

Police check post attacked
F.P. Report

DERA ALLAH YAR: Unidentified attackers hurled a hand grenade at the Mir Hassan police check post in Dera Allah Yar, Balochistan. However, the assault resulted in no casualties. Following a swift response from the police, the assailants managed to escape the scene. The grenade attack occurred at the police check post, prompting an immediate counteraction by the officers present.



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MINSK: President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a bilateral meeting at Independence Palace of Belarus.

TTP commander killed in Dir operation

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A senior commander of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), who was involved in multiple attacks against Pakistani security forces and a deadly 2010 bombing targeting American troops, was killed in an intelligence-based operation in the Lower Dir district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa late on Thursday night, officials said.

The militant, identified as Hafizullah alias Kochwan, held a degree in computer science and was reportedly involved in orchestrating a series of cross-border attacks in the Lower Dir and Chitral regions between 2009 and 2014. According to security officials, he was killed following a tip-off regarding the movement of TTP fighters at Shekolai area in the jurisdiction of Timergara police station after an exchange of fire.

In one of the most high-profile attacks attributed to Hafizullah, he allegedly masterminded a 2010 suicide bombing that targeted American military trainers affiliated with the Dir

Scouts, a wing of the Frontier Corps. The trainers were en route to inaugurate a girls' school in the restive Maidan area shortly after the conclusion of a military operation in the Malakand Division when their convoy was ambushed. Three US troops were killed in the blast. Local residents said the exchange if firing continued for more than half an hour during which two militants were killed. One dead was identified as Hafizullah alias Kochwan while the second body remained unidentified.

At the time, TTP spokesperson Azam Tariq claimed responsibility for the attack, stating it was carried out in retaliation against what the group alleged were Blackwater contractors operating in the region. A security official said, "This evening, an intelligence source reported the presence of a TTP tashkeel [group of fighters] in the area. Security forces signaled them to stop, but they attempted to flee on motorcycles."

Hafizullah's body has been identified, while identification of the remaining

individuals is underway", the official said. Security operations in the tribal districts have intensified in recent months amid concerns over cross-border militancy and a resurgence in TTP activity.

President Asif Ali Zardari has praised the bravery of the security forces following the successful operation in the Lower Dir district, which resulted in the killing of two terrorists.

In a statement here today, President Zardari lauded the intelligence-based operation that led to the elimination of two terrorists, including a high-value target. He stated that the eradication of the terrorist leader is a significant achievement for the security forces.

The President emphasized that operations by the security forces will continue until the complete elimination of terrorists. The President welcomed the successful operations of the security forces in eradicating terrorism and reaffirmed the national resolve to fully eliminate the menace of extremism.

Minister hints at another cut in electricity tariff

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Aurangzeb on Friday hinted at further drop in electricity tariff.

Talking to media persons in Islamabad, Senator Aurangzeb said "We are working on slashing power tariff further by July or before." The minister said the government is also working on providing some relief to the salaried class in the federal budget. "We do not want to disclose any details regarding relief to the salaried class at this stage. First, we will discuss all these details with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)," he added.

The Finance Minister said the government had received 98 percent suggestions from the government and private sector, relating to Budget 2025. Aurangzeb said "We will convey our concerns after examining the proposals and take a decision."

Aurangzeb expressed the hope that the IMF Board will approve Staff Level Agreement with Pakistan in May 2025. The minister said that Pakistan achieved all the targets set by the IMF. He admitted that some targets were achieved with delay but they were chased down.

Meanwhile, the Power Division has notified reduction in electricity prices by Rs 1.71 per unit, effective from April to June 2025.

According to the notification issued here, the price cut, made possible through additional federal government subsidies, will benefit all consumers except lifeline consumers. It is worth mentioning here that following PM Shehbaz Sharif's recent announcement regarding a reduction in electricity prices, an official notification from the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) issued confirming the price cut under the quarterly adjustment.

The notification offers consumers relief of up to Rs3.02 per unit. The adjustment, applicable for the October-December 2024 quarter, will reduce electricity rates by Rs1.90 per unit, effective from April to June 2025.

The Frontier Post

Minsk to accept 150,000 skilled Pakistani workers

MINSK (APP): Pakistan and Belarus on Friday agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in several areas including agriculture, food security, industries, trade, and defence.

During a meeting between Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko here, the two sides also agreed to send 150,000 skilled Pakistani youth to Belarus to contribute to nation-building efforts of Belarus. A comprehensive strategy in this regard will be formulated soon. During the meeting, the two sides agreed to jointly work for the manufacturing of the agriculture machinery. Similarly, it was also agreed to expand cooperation in manufacturing of electric buses and food security.

Furthermore, the two leaders also reiterated their resolve to boost defence and business to business cooperation. The two sides discussed matters relating to trade, investment and regional issues and expressed satisfaction over the recent progress on all aspects of the bilateral relations. The prime minister said that a significant progress in various sectors was made after the eighth meeting of Pak-Belarus joint ministerial commission held last year and visit of Pakistan's inter-ministerial delegation to Belarus.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in his social media post on X highlighting his meeting with the Belarusian President said "We reviewed the entire spectrum of our bilateral cooperation, including political, trade, investment, and people-to-people contacts".

"Highlights of our talks included the agreement to send over 150,000 highly skilled Pakistani workers to contribute to nation-building efforts in Belarus;

enhanced cooperation in agriculture and food security; and potential joint ventures in the manufacturing of electric buses and agricultural machinery—steps that will help transform our enduring bond of friendship into a lasting partnership", he added. He added "President Lukashenko and I share a strong desire to continue elevating Pakistan-Belarus cooperation to new and greater heights".

Meanwhile, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko hosted a dinner at his farm house here in honour of President Pakistan Muslim League(N) Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar attended the dinner. President Lukashenko expressed extraordinary warmth for prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. The prime minister thanked President Lukashenko for the warm welcome and hospitality.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also held a high-level meeting with Chairperson of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus, Natalya Kochanova, and Chairman of the House of Representatives, Igor Sergeyenko. The discussions focused on enhancing parliamentary relations between Pakistan and Belarus, with both sides emphasizing the importance of continued inter-parliamentary engagement. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation across all sectors, recognizing the vital role that parliamentary diplomacy plays in advancing mutual interests.

President Zardari tests negative for Covid

F.P. Report

KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari is showing signs of improvement in his treatment, his physician Dr Asim Hussain told media on Friday. "The president has tested negative for COVID-19 on a rapid test but remains under the care of infectious disease specialists," Dr Asim said in a phone conversation with media.

The physician added that the president was undergoing physiotherapy as part of his recovery, according to his physician, and the president was expected to remain hospitalised for another couple of days. Doctors have not yet allowed any visitors to meet President Zardari during his stay.

President Zardari tested positive for COVID-19 on April 2 and has since remained in isolation under close medical supervision, with multiple diagnostic tests conducted to monitor his condition. On April 3, Dr Asim updated the media that the president was receiving medical care at a private hospital in Karachi under the care of infectious disease specialists. "... the recent blood test reports are promising," Dr Asim informed the media.

"Infectious diseases department experts examine President Asif Zardari three times a day," he said, adding that shifting him from Nawabshah to Karachi for treatment was a good decision.

Apex court weighs in on use of AI in judicial system

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark ruling on the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the judicial system of Pakistan, the Supreme Court (SC) on Friday recommended to develop formal guidelines to regulate its (AI) application.

The ruling called upon the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NJPMC) and the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP) to deliberate and jointly prepare comprehensive guidelines outlining the permissible uses of AI in the courts across the country. The 18-page ruling authored by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, underscores the role of AI as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for human judges, adding that it can enhance efficiency but "must be welcomed with careful optimism".

In the ruling, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah noted that while AI tools such as ChatGPT and DeepSeek etc can significantly enhance judicial capacity, however, they cannot replace human reasoning, discretion, and empathy, which are central to the justice system and its delivery. The verdict stated that the guidelines must delineate clear boundaries, ensuring that AI is used only as a facilitative tool and never in a manner that compromises or may compromise human judicial autonomy, constitutional fidelity, or public trust in the justice system.

It has been noted in the verdict that judges globally have acknowledged using AI for assistance in legal research and drafting, and AI can support legal research, generate drafts, and improve language precision, but must not be allowed to undermine human autonomy in judicial rulings. The verdict, while citing global

JCP approves Justice Ali Baqar Najafi's appointment as SC judge

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) has approved the appointment of Justice Ali Baqar Najafi from the Lahore High Court as a judge of the Supreme Court (SC). The decision was made during a meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan, chaired by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, which lasted for two and a half hours. The appointment was approved on a majority basis. The commission also considered the names of five other senior judges from the Lahore High Court for the position; however, no one was finalised. In addition to Justice Najafi's appointment, the Judicial Commission of Pakistan also approved the appointment of four new members to the Judicial Commission. According to sources, Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqir, Justice (retd) Nazir Lango, Justice (retd) Shoukat Aziz Siddiqui and Justice (retd) Shakirullah Jan have been nominated as members of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan.

instances, pointed out that judges in the United States, Colombia and Pakistan have already experimented with tools like ChatGPT for drafting decisions, though under strict human oversight.

According to the verdict, Pakistan's own Federal Judicial Academy (FJA) has introduced 'Judge-GPT' to assist around 1,500 district judges with case research and drafting under a regulated framework. The verdict, however, cautioned against 'automation biases' and AI hallucinations, where AI generates fabricated or incorrect information, and stressed that such tools must never be viewed as conclusive or infallible.

The verdict called upon the judges to must always verify AI outputs, ensuring that all decisions remain transparent, explainable, and contestable. It stated that 'a courtroom is not a site for algorithmic governance but a space for reasoned and principled deliberation, where delegating core adjudicative functions to AI

would amount to misconduct and violate due process.

The ruling recommends that any framework developed must preserve judicial independence, constitutional fidelity, and public trust. The ruling affirmed that AI can help reduce delays and improve administrative efficiency, such as in case' allocation. However, the verdict reiterated that core judicial responsibilities must remain exclusively with human judges. Justice Shah called the use of AI a "promising path to operational reform, provided its adoption remains grounded in principled constitutional limits".

"Although AI may yield significant advantages its adoption likewise generates pressing ethical considerations that necessitate rigorous examination, the verdict noted. "Therefore, the responsible use of AI in judicial systems must be grounded in a robust framework of constitutional, ethical, and international legal principles", the verdict added.

KP cabinet takes various decisions for welfare of masses

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet took a number of decisions with regard to the welfare of the general public in Health, Education, power supply and Public Health, Tourism, Environment, Sanitation, Energy & Power sectors.

The marathon meeting of the Cabinet was held here on Thursday which was presided over by the Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and attended by the cabinet members, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries, Senior Member Board of Revenue, Administrative Secretaries and Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Cabinet approved Rs. one Billion as Supplementary Grant for the Scheme "Provision of Free Textbooks and School Bags in Merged Districts" and directed the concerned authorities to prepare a schemes for the provision of schools bags to all school going children starting from those out of school children being in rolled during the ongoing campaign. The Cabinet stressed the importance of basic education for

children and reiterated their resolve to ensure provision of basic education facilities to each and every child of the Province. It was held that on the one hand the timely printing of textbooks will be ensured while on the other hand its quality further improved, efforts made to reduce its costs and also enable the Education Department clear the outstanding dues on priority basis.

The cabinet approved revision of cost of Missing Basic Facilities under Conditional Grant Program and Revision of expenditure ceiling of Parent Teacher Council in PTC Guidelines. With this decision the annual expenditure limit for PTC has been increased from Rs.05 million to Rs.07 million. It also emphasized the transparent utilization of such PTC funds.

It also approved the restoration & enhancement of Grant-in-Aid for Deeni Madaris/ Darul Ulooms in the Province and released a sum of Rs.100 million for the purpose.

The cabinet approved the revised ADP Project of "University of Engineering and Applied Sciences Swat" at a total revised cost of Rs.

3636.50 million and its re-naming as University of Computing Sciences Swat. It has been decided that the main campus of the University will be urgently completed to shift UE&AS from a rented building to the main campus during the current financial year.

In the Health sector, the Cabinet approved the launching of a new initiative of Sehat Card Transplant & Implant Scheme. Under this Scheme the Provincial Government will bear the cost of bone marrow, liver and kidney transplant cochlear implant of all such patients from the Province without any discrimination. The high cost of such treatment was actually not covered by the famous Sehat Card Scheme of the PTI government.

The cabinet granted a waiver to the Health Department from procedure for lease of Local Government property for construction of civil dispensaries in Polio related Super High-Risk Union Councils of Peshawar. It also approved a grant of Rs.30 million to the Khyber Medical University for the establishment of KMU Institute of Nursing Sciences in

D.I.Khan.

It also approved a supplementary grant of Rs.189.65 million for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority. As a cost saving measure the cabinet approved the merger of the Governor's Inspection Team (GIT), with the Provincial Inspection Team (PIT). Since the merger of FATA and the amendments in the Universities Act, 2012, GIT had become redundant necessitating the merger.

The Cabinet approved the appointment of the Finance, Technical and HR members of the Board of Directors of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Transmission and Grid System Company. The cabinet approved the construction of the remaining part of the Northern Section of the Peshawar Ring Road from Warsak Road to Nasir Bagh Road. On this occasion the Chief Minister also directed to link the said road with the Industrial Estate Hayatabad. It also approved the retendering of the construction of four bridges of Khyali in Charsadda, Matra, Michni and Kababiyani in Peshawar.

Gandapur announces setup of a state-of-the-art Innovation Hub

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has announced the establishment of a state-of-the-art Innovation Hub at the provincial level as a major step towards promoting working spaces and the development of Information Technology in the province. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Innovation Hub will be set up within the premises of the University of Peshawar.

The decision was taken during a joint meeting of the Higher Education and Information Technology Departments chaired by the Chief Minister. The meeting was attended by Special Assistant to CM on Information Technology Shafqat Ayaz, Secretary IT Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Higher Education Kamran Afridi, and other relevant officials. During the meeting, officials briefed the Chief Minister on various aspects of the proposed Innovation Hub.

It was revealed that the hub will comprise 22 private offices, two large event halls, a conference room, a boardroom, two committee rooms, and two co-working spaces. The facility will utilize the building of the existing incubation center at the University of Peshawar. Once operational, the Innovation Hub is expected to generate an annual income of up to Rs. 60 million for the university. It will serve as a multi-purpose IT center, offering a conducive environment for students, freelancers, and private IT companies, particularly startups and entrepreneurs. All necessary facilities and services for startups and entrepreneurship will be available under one roof.



Sharjeel condemns Irfan Siddiqui's remarks on PPP's opposition to canal projects

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that Senator Irfan Siddiqui's remarks about the PPP are condemnable. He added that Senator Irfan Siddiqui is either ignorant or uninformed and should read the Constitution. If Irfan Siddiqui has not read the Constitution, then he is unfit to hold a seat in the Senate and should refrain from mocking the public's mandate.

Addressing a press conference in Karachi, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, responded to recent remarks made by Senator Irfan Siddiqui. He stated that Senator Siddiqui claimed in an interview that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had never opposed the construction of canals, and then made a reference to the President. In response, Memon clarified that the PPP has consistently opposed such projects, citing that in 2021, the party passed a resolution against the Ratha Canal; in 2022, it passed another against the Greater Thal Canal Phase II and the Jalapur Canal. Following these resolutions, the Sindh government raised its concerns in the Council of Common Interests (CCI), including in July 2022 when it opposed the Cholistan Canal.

He emphasized that the Chief Minister of Sindh has written multiple letters to the federal government on this matter. "If Senator Irfan Siddiqui does not remember, we can send him copies of those letters," he remarked. "We have unanimously passed resolutions in the Sindh Assembly. If such resolutions are not considered an official form of protest, then perhaps he should consider stepping down."

Criticizing Siddiqui's understanding of the Constitution, Memon said, "You are sitting in the Upper House—don't you know the constitutional role of the President?" He added that a few members of the PML-N often make uninformed statements, seemingly unaware of constitutional provisions.

He further noted that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had clearly communicated the party's opposition to the canal project to the Prime Minister on the highest platforms. Additionally, the President, during his address to the joint session of Parliament,



affirmed that no such project would be supported.

"The PPP has maintained a clear and unequivocal stance on the issue of water—this is not a secret," Memon said. Condemning Senator Irfan Siddiqui's statement, he urged the PML-N leadership to educate its members on the PPP's position and discourage them from making such misleading remarks.

He stated that the Apex Committee meeting reviewed the repatriation of illegal immigrants to their home countries. He emphasized that special laws regarding illegal immigration exist around the world—no one is permitted to reside illegally in any country. Since April 1, a total of 991 immigrants have been deported from Sindh, including 476 men, 179 women, and 336 children. Currently, 220 individuals remain in the camp awaiting deportation. Additionally, thousands of immigrants have voluntarily returned to their home countries. These operations will continue on a daily basis.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Sindh government has taken strict notice of the unauthorized use of police blue lights on vehicles, tinted windows, and public display of weapons. In addition to the police, the Rangers have also been empowered to take action. He urged the public to comply with the law to avoid legal consequences. Furthermore, it has been decided to implement a joint checkpoint system in the border areas between provinces.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Apex Committee meeting included a detailed discussion on the misuse of social media. It was decided that strict action will be taken against individuals who engage in misconduct online or contribute to a hateful environment. The Sindh government, through the Home Department and the Home Secretary, in collaboration with the FIA Cyber Crime

Wing and the National Response Center for Cyber Crime, will take action against social media accounts involved in spreading hate or misusing digital platforms.

He said that some private restaurants in Karachi were damaged during recent incidents. While everyone has the right to express their emotions, no one should act in a way that harms Pakistan. Taking the law into one's own hands is unacceptable. It is the responsibility of the state to make major decisions and enforce the law.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that since November 2024, there has been a sudden rise in road accidents across Sindh. In response, the Chief Minister of Sindh has formed a fact-finding committee to investigate the causes. He emphasized that heavy traffic and motorcycles have long been operating in the city, but recent developments have prompted decisive action.

The Sindh government, under the Chief Minister's direct supervision, has initiated a comprehensive crackdown on traffic violations in Karachi. Over the past three days alone, 250 heavy vehicles—including trucks, trawlers, and water tankers—have been seized for violating traffic laws or being physically unfit for operation.

He highlighted the penalties for non-compliance with traffic safety regulations, noting that the fine for a first helmet violation is Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,500 for a second offense. "It's better to invest in a Rs 2,500 helmet than pay fines or risk your life," he remarked.

In addition, the Sindh government has made it mandatory for all heavy, light, and public transport vehicles to be equipped with trackers, dash cams, and underrun protection devices. The speed limit for heavy vehicles in Karachi has been set at 30 km/h. Sudden drug testing for drivers has also been made compulsory, along with comprehensive checks on

their physical and mental health. Since November, 603 fatalities have been recorded due to road accidents—160 of which involved heavy vehicles.

Sharjeel Inam Memon also criticized certain political parties for attempting to politicize the issue over the past few days. "They have been making hateful statements and using an inflammatory tone in an attempt to pit brother against brother," he said. "The Sindh government has sent a clear message: strict action will be taken against anyone trying to incite unrest. Those who attempt to exploit these incidents for political gain or to instigate riots will not be spared." He concluded by warning those trying to revive what he described as "dead politics": "That era is over. You cannot hold this city hostage, and you cannot destroy public property through mischief."

He stated that the murder of journalist AD Shar, who was killed in Khairpur, was due to personal reasons rather than his journalistic duties. During the initial investigation, his close friend, journalist Niaz Dasti, also known as Niaz Badami, was arrested. Bloodstains were found on his clothes. The victim's motorcycle was recovered about one kilometer from the crime scene. Sindh Police apprehended the suspects involved in the murder within two days. A total of five men and one woman have been arrested in connection with the case. The perpetrators of the slain journalist will be brought to justice.

In response to a question, he asked why those who had threatened to burn and surround the press conference are now silent and not coming forward to help the people. He said they incite others and use them to fuel violence.

In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Pakistan Peoples Party had already presented a resolution on the canal issue in the National Assembly. At that time, PTI walked out of the session under the pretext of a boycott. On April 10, PTI submitted a separate resolution on the same issue. Since our resolution is already in place, PTI should support it.

In response to another question, he stated that, politically, everyone has the right to hold rallies, but no one has the right to resort to violence. Anyone who engages in violence will face legal action.

KP, Punjab Governors discuss strong coordination

LAHORE (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi met with Punjab Governor Sardar Salim Haider Khan on Friday during a one-day visit to Lahore.

The meeting took place at the Governor's House, where the two dignitaries discussed the prevailing political situation in the country, inter-provincial harmony, and other key national matters.

Both governors emphasized the importance of strong coordination between the federal and provincial governments to address public issues more effectively. They also discussed challenges related to the economy, public welfare projects, and initiatives aimed at promoting national unity.

During the meeting, Governor

Salim Haider extended an invitation to Governor Kundi to visit Attock in the near future.

Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi held a meeting with Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) Senior General Manager North, Taj Ali Khan, and General Manager Projects, Khuram Ayub, at the Governor House Lahore. The discussion focused on gas supply to Dera Ismail Khan and progress on various development projects in the province.

A detailed exchange took place regarding the installation of Town Border Stations (TBS) in Korai and Kotla Saidan, with emphasis on the availability of necessary equipment for the installations. Matters related

to the approval of new gas connections in areas with pre-laid pipeline networks were also reviewed.

Governor Kundi and SNGPL officials further discussed the approval of new gas connections in Dera Ismail Khan city. The Governor highlighted that since Dera Ismail Khan is among the gas-producing districts, the provision of gas connections should be initiated without delay.

Governor Kundi stressed the importance of timely completion of these gas supply projects for public welfare and urged all concerned departments to play their roles efficiently. He said that following the installation of the TBS, gas supply operations in Korai will commence, benefiting the local population.

Suspected robber gunned down in Karachi

KARACHI (PTI): One suspected robber was gunned down and five others arrested during four separate encounters in Karachi, according to police reports here on Friday.

An encounter at Paracha Graveyard in Qasba Colony, Orangi Town, led to the death of Rano Khan Somroo. Law enforcement recovered a pistol and a car from the scene. The deceased was transported to a medical facility, with further investigations proceeding.

At Saddiqabad in Lyari Nadi, police engaged a motorcycle-lifting gang, resulting in the capture of Fazal Hussain, Shoukat, and Mulazim Hussain. Three pistols and two stolen bikes were seized. One suspect managed a getaway, while the injured were sent to a hospital as investigations continue.

Paper scanning App of BISEL plagued

LAHORE (APP): The 9th grade Islamiat compulsory paper under the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISEL) Lahore was plagued by technical problems on Friday.

The question paper scanning App used by the board suddenly collapsed, due to which the bundles of papers had to be opened without scanning at the examination centers. Under normal circumstances, before opening the bundles of question papers, specific codes are scanned by the Distributing Inspector (DI), resident inspector and superintendent to ensure the security of the papers.



KARACHI: Activists of PTI solidarity rally with palestine peoples. —INP Photo

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RE-TENDER NOTICE

1. Sealed Tender/Quotations are invited for the contract of DHQ Teaching Hospital Mardan for the year 2024-2025. All Drugs/Medicine, Surgical, Disposable & Non Drugs items registered with Drugs Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) have to be supplied under this contract as per Drug Act 1976.
2. Sealed Tender/Quotations are required from Retail Drugs Medicine License holders having Pharmacy/Medicine Store near by DHQ Teaching Hospital Mardan.
3. The Medical Superintendent DHQ Teaching Hospital Mardan has required Tender/Quotation for the contract for the year 2024-2025 which should reach the undersigned along with Call Deposit.

S.NO	Name of Tender	Call Deposit
1	Purchase of Zakat Medicine	90000/-
2	Through single stage one envelope Rule 6 (2a).	

The quotation for purchase of Zakat medicine should reach to the undersigned through Registered Post on or before 28-04-2025 upto 10:00 AM and will be open on the same date at 11:00 AM by the authorized committee in the presence of all Tenderers/representatives. The contract will be awarded on high discount. The prices will be valid upto 30.06.2025. The successful bidders will ensure the availability of his representatives in Main Pharmacy of the Hospital to supply medicine in time. The medicine will be supplied according to the demand. No medicine will be accepted without prior permission. In case of non-registered supply of medicine, the contract can be cancelled. The supply should start immediately. In case of nonpayment the supply will not be stopped. Any deduction will be according to Govt. policy. The bills should be submitted on monthly basis in account section. All items should be provide on the signatures of the Medical Superintendent, Ward Incharge & Incharge Pharmacist, according to patient need. The quotation will not be accepted without post. Successful bidders should fill the Judicial stamp papers worth Rs.100/- regarding acceptances of all terms/conditions. The shop will remain open for 24 hours for supply of medicine in case of any emergency. Successful bidder will be bound to provide his home and shop telephone Nos to main pharmacy. Black listed firms will not be considered for the year 2024-2025.

Any Tender/Quotation will not be accepted without call deposit duly verified from the concerned bank. Tender form with the price of Rs. 500/- non-refundable and other Terms/Conditions will be available in the duty hours.

The details and other TOR.s of the tender could be obtained from Medical Superintendent office during duty hours. INF(P) 1327/25

Medical Superintendent,
DHQ Teaching Hospital, Mardan.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING (Single Stage Single Envelope E-Bidding)

The C&W Highway Division Mardan, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites Electronic Bids from eligible firms/contractors in accordance with KPPRA Procurement Rules 2014, amended upto 15/09/2021 on Single Stage Single Envelope procedure for the following work(s).

Sl No.	Name of Work	Required PEC category	Bid Security i/c Stamp Duty Rs. (M)	Tender Fee @ 0.03%	Period of completion	Last date and time of submission of E-bids	Date & Time of Opening of Financial Bid
A	240317-District Development Initiative in Mardan						
1.	Construction of road at village Muslim Abad Jewar Zareen Abad Road UC Mian Essa.	C-6 & above	218750/-	3000/-	As per Work Order	06-05-2025 at 12:00 pm	06-05-2025 at 12:30 pm

Complete Detail of Bid Security in shape of CDR i.e Bank name, CDR Number(s) and Date(s) must be submitted electronically alongwith E-Bid on the E-bidding System. 1. All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under Finance Act, 2013 Act No. XXI of 2013. **AS per KPPRA Notification No. S.R.O (14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22/6058-71 dated 10/05/2022**

i. The Contractors quoted their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security @2% only of Engineer Estimate. ii. The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineer's Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers Estimated Cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. iii. Similarly, a contractor quoted bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on engineer's Estimated cost equal to be differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer's Estimate along with detailed rate analysis". In case of more than 20% below bids. If the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and/or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly iv. In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the of the procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof. v. The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. vi. After commencements of work by the successful bidder, the procuring entity may replace Additional Security with a Bank Guarantee of the same amount from the scheduled bank, if the already deposited security is not in the form of bank guarantee. vii. The Additional Security shall be released to the contractor in four installments i.e 1st installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project 2nd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project 3rd installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project. 3. Venue of Bids opening is office of the Executive Engineer C&W Highway Division Mard Road Mardan

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
C&W Highway Division Mardan Phone # 0937-9230038

www.khyberpakhtunkhwa.gov.pk Our Faith Corruption Free Pakistan INF(P)1312/2025

CM orders skills training programme for transgenders

LAHORE (APP): On the orders of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a comprehensive technical skills training programme has been launched for the transgender commu-

nity, aimed at empowering them to earn a livelihood with dignity, rather than resorting to begging.

In the first phase, 1,600 transgender individuals will receive training in various

fields through the Technical Skills Training and Punjab Skills Development Fund Programmes. The programme will focus on imparting IT and freelancing skills to foster economic independence.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION AND WORKS DEPARTMENT							
NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING (SINGLE STAGE SINGLE ENVELOPE E-BIDDING SYSTEM)							
C&W Department (C&W Division Hangu) Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electronic Bids from the eligible firms/bidders in accordance with KPPRA Procurement rules 2014 on single stage single envelope procedure for the following works:							
S. No.	Name of Work	Required Category of PEC	Bid Security i/c Stamp Duty	Bidding Entry Free @ 0.03%	Period of Completion	Last Date and Time of submission of Financial Bid	Date of opening of Financial Bid
1	AOM&R of residential / Non Residential Buildings in District Hangu for the year 2024-25 Sub Head: i. C&W Offices ii. Rest House Samana-I iii. Rest House Samana-II iv. Solar System for Samana Rest House	C-6 and Above	Rs. 69000/-	Rs. 1000/-	As per work order	06.05.2025 12:00 PM	06.05.2025 12:30 PM
1. Bid documents and instructions to bidders can be downloaded upto one day prior to the opening date from C&W Web Site (www.ced.gkp.pk) & KPPRA Website and can be seen in the office of undersigned on any working day. 2. As recommended by Sub Committee of the Cabinet notified vide Section Officer (Confidential) Chief Minister's Secretariat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar No. SO(C)/CMS/KPK/2021/2828-21 Dated: 05.04.2021. Non Refundable Bidding Entry fee @0.03% of Tender Cost alongwith 02% Earnest Money and stamp Duty separately (In Original) should accompany the financial Bid. 3. The bidders should be enlisted with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority as per KPPRA Rules. 4. A copy of the technical proposals in the required format is mandatory and to be uploaded as part of E-Bidding before submitting financial bids. 5. Scanned copy of bid Security shall be submitted electronically alongwith technical bid on E-Bidding system. 6. Venue of Bid opening is C&W Division Hangu. 7. The Contractors quoting their bids upto a limit of 10% below Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security @2% only of Engineer Estimate. 8. The Contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineer's Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. 9. Similarly, a Contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer's Estimate alongwith detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted alongwith such non responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2 lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. 10. In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bid is, in view of the procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof. 11. The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. 12. After commencements of work by the successful bidder, the procuring entity may replace the Additional Security with a bank guarantee of the same amount from the scheduled bank; if the already deposited security is not the form of bank guarantee. 13. Any bidder who provides incorrect information shall stand disqualified and will be debarred. 14. Electronic bid valid for Ninety (90) days. 15. Bid security 1, 2nd and 3rd bidders will be retained by the employer till approval of bid.							
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, C&W DIVISION HANGU							INF(P)1345/25

ufone 4G Public Notice			
Dear Customers, Following will be the prices of below offers effective 17 th April 2025.			
Offer	Price	Offer	Price
Social Champion Offer	Rs. 400	Social Plus Offer	Rs. 650
Monthly Facebook Offer	Rs. 400	Social Extreme Offer	Rs. 700
Social Hero Offer	Rs. 600	Social Infinity Offer	Rs. 1200
For more information, please visit www.ufone.com or call our helpline number 333. Terms & Conditions apply.			

CORRIGENDUM

This corrigendum is being issued with reference to advertisement No. INF (P) 1096/25 titled Purchase of GPS/GNSS Survey Equipment for the Project Settlement of Land Records in Districts Dir Lower, Dir Upper and Tehsil Kalam (Swat), published in Daily Aaj Dated: 19.03.2025 in Frontier Post Dated 20.03.2025. The Technical Bid will now be opened on Date: 22.04.2025 at 12:00 PM instead of 14.04.2025, 12:00 PM.

1st Floor IRC Building Murad Abad Near Taroan Shadi Hall Jamrud Road Peshawar. Phone # 091-9221227, Email: pd.dirsettlