks-they are anthems of hope, pride, and unity that have connected millions of fans across Pakistan.

Each year, these anthems have captured the essence of the team and its journey, reflecting both the evolving identity of Zalmi and the growing strength of its fanbase. Over the years, the anthems have not only been musical expressions of triumph but also cultural celebrations that blend contemporary music with deep-rooted traditions.

Onana ‘one of United's worst goalkeepers’: Matic

LONDON (BBC): Former Manchester United midfielder Nemanja Matic has labelled Andre Onana as "one of the worst goalkeepers in the club's history". Serbian Matic, 36, was responding to Onana's comments about United being "way better" than French club Lyon as the two sides prepare to meet in the Europa League quarter-finals on Thursday.

Onana then posted on social media, denying he was being disrespectful.

Speaking at Wednesday's news conference, Matic, who played for United from 2017-2022, said: "You know, I respect everyone but to say that then you need to give the answer.

"If you are one of the worst goalkeepers in Man United's history, you need to take care what you're talking about.

"If it was [Edwin] Van der Sar, [Peter] Schmeichel or [David] De Gea saying that, then I would question myself. But you need to have cover to say something like that."

The Europa League is the final opportunity for Ruben Amorim's side - currently 13th in the Premier League - to save a disappointing season.

Matic made 128 appearances for the Red Devils and joined Ligue 1 side Lyon in 2024 after spells at Rennes and Roma. He won the Premier League twice, plus the FA Cup and EFL Cup in a four-year spell at Chelsea.

Onana signed for £47.2m from Inter Milan in 2023 and has won the FA Cup at Old Trafford, keeping 23 clean sheets in 93 appearances.

"I would never be disrespectful to another club. We know that tomorrow will be a difficult game against a strong opponent," Onana said on X.

"We focus on preparing a performance to make our fans proud.

"At least I've lifted trophies with the greatest club in the world. Some can't say the same."

Cameroon international Onana's initial comments came after Sunday's 0-0 draw against Manchester City, when he was confident despite describing Lyon as a "very good team".

"Of course, it's not going to be easy but I think we are way better than them," Onana said.

"We all know the importance of this game, we will go there with the winning mentality. It's not our best season but we still have something to win and we will go for it."

The first leg of the Europa League quarter-final takes place in Lyon at 20:00 BST.

Onana succeeded David De Gea at Old Trafford after the Spaniard ended his 12-year stay at the club in July 2023.

De Gea, who is now at Fiorentina, was four-time United player of the year and twice won the Premier League Golden Glove, which is given to the keeper with most clean sheets.

He is fourth in the all-

time Premier League clean sheet list with 147.

In total, he kept 190 clean sheets in 545 games and won the Premier League, FA Cup, two EFL Cups and Europa League.

His predecessor was Dutchman Edwin van der Sar who in a six-year spell at United won the Champions League, four Premier Leagues, Club World Cup and two League Cups.

He had a record of 135 clean sheets in 266 games and is tied for eighth on the Premier League's all-time clean sheet list with 132. Prior to signing Van der Sar in 2005, United went through a number of goalkeepers as they searched for a long-term replacement for Peter Schmeichel.

Fabian Barthez, Tim Howard, Roy Carroll and Mark Bosnich all had stints as number one but while United won three league titles between 1999 and 2005, none of these fully convinced.

They had a very hard act to follow given Schmeichel's legendary status at a club where he played 398 times over eight seasons.

The Dane won five Premier Leagues, three FA Cups, one League Cup and a European Super Cup before signing off with the Champions League as part of a then unprecedented treble.

Onana did not make a list of the top goalkeepers in the world, published on Wednesday by the CIES Football Observatory

Index.

CIES uses methodology to take into account the level of games played, the results of matches and the deviation in the percentage of saves at domestic league level compared to the expected value.

That is a pretty explosive statement from Nemanja Matic, which goes to the heart of a major talking point among Manchester United supporters.

The status of Schmeichel and Van der Sar as legendary United figures is assured due to their Premier League title and Champions League-winning feats during their time at Old Trafford.

De Gea was the goalkeeper for the club's last championship-winning campaign under Sir Alex Ferguson in 2013.

His unprecedented four United player of the year awards came at a point where many felt without De Gea, the club's slide from prominence would have been even worse than it was.

However, De Gea's time at Old Trafford coincided with the period when the demands on goalkeepers to play with their feet began to increase.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was not convinced by De Gea and he also lost his place in the Spain squad. Amid a huge amount of speculation around his future, United opted not to offer De Gea an extension in 2023 and he left, with Onana coming in from Inter Milan.





## In brief

### Six more drug dealers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Wednesday continued the crackdown against drug suppliers and arrested six more accused with more than 9.5 kilograms charas. According to the police spokesman, the Ratta Amral Police recovered 2.25 kg and 1.85 kg charas from accused Khurram Shahzad and Yasin respectively. Similarly, the Wah Saddar Police nabbed accused Tanveer with 1.6 kg charas, while the Pirwadhai Police held accused Luqman with 1.28 kg of the contraband item. Likewise, Dhamial and Cantt Police arrested accused Kashif and Sibtain Haider respectively recovering 1.28 kg and 1.25 kg charas. More than 70 drug suppliers, including woman accused, have been arrested in the last five days. A total of 3.51 kg ice, 1.5 kg heroin and more than 120 kg charas have been recovered from them.

### 82,800 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 82,800 cusecs water from various run stations with inflow of 98,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1410.57 feet which was 8.57 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 27,600 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1094.50 feet, which was 44.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 30,300 cusecs and 17,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 42,500, 34,200, 26,100 and 6,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 22,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 13,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Safe City to launch CCTV

ISLAMABAD (APP): Safe City Islamabad is set to launch a comprehensive CCTV and Network Technician training course, open to all citizens of the federal capital, regardless of age or educational background. An official told APP that the course will span two weeks and aims to equip participants with practical skills in security system installation, monitoring, and maintenance. He said the program will cover the installation and repair of analogue, IP, PTZ, and thermal cameras, alongside training on the use of surveillance equipment for real-time monitoring and activity recording. He said participants will also be taught how to store data on DVRs, NVRs, and cloud storage devices, including techniques for upgrading backup recordings. He said the course will feature detailed sessions on networking hardware such as routers, switches, and fiber optics, with troubleshooting procedures in case of malfunctions. He said trainees will also be shown how to monitor systems via mobile applications to enhance real-time surveillance capabilities. He said public and private security awareness will be emphasized throughout the course, preparing participants to handle various security scenarios. He said certificates will be distributed among participants upon the successful completion of the training program.

# NUML hosts 7th ORIC steering committee meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 7th Steering Committee meeting of the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) was held at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Ibn-e-Rushd Block, on Wednesday.

The meeting was chaired by Pro-Rector (Academics), Dr. Safer Awan, and brought together prominent stakeholders from academia and industry to explore ways of bridging the gap between academic research and industrial application.

The meeting was attended by former Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting and senior media analyst Murtaza Solangi, a representative from the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), the Marketing Manager of Faisal Town, CEO Atom Global, and all Deans of NUML.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Safer Awan appreciated the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for its initiative in establishing ORIC offices in universities, emphasizing that such platforms are crucial for fostering academic-industry linkages.

He highlighted NUML's

commitment to this cause and stressed the need for deeper collaboration, citing the potential of NUML students in developing impactful software solutions under expert faculty guidance.

Dr. Atta Ullah, Assistant Professor and Director ITCON & BICON delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining NUML's progress across various domains. He noted a significant improvement in the university's performance on the HEC scorecard—rising from 40 to 68 points—and securing a place in the X-category (Top 11 institutions).

He called for intensified efforts in the areas of innovation and commercialization, and showcased in-house software projects developed by NUML students.

Speaking on the occasion, the Marketing Manager of Faisal Town emphasized the value of joint ventures, stating that industry partnerships could not only provide practical training but also open up employment opportunities for students.

CEO Atom Global, Waqas Ahmad identified the need to shift from a technology-centric to a

function-centric approach, proposing platforms where students can gain practical exposure. He also pointed out current import restrictions on AI and quantum computing hardware, urging the creation of indigenous platforms with a “bring your own cup of coffee” culture to foster open, business-driven innovation.

Murtaza Solangi underscored the importance of aligning academic theory with real-world practice. “When the organic connection between theory and practice breaks, problems arise. Practice is the mother of theory,” he noted.

He highlighted the transformation in the media landscape due to technological advancements and expressed willingness to support student-industry linkages in the media sector.

The meeting concluded with valuable insights from all dignitaries on overcoming challenges and enhancing collaboration between academia, research institutions, and industry. Participants agreed on the need for sustained dialogue, joint ventures, and practical platforms to foster innovation, employability, and real-world impact.

## ‘Research & Practices in Education’ concluded

ISLAMABAD (APP): The concluding ceremony of the two-day 8th International Conference on “Research and Practices in Education” was held on Wednesday at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU).

Speaking on the occasion, Vice-Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, said that the needs of life are rapidly changing, and it is imperative to align education with the requirements of the next 30 years.

With the rapid advancement in technology, our thinking time is shrinking, which makes it essential to adopt effective strategies in the field of education.

He emphasized that we must consider the future of upcoming generations and ask ourselves whether the curriculum being taught today will meet the needs of the next 10 years. If not,

then this is a moment of thought for us. He congratulated the entire faculty for the successful organization of the conference and thanked partner organizations for their role in making the event a success.

Conference Secretary Dr. Zafar Iqbal presented a summary of the event, stating that five national and international keynote speakers presented their papers.

He also mentioned that there were 156 oral presentations and 16 poster presentations during the conference.

Conference Coordinator Dr. Muhammad Ajmal said that under the leadership and visionary approach of Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, a highly successful conference was held.

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## Education reform vital for harmony, peace

ISLAMABAD (APP): Experts emphasized education reform, such as revising the curriculum to instill values emphasizing peace and harmony as a key feature to address Pakistan's long-standing security challenges.

The experts shared these views during the a high-profile panel discussion hosted by Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), said a press release on Wednesday.

The session was chaired by Chairman Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) Amb Jauhar Saleem while other participants included Anwarul Haq Kakar, former caretaker Prime Minister of

Pakistan, Nasir Khan Janjua, former National Security Advisor, Dr. Moeed Yusuf, VC BNU, Asif Ali Khan Durrani, former special envoy for Afghanistan, Asif Yasin Malik former Defence Secretary, Ihsan Ghani, former IG Police and Chief of NACTA, Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, The Center for Research and Security Studies, Amir Rana, President, Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services, Mr. Abdullah Khan, MD, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, and Mr. Iftikhar Firdous, editor and founder, Khorasan Diary.

Experts also advocated the governance reforms as a crucial to comprehensive response to the rise in terrorism across the country.

They asserted the importance of persistently pursuing consensus-based initiatives outlined in the National Action Plan.

During the session, the experts provided an in-depth analysis of the historical context shaping the current security environment.

They proposed a series of key recommendations aimed at strengthening national security, including the development of a strong counter-narrative to terrorism.

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ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja officers of Service Training of Election Officers (3rd Batch) at ECP Secretariat.

## ECP launches intensive training for new EOs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday initiated a 13-week training session for its 23 newly hired BS-17 Election Officers (EOs) at its academy, with the program set to end on July 4, 2025.

Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja officially inaugurated the training program at ECP Academy, designed to provide election officers with essential competencies for effective electoral management.

Chief Election Commissioner Raja welcomed the newly appointed Election Officers to the ECP, commending their merit-based selection. He underscored that election management is a multifaceted responsibility demanding thorough understanding of constitutional provisions, legal frameworks, procedural regulations, and ethical guidelines—along with hands-on experience.

The CEC also emphasized that during this period, officers will receive training on modern technology to enhance its application in both their professional duties and daily lives.

Officers will also undergo training on election laws, constituency delimitation, voter registration, polling procedures, and office tasks, supported by practical exercises. They will also learn how to effectively utilize modern technology for professional and personal applications.

Chief Election Commissioner urged newly appointed Election Officers to prioritize serving the nation, adhering to the Constitution and laws, and treating the public with courtesy. He emphasized the importance of focusing on their training to effectively manage elections.

## DHA improving mother-child healthcare

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Health Authority (DHA), Rawalpindi is intensely engaged in efforts to improve mother-child healthcare by putting special focus on reducing maternal and newborn mortality rate.

In an interaction with APP on Wednesday, Dr. Asif Arbab Niazi CEO, District Health Authority said that the health department was organizing awareness seminars, special lectures and interactive sessions to identify root causes and counter strategy to overcome mother-child healthcare challenges.

“Our special focus on Health Day is on maternal and newborn child healthcare, to improved maternal health and reduce mortality risk”, he said while highlighting DHA's efforts in connection with World Health Day.

The World Health Day is being celebrated globally for which a special campaign titled ‘Healthy beginnings’ on maternal and newborn health is underway. Dr. Asif said that the health authority, under the vision of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif has prioritized the women's long term health.

He underlined that besides taking important steps to improve child healthcare, work was also being done on improving newborn and infant healthcare system.

## Dairy farm sealed over illegal milk injections

ISLAMABAD (APP): In an early morning raid, the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) on Wednesday sealed a dairy farm in Meherabadi for using banned chemicals to increase milk production.

Talking to APP, Deputy Director Operations of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), Dr Tahira Siddique said that the food safety teams (FSTs) found poor hygiene conditions and seized a large quantity of prohibited injections used on animals.

The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) carried out a major operation at a dairy farm in Meherabadi during the early hours of the day, she said.

The raid revealed the use of oxytocin injections—an illegal substance banned for use in dairy production to artificially increase milk output.

According to IFA Deputy Director, over five liters of oxytocin were recovered from the premises and later destroyed. The dairy farm was immediate-

ly sealed for violating food safety laws.

Health and hygiene conditions at the farm were found to be extremely poor. Officials reported a high presence of flies and mosquitoes.

The area where milk was being processed had an unpleasant smell, indicating serious cleanliness issues. Workers at the facility were also found in unhygienic conditions, with no evidence of personal hygiene being maintained.

“Using oxytocin in milk production is strictly prohibited,” said the IFA Deputy Director. “Such chemicals not only affect the quality of milk but also pose serious health risks to consumers.”

Dr Tahira Siddique confirmed the risks, stating that consuming such milk can damage the stomach, liver, and intestines.

She also emphasized that the use of chemicals to boost milk production is illegal and harmful.

The food authority has

intensified efforts to ensure the availability of safe and standard milk across the capital. Officials said they are adopting a zero-tolerance policy against milk adulteration and have launched a crackdown on all dairy farms operating in Islamabad.

“We are committed to protecting public health by targeting those who violate food safety laws,” said the IFA Deputy Director. “Strict action will be taken against anyone involved in such illegal practices.”

The Islamabad Food Authority is continuing its inspection campaign across the city, aiming to identify and shut down any facilities involved in similar violations. The crackdown is part of a broader effort to eliminate health hazards caused by the use of artificial substances in food products.

This operation is one of many steps being taken by the IFA to improve food safety standards and hold violators accountable.

## Tirmizi spells out GoP's progressive agenda

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan to the United Arab Emirates Faisal Niaz Tirmizi said that the Government of Pakistan was pursuing an agenda aimed at making tangible progress towards achieving economic growth and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He was addressing a reception hosted by the Embassy in the UAE to commemorate the National Day of Pakistan, a press release on Wednesday said.

The ambassador recalled the significance of the Pakistan resolution and highlighted the arduous struggle in tackling the growing needs of a nascent state, and later towards achieving socio-economic development. He also highlighted a range of opportunities in Pakistan that remained pivotal in promoting socio-economic development in the country which included a healthy youth bulge; growing women participation in

public life; potential of agriculture; rich socio-cultural heritage; tourism potential; and the fastest growing IT Sector.

Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan was the chief guest on the occasion. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed bin Ali Al Sayegh attended the event. While members of the diplomatic corps, senior officials of the UAE government, Emirati nationals and the Pakistani community participated in the event.

Pakistani artists played the national anthems of Pakistan and the UAE on traditional instruments.

The ambassador reaffirmed Pakistan's position on the resolution of the Palestinian issue and the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in line with the UN Security Council resolutions.

Ambassador Tirmizi acknowledged the impressive economic growth of

the UAE in the last five decades and paid rich tribute to the visionary leadership of late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan which was proudly continued by incumbent President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

He referred to growing Pakistan-UAE strong political and economic partnership, demonstrated through regular high-level contacts, well-established institutions and the presence of 1.7 million Pakistani diaspora.

As a mark of tribute to the founding father of the UAE, the embassy also launched a book on the Life and Works of Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan titled “Sheikh Zayed Maimaar-e-Watan”, written by a prominent Pakistani, Khan Zaman Suror.

On this occasion, one of the distinguished Pakistani entrepreneurs, Adnan Niaz, was honoured with Sitara-i-Imtiaz for his outstanding services.

## Transparent marking process to be maintained

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Rawalpindi, Muhammad Adnan Khan and Controller Examinations Tanveer Asghar Awan have said in a joint statement that several important steps have been taken to make the marking process of examination papers transparent, impartial and standard.

According to the statement, biometric attendance system and CCTV cameras have been installed at all established marking centers to effectively monitor the attendance, discipline and performance of marking staff.

He said that the board has also introduced a modern Monitoring and Evaluation System to ensure effective monitoring and transparency of the marking process, which was successfully implemented in the Intermediate-Second Annual 2024 examinations. Now this system has been further improved and has been implemented in the Matric Annual 2025

as well. “This system will monitor not only the Head Examiners, Sub-

Examiners, Super Checkers and Assistant to Head Examiners, but also other relevant officers to ensure accountability and transparency at all levels”, said the statement issued on Wednesday.

He further said that impartiality, transparency and protection of merit in the marking process are the top priority so that there is

no fear of any injustice to the students. This system will not only improve the performance of the staff but will also further strengthen the public's confidence in the examination system.

Controller Examinations, Tanveer Asghar Awan recently visited the marking centers established at Government Boys Qadri Secondary School Gujar Khan and Government Girls High School Kallar Syedan.

## NPC arranges special screening of ‘Kabir’

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Press Club (NPC), in collaboration with the Women Journalists Caucus and Capital Premier League, arranged a special screening of ‘Kabir’ to honor participants of the ‘Women Journalists Eid Sports Gala’.

The special screening took place at 8:00 PM late Tuesday at Centaurus Mall. Kabir was one of the most successful films released on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr this year. The event provided a unique opportunity for participants and esteemed guests to meet the lead cast of the film. The movie received an overwhelming response from the participants and other attendees. Moreover, prizes were distributed among the winning and runner-up teams of the cricket tournament, celebrating their outstanding performance in the recent sports gala.



RAWALPINDI: Director Operation NBP Rawalpindi Anjum Naseer presenting souvenir to Director NADRA. Director Overseas also present on occasion.



Lightning strikes leave 2 dead

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Two people have been killed and three others injured due to lightning strikes in southeastern Khost province. Mustaghfir Gurbaz, the governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok that the lightning strikes occurred on Tuesday in the Matun area of Gardez and Zazai Maidan district. Gurbaz said that two individuals lost their lives, and three others were wounded in the incidents. The injured have been evacuated to the hospital and are said to be in stable condition.

Central bank to auction \$20m

KABUL (Pajhwok): The central bank is all poised to auction 20 million US dollars today (Thursday) to keep the afghani stable. Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) invited eligible lenders and money-exchange services to take part in the auction. The winners will have to settle their accounts by the end of the day, according to DAB, which said partial payments were unacceptable. Partial transactions will not be permissible, with the winner required to deposit the amount in cash.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

## Taliban publicly flog five people

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban administered public floggings to five individuals, including a woman, on Wednesday in the provinces of Maidan Wardak and Sar-e-Pul, as part of their continued use of corporal punishment for offenses including theft and extramarital relations.

According to a statement from the Taliban's Supreme Court, four men in the Jalrez district of Maidan Wardak were convicted of theft and sentenced by a local court to prison terms along with public lashes.

Two of the men received two-year prison terms and 25 lashes each. A third was sentenced to three years and six months in prison and 25 lashes, while the fourth was given two years and eight months, also with 25 lashes. The punishments were carried out in the presence of local Taliban officials, including judges and security personnel.

In a separate case in Sar-e-Pul Province, a woman

was publicly flogged after being convicted of having an extramarital relationship. The Taliban's criminal court sentenced her to one year in prison and 39 lashes. The punishment was carried out in the courtyard of the appellate court, reportedly in the presence of Taliban judges, court staff, armed personnel, and local residents.

The incidents are part of a wider pattern of corporal punishments reintroduced by the Taliban since their return to power in August 2021, echoing practices from their previous rule in the 1990s. Despite international condemnation, the group has defended such sentences as compliant with their interpretation of Islamic law.

Official figures released by the Taliban's judiciary indicate that more than 798 individuals — including at least 140 women — have been publicly flogged across various provinces in the past three years.

In the current solar year alone (beginning March 2024), at least 456 people, including 60 women, have reportedly received public corporal punishment in 26 provinces, including Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat.

During the final quarter of last year, more than 200 people — among them 30 women — were publicly flogged in 14 provinces.

In addition to flogging, the Taliban judiciary has issued at least 176 rulings for qisas (retribution), 37 for stoning, and four for "wall-collapsing" executions since taking control.

The offenses cited in these cases include adultery, running away from home, sodomy, and theft.

Human rights organizations have repeatedly condemned these actions as flagrant violations of international human rights standards. Some Afghan citizens have also spoken out, describing the punishments as cruel and calling for international intervention.

## Commission holds meeting in Kabul

KABUL (BNA): The High Commission for Addressing Refugee Issues convened a meeting of its twelve committee heads in Kabul, chaired by Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Administrative Chief of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's Prime Minister Office. Several commission members and committee leaders also attended.

According to a statement from Arg (the Presidential Palace), the meeting aimed to address the challenges faced by refugees forcibly deported from neighboring countries.

Following a comprehensive assessment of the issue, the commission tasked relevant committees with taking immediate and serious measures to improve services for returning refugees and resolve their difficulties.

## New health center inaugurated in Gardiz

GARDIZ (BNA): Mawlawi Noorjalah Jalali, the Minister of Public Health, officially inaugurated a new health center in Gardiz city, the capital of Paktia province.

The ceremony took place in the Rabat refugee township and was supported by the United Nations, with a total investment of \$375,000.

During the inauguration, Minister Jalali emphasized the urgent need for expanded health services in Afghanistan.

He announced plans to establish additional health centers in 318 districts across the country in the near future, reflecting the government's commitment to improving healthcare access.

Dr. Meraj Gul Adel, head of public health in Paktia, noted that the new center spans 3,500 square meters and features 34 rooms and 30 beds.

The facility is expected to be equipped with modern medical technologies, enhancing the quality of care available to the local population.

## Unexploded ordnance kills child

KABUL (BNA): An explosion caused by unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Chak district of Maidan Wardak province has resulted in the death of an 11-year-old girl and injuries to four other children.

According to Mawlawi Faizullah Jalali, head of disaster management and preparedness for the province, the incident took place in the village of Baksimand Zalqa'da while the children were on their way home from school.

Officials said the explosion was caused by leftover explosives from previous conflicts.

## Afghanistan-Uzbekistan ties expanding in politics, trade

KABUL (TOLOnews): Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, praised Uzbekistan's positive stance toward Afghanistan and said that political, economic, and trade interactions with Tashkent have expanded.

Fitrat reiterated that the caretaker government seeks to broaden relations with all countries in the region and the world.

He said: "Recently, Afghanistan's relations with Uzbekistan have increased in the political, economic, trade, transit, investment, and other sectors. The Islamic Emirate aims to strengthen its comprehensive ties with neighboring countries, the region, and the wider international community."

Meanwhile, Uzbekistan's President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, emphasized the importance of constructive dialogue with the current authorities of Afghanistan at the 150th session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, attended by representatives of 140 countries.

He said: "We must not forget our neighbor — Afghanistan. We believe it is important to prevent the isolation of this country on the international stage, to establish a constructive dialogue with the current authorities, and to view it as an integral part of the



Central Asian region that offers new opportunities."

Political analysts also view global engagement with Afghanistan, based on national interest, as beneficial.

Zalmay Afghan Yar told TOLOnews: "The caretaker government has declared to the world its commitment to an economy-focused administration, non-interference, and regional stability."

President Mirziyoyev's comments align with protecting Afghanistan's interests

globally. I hope dialogue resolves conflicts."

Abdul Sadiq Hamidzoy said: "Global norms also call for engagement to ensure equality, human rights, and international order. Opportunities must be created to solve issues through cooperation."

This comes as EU and Central Asian leaders, during their first joint summit, voiced concern over the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and pledged support for its people.

## Windstorm halts broadcasts of private radios in Sar-i-Pul

SAR-I-PUL (Pajhwok): Heavy storms have halted broadcasts of two private ration stations in northern Sar-i-Pul province, officials confirmed on Wednesday.

Officials from the affected stations said the storm, which struck on Tuesday night, caused severe damage to their broadcasting equipment, forcing them off air.

Shafiullah Haidari, the broadcasting manager of Arghawan Radio, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the storm destroyed the station's antenna, damaged the power cables and dipole and caused significant harm to the main broadcasting equipment.

He estimated the losses at over

300,000 afghanis, adding that the station lacked the financial capacity to carry out the necessary repairs. As a result, Arghawan Radio has suspended its broadcasts indefinitely.

He urged the caretaker government and organisations supporting the media to assist them in repairing the damaged equipment.

Similarly, Mujibullah, technical manager of Anbir Radio, also said that the storm inflicted more than 400,000 afghanis worth of damage on their station.

"Our 40-metre antenna has been completely destroyed, the cables are damaged, and the broadcasting equipment is also affected," he said.

He also called on the relevant authorities and media support bodies for help, stating that without external assistance, it would not be possible for them to resume operations.

Meanwhile, Information and Culture Director Mullah Abdul Ghafar Haqnama told Pajhwok that he was aware of the issue and his department would work to help the affected stations restart their activities.

"Arghawan and Anbir Radios are valuable cultural assets for the people of Sar-i-Pul, and we are committed to supporting them," he said.

Sar-i-Pul province experienced strong winds and heavy rain during Tuesday night's storm.

## 64 alternative check dams completed to boost water access

KABUL (BNA): The Economic Deputy Office of the Prime Minister stated that, over the past two years, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development has completed 64 alternative check dam projects across various provinces of the country.

According to the office's press release to Bakhtar News Agency, during the solar years 1402 and 1403 (March 2023 to March 2025), the ministry completed 64 agricultural projects including irrigation canals,

water reservoirs, dams, and retaining walls in eight provinces.

The report adds that these projects, funded by the Islamic Emirate's budget, were implemented at a cost of approximately 97 million Afghanis in Baghlan, Balkh, Parwan, Paktia, Zabul, Kapisa, Kunduz, and Nuristan, and are now in use.

The goal of these alternative check dam projects was to provide drinking water, deliver irrigation water to agricultural lands, and protect homes and

farmland from floods. Thousands of people benefited from the projects, both directly and indirectly, through job opportunities.

Meanwhile, over the past two years, the ministry has also completed 79 concrete, stone, and soil-based check dams in Badghis, Zabul, Baghlan, Sar-e-Pol, Farah, Kunduz, Balkh, Herat, Nimroz, and Paktia, at a cost of over 317 million Afghanis from the budget of the Islamic Emirate.

## Spring brings tourists to scenic Dasht-e Abdan

KUNDUZ (TOLOnews): Dasht-e Abdan, a scenic destination in Kunduz province of Afghanistan, is currently hosting hundreds of visitors from across the country.

Some visitors have called on the caretaker government to provide more facilities for tourists at the site.

With its lush greenery in spring, Dasht-e Abdan attracts crowds annually.

Hazratullah, a resident of Zabul visiting Kunduz, told TOLOnews: "We came to Dasht-e Abdan for a picnic. It's a beautiful place, and many people are here, including visitors from the north and Kandahar."

Mohammad Ebrahim, from Kabul, said: "This area refreshes the soul. We traveled from Kabul just to experience Dasht-e Abdan."

A group of youth from Badakhshan told TOLOnews they plan to stay overnight at the site. They praised the overall security in the country and called for further support for tourism.

Najibullah Sharifi from Badakhshan said: "It's clear to everyone that Dasht-e Abdan is a spiritual and beautiful location. Security here is excellent."

Tayyeb Nabizada, also from Badakhshan, said: "Security in Dasht-e

Abdan is fully ensured. We are enjoying our time here peacefully."

Meanwhile, Kunduz police command assured that security for both domestic and foreign tourists is fully in place.

Police spokesman Jumauddin Khaksar said: "Our forces have ensured the safety of Kunduz and Dasht-e Abdan. We will not allow anyone to disrupt public order."

Due to improved security in recent years, the tourism industry—particularly domestic tourism—has grown. Officials say that thousands of domestic and foreign tourists visited northeastern provinces last year.

## Home gardens help women spur family income

SAR-I-PUL (Pajhwok): In small, unpaved courtyards in the capital of northern Sar-i-Pul province, home gardens have not only enhanced beauty but also afforded women a productive source of income — helping those who once struggled meeting family expenses.

**Carpet weaving to growing vegetables**

Marzia, a 65-year-old woman from the Chaharbagh village of Sar-i-Pul City, spent making yarn and weaving carpets. However, the hard labour and meagre income made life difficult for her.

Three years ago, with the support of a relief organisation, she established a small garden in her courtyard, an initiative that transformed her life.

Now, every morning before sunrise, she walks

through her vegetables, gently touching their leaves with hands — no longer haunted by the carpet-weaving toil.

With a smile of satisfaction playing across her visage, she says: "I no longer need to borrow money from anyone. I sell my vegetables and use the income to cover household expenses. This garden has not only provided me with an income but has also brought me peace. When taking care of the vegetables, I forget all my worries."

Playing a crucial role in her seven-member family's economy, she said: "The organisation handed me gardening tools and vegetable seeds and I did the rest on my own."

"By growing chives, mint, spring onions, radish, coriander, watercress and

lettuce and selling them in the market. I have opened a new chapter in my life."

**Transforming family economy**

For women who previously struggled with economic difficulties, small home gardens have become a source of hope and peace. The cool verdure has not only improved livelihoods but also brought back women's smiles that had faded as a result of financial hardships.

In Chaharbagh village, 50-year-old Shireen established a little vegetable patch in a corner of her courtyard four years back. Currently, the garden helps enrich her family meals besides bringing her a stable income.

Over three months of winter, Shireen earned more than 20,000 afghanis. The woman says she no

longer needs financial support from her husband.

Although she suffers from back pain, Shireen enjoys growing vegetables and occasionally hires a worker for heavy gardening tasks.

"Previously, I was always worried and thought so much about non-issues. Unemployment leads to stress and mental pressure. But now that I work in my garden, my mind feels at ease. I am no longer as anxious as before, I feel good and I even visit the doctor less often because this garden's peace has become my medicine," she commented.

**Beefing up household earning**

Masooma, a 22-year-old woman who started gardening two years ago, now earns 200 afghanis daily by selling vegetables. Her husband, a rickshaw driver,

also contributes to the family income.

She explained: "We are a family of six and for households in a weak financial situation, having home gardens is a great blessing. Now, I cover our day-to-day expenses from this garden and it is a good job for me."

At the same time, Malika Sadat, a female entrepreneur in Sar-i-Pul, believed when women had income sources, many family problems could be resolved.

"In every home where a woman contributes to the family economy, there is less domestic violence because most problems stem from financial woes," she argued.

Sadal urged the government and society to create more job opportunities for women to help address social and economic chal-



lenges.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Department

announced 137 women had been helped with setting up home gardens this year in Sayyad and Sancharak dis-

tricts, as well as the provincial capital.

Damla Sharifullah Mosadeq, director of the department, said the women had become part of the workforce.

He recalled similar pro-

grammes were implemented in previous years, benefiting many women.

Efforts would be made to expand these initiative to create more income opportunities for women, he promised.





KARACHI: Afghan national going back to their country from Sohrab Goth.

# Security withdrawal from former CMs

PHC ask Chief Secretary to submit reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Aurangzeb has issued a notice to the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in response to a petition filed by former Chief Minister and Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians (PTIP), Mahmood Khan, challenging the withdrawal of his security, on Wednesday.

The counsel Shumail Ahmad Butt advocate argued that the security provided to former CM Mahmood Khan was withdrawn by the current Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur, soon after he took office.

The lawyer stated that the Chief Minister had ordered the withdrawal of security from all former Chief Ministers, suggesting that they could hire private security guards if needed. It was mentioned that the security for the former Chief Minister had initially included two guards, which was later increased to eight guards, the lawyer argued. The caretaker government had submitted a response in the case, and now the elected government is required to provide its response, he added.

PHC divisional bench comprising of Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Aurangzeb has issued a notice to the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, seeking a response to the petition.

**Court seeks reply KP govt reply within 14 days LG Mayors plea:** The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has ordered Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to submit response within 14 days to a petition filed by various city mayors and nazims seeking extension of three years, which would be facilitated through a legal amendment. Furthermore, they argued the

court to grant financial and administrative powers provided by the law, on Wednesday.

The petition filed 29 mayors including president Local Council Association Himayat Ullah Mayar and other nazims while Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued the case before court. The provincial government, on the other hand, was represented by Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shah Faisal Otmankhel.

The petitioners argued that they were directly elected by the people through local government elections, but the provincial government had failed to provide them with the necessary powers and funds to effectively govern their respective areas.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Kamran Hayat, heard the case. The petitioners' lawyer argued that the provincial government had repeatedly violated the Local Government Act. The petitioners are seeking an amendment to Section 79 of the Local Government Act, which would extend their term by three years and provide them with the necessary powers and funds to govern their areas effectively. The petitioners alleged that despite their direct election by the people, they were not provided with the necessary powers and funds to perform their duties.

The counsel claimed that the provincial government had failed to fulfill its promises, made during the local government elections, to provide them with the necessary support and resources. The petitioners also argued that the provincial government's actions had hindered their ability to serve the people. PHC directed Advocate General to provide arguments on the maintainability of the petition at the next hearing, scheduled on 24th April.

## Mafia opposing reforms in Mines, Minerals Act, says Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that a mafia is actively working against the proposed amendments to the Mines and Minerals Act in an attempt to sabotage the Chief Minister's reform agenda.

In an official statement, Barrister Dr. Saif said that the Chief Minister is determined to liberate the Mines and Minerals sector from the clutches of this mafia. However, the mafia is resorting to propaganda against the proposed amendments to fulfill its nefarious objectives.

He further remarked, "We do not recognize the illegitimate federal government—how, then, can we surrender provincial authority to it? There is no question of handing over provincial powers to those who have stolen the public mandate." Barrister Dr. Saif reaffirmed that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a clear stance: the government will not bow to any mafia in any sector.

He emphasized that the purpose of the proposed amendments is to strengthen and make the Mines and Minerals sector more profitable. These reforms are part of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's broader reform agenda. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is confidently implementing reforms across all sectors. "The proposed amendments are not a secret," he added. "They will be presented in the provincial assembly, and the opinion of the opposition will also be sought."

## Repatriation of Afghans continue

F.P. Report

CHAGHI: Under the mutual decision of the Government of Pakistan and the Government of Balochistan, the process of repatriating Afghan refugees is ongoing.

In Chaghi district, illegal Afghan refugees are being systematically sent back to their homeland, Afghanistan. During this process, the district administration is providing various facilities to ensure that the refugees do not face any difficulties.

This process is being supervised by Deputy Commissioner Chaghi, Atta-ul-Munim. Special arrangements have been made for temporary accommodation, food, medical aid, and other necessities for the refugees. Atta-ul-Munim stated that the refugees are being sent back to their homeland under humanitarian compassion and Islamic brotherhood, and everyone is being treated with dignity and respect. The arrangements for food and medical facilities in the temporary shelters have been made foolproof. According to government directives, efforts are being made to complete this process peacefully and smoothly.

Atta-ul-Munim also appealed to the local population to cooperate with the administration to ensure that there are no obstacles in this process. At the district-level transit camp, hundreds of refugees are being provided with facilities daily, making their dignified return possible. The local administration, Levies, police, and other agencies are working day and night to ensure the success of this process.

measures taken by the person to protect water. The next hearing of the case will be on April 11. Meanwhile, following the orders of Lahore High Court, Deputy Director Environment Ali Ejaz has launched awareness notices to Lahore residents banning vehicle washing in homes, under which a fine of Rs10,000 will be imposed with legal action for violation.

Deputy Director of Environment Ali Ejaz also appealed to citizens to conserve water. In view of the severe shortage of water, an immediate ban has been imposed on washing vehicles with clean tap water, the text of the awareness notice said. The aim of the ban is to preserve water for human needs like cooking and cleaning. It was requested in the notice that citizens use alternative methods for washing vehicles by using recycled water or water collected in buckets.

for wasting water on the office order. The court wrote in the decision that DG PDMA expressed concern about water shortage in rivers due to climate change.

The court ordered in the decision that PDMA will have to play a central role in avoiding drought, and the PDMA should take proactive steps in Punjab with other departments to save water. It is the need of the hour to implement a Corona-style water emergency in Punjab.

The court ordered them to submit a summary to the cabinet for implementing a water emergency. The implementation of the emergency will further strengthen the PDMA in its measures for water conservation. A committee of focal persons from various departments should be formed for water conservation. The court ordered that the focal person should also submit a report on the

# LHC suggests imposing water emergency

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has suggested imposing a water emergency like the coronavirus to avoid drought. The court has also ordered action against those wasting water in homes and society administrations.

The court has also ordered the water emergency matter to be presented to the cabinet and a report to be submitted at the next hearing. Justice Shahid Karim has issued a written order of the previous hearing regarding smog prevention.

According to the decision, the Cooperative Department should also fine those who wash cars in homes and the society administration. A complete ban should be imposed on wasting clean water by installing pipes in homes. The Cooperative Department should also write the amount of the fine

## Korangi blaze enters 12th day

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Authorities have decided to seek assistance from a globally renowned US-based firm to help extinguish the underground fire caused by a suspected natural gas pocket in Karachi's Korangi Creek area, sources told media.

Amid growing concerns over the fire that has been ablaze for the last 12 days, the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) has formed a technical committee to assess and contain a natural gas pocket found in Karachi's Korangi Creek area. The committee includes Chief Operating Officer of Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) Sikandar Ali Memon, along with Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) Chief Geologist Khurram Shahzad, Production Manager Habibullah

Chohan, and General Manager of Pakistan Refinery Limited (PRL) Abdul Majid as members.

According to sources, the technical committee has also resolved to purchase two state-of-the-art gas detection metres to accurately measure the presence and concentration of natural gas in the area, the sources added. Additionally, experts are also evaluating the option of filling the boreholes with cement as part of the fire containment strategy, they added.

Moreover, the PRL was instructed to set up a camp office on its premises immediately, and all energy, petroleum, and service companies operating in Sindh were urged to provide the necessary technical and logistical support to assist with firefighting and remedial operations. The blaze's flame, as opposed to its earlier blue

shade, has now turned reddish, indicating incomplete burning and the emission of carbon monoxide.

The fire, which started after a 1,200-foot-deep bore was drilled at the site on March 29, has led to concerns about the type and volume of gas responsible for the blaze. A preliminary chemical analysis, as per PPL sources, of the water breaking out of the ditch at the site of the ongoing fire in the Korangi area revealed the presence of hazardous chemicals.

The initial report, compiled following water sampling from the fire site, has detected excessive quantities of benzene, toluene, and tetrachloroethylene. The report states that tetrachloroethylene was measured at 33 microgrammes per litre, significantly above the standard limit of 5 mg.

# IHC reserves verdict on Omar Ayub's plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday reserved its decision against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)'s proceeding to investigate the alleged rigging in NA-18 Haripur the constituency of opposition leader Omar Ayub.

Acting Chief Justice Sardar Saffraz Dogar heard the case. During the hearing, the Election Commission's lawyer Sajjeel Swati and Omar Ayub's lawyer appeared in the court. Omar Ayub's lawyer said that the ECP has to decide on the petition within 60 days, adding that after 60 days the proceeding of commission is illegal.

Omar Ayub had won the election by a huge margin, he said, adding that the opposing candidate also accepted Omar Ayub's victory and even tweeted about it. The ECP's lawyer said that Omar Ayub himself had first complained about rigging on the election day. When Omar Ayub won in the evening, the opposing candidate also filed a complaint about rigging. When the commission started proceedings on both petitions, Omar Ayub came to the High Court in a writ.

The lawyer requested that the commission had not yet issued any action or order and prayed the court that the petition be dismissed. The court after hearing the arguments of the lawyers of the parties, the decision was reserved on Omar Ayub's petition.

Omar Ayub had challenged the Election Commission's action and the July 10, order to investigate rigging in NA-18 Haripur.

Former Chief Justice Aamir Farooq had issued a stay order on the Election Commission's action. The court had sought responses from the Election Commission, the NA-18 Returning Officer, the District Returning Officer and Babar Nawaz Khan.

**Court suspends show-cause notices to DG passport, director NAB:** The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday suspended the contempt of court show cause notice issued to the DG Immigration and Passport and Director NAB, and also sought a writ petition and a complete record of the contempt of court proceedings from the court of Justice Babar Sattar.

A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif issued

an order suspending the show cause notice. In the order, the court said that the objection to the appeal of the DG Immigration and Passport is removed and the hearing should be scheduled for today.

The single bench issued a show cause notice of contempt of court on the petition to remove the name from the travel ban. The petitioners' lawyer said that the order to include the name in the travel ban list was suspended and final relief was given instead of interim. He said that the Directorate General Immigration and Passport acted on the NAB's request. He did not include the name by picking and choosing on its own.

The contempt of court notice issued to the DG Immigration and Passport is illegal. The court said that the appellant's point is worthy of consideration, so notices are issued to the parties seeking their response. All records of the office application and contempt of court proceedings should be attached to this appeal. A show cause notice was issued on the recommendation to include the name in the travel ban list in continuous violation of court orders. Justice Babar Sattar had issued show cause notices to the DG Immigration and Passport and Director NAB.

## Balohistan's issues: Nawaz assures 'active role'

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday met National Party (NP) chief Dr Abdul Malik Baloch and assured him of playing an "active role" in addressing issues plaguing Balochistan.

The NP delegation included former secretary general Senator Jan Muhammad Buledi, MNA Pullain Baloch, NP Vice President and former MNA Sardar Kamal Khan Bangulzai, provincial president Aslam Baloch, Central Vice President Shahwaz Khan Bizenjo, and NP Punjab President Malik Ayub. Abdul Malik briefed the former three-time prime minister on the current situation in the province, with particular reference to the recent wave of arrests and ongoing protests.

Talking to journalists after the meeting, Dr Baloch said the two leaders held a detailed discussion on the situation in Balochistan. "I have requested Nawaz Sharif to play his political role for Balochistan, and he assured me of doing so," he added.

Dr Baloch, who also served as former Balochistan chief minister, said that he had invited the PML-N president to visit Balochistan and hold meetings with local political leaders. "Nawaz expressed readiness to visit the province, and his visit is expected soon," he noted. He said

Balochistan's issues were political in nature and required political solutions. "We strongly condemn the killing of innocent people in Balochistan," he added.

Dr Baloch also recalled Nawaz's active political engagement during the 2013 tenure and hoped for similar involvement moving forward. "We told Nawaz that his role is crucial in resolving the situation in Balochistan." The former CM said that Nawaz Sharif and other party leaders welcomed them warmly in line with traditional hospitality.

Meanwhile, PML-N leader Khawaja Saad Rafique, for his part, said the meeting focused on the current situation in Balochistan. "Dr Baloch urged Nawaz to step forward politically, and Nawaz Sharif gave a positive response," he added.

The meeting follows protests across Balochistan and Karachi over the recent arrests of Baloch Yakjehti Committee's (BYC) leadership and a crackdown on its sit-in in Quetta. BYC chief organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch and 16 other activists were arrested from their protest camp at Quetta's Sariab Road on Saturday, a day after they claimed that three protesters died due to police action. Mahrang, among 150 individuals, including prominent leaders from the BYC, are facing charges encompassing various serious offences such as terrorism, incitement to rebellion, and murder.

## US issues new curbs on Iran as Trump seeks talks

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The United States issued fresh sanctions targeting Iran on Wednesday, the Treasury Department said.

Two days after President Donald Trump announced the US planned direct talks with Tehran over its nuclear program.

The US Treasury Department in a statement said it imposed sanctions on five Iran-based entities and one person based in Iran for their support of Iran's nuclear program with the aim of denying Tehran a nuclear weapon. "The Iranian regime's reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons remains a grave threat to the United States and a menace to regional stability and global security," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in the statement.

"Treasury will continue to leverage our tools and authorities to disrupt any attempt by Iran to advance its nuclear program and its broader destabilizing agenda," Iran's mission to the United Nations in New

York did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The action comes after Trump made a surprise announcement on Monday that the United States and Iran were poised to begin direct talks on Tehran's nuclear program, but Iran's foreign minister said the discussions in Oman would be indirect. In a further sign of the difficult path to any deal between the two geopolitical foes, Trump issued a stark warning that if the talks were unsuccessful, "Iran is going to be in great danger."

The Treasury said those targeted on Wednesday supported two previously sanctioned entities that manage and oversee the country's nuclear program, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and its subordinate, the Iran Centrifuge Technology Company (TESA). Among those targeted was a company that manufactures aluminum for TESA, an AEOI subordinate responsible for a number of nuclear reactor projects and a company tasked with developing thorium-fueled reactor technologies.

US Energy Secretary Chris Wright said on Tuesday that Iran can expect tighter sanctions if it does not come to an agreement with Trump on its nuclear program. Efforts to settle a dispute over Iran's nuclear program, which it says is purely for civilian use but which Western countries see as a precursor to an atomic bomb, have ebbed and flowed for more than 20 years without resolution.

Trump tore up a 2015 deal between Iran and six world powers - the US, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany - during his first term of office in 2017 and talks since then have stalled. Iranian officials told Reuters on Tuesday that Tehran is approaching weekend talks with the United States over its nuclear program warily, with little confidence in progress and deep suspicions over US intentions.

## 113 reported killed in nightclub roof collapse

SANTO DOMINGO: A catastrophic roof collapse at an iconic nightclub in the Dominican Republic's capital, Santo Domingo, has left at least 113 people dead, including a provincial governor and former Major League Baseball (MLB) pitcher Octavio Dotel, according to reports.

More than 255 other people are injured and emergency crews are still working to find survivors amid the rubble as families of the victims gathered at the site searching for their loved ones, authorities said on Wednesday. Efforts to rescue those trapped under the debris are continuing, though the exact number of people inside the Jet Set nightclub at the time of the collapse remains unclear, the director of the country's Emergency Operations Center, Juan Manuel Mendez said.

Local media said the roof collapsed during a concert attended by politicians, athletes and other prominent figures. Between 500 and 1,000 people were reported to have been in the club when disaster struck. Among the victims was Nelsy Cruz, the governor of the northern Monte Cristi province, President Luis Abinader said. Cruz is the sister of former baseball player Nelson Cruz, a seven-time MLB All-Star.

Former MLB pitcher Dotel died en route to a local hospital after being pulled from the debris, a spokesman for the nation's Ministry of Sports said. The Dominican Republic's Professional Baseball League expressed "its sorrow over the death of former pitcher Octavio Dotel" and concluded, "Peace to his soul".

Dotel, 51, debuted for the New York Mets in 1999 and played until 2013 for more than a dozen teams, including the Houston Astros, Oakland A's, New York Yankees, Chicago White Sox and Detroit Tigers. "Thinking about our people in the Dominican Republic," Carlos Mendoza, the manager of the Mets, said in a news conference. "We have a lot of the Dominican community in the baseball world."

The cause of the roof collapse remains under investigation. Iris Pena, a woman who had attended the concert, told the Dominican channel SIN how she escaped with her son. "At one point, dirt started falling like dust into the drink on the table. I asked the security officers ... whether the ground had shaken," she said.

"A stone fell and cracked the table where we were, and we got out," Pena recounted. "The impact was so strong, as if it had been a tsunami or an earthquake." Dozens of family members flocked to hospitals for news. "We are desperate," Regina del Rosa, whose sister was at the concert, told SIN. "They are not giving us news; they are not telling us anything."

At the scene, meanwhile, helicopter images revealed a large hole where the club's roof once was. A construction crane was helping to lift some of the heavier rubble as men in hard hats dug through the debris. The authorities have issued a call for Dominicans to donate blood. "We are rescuing all the people we can save alive and recovering those bodies we find along the way. — Aljazeera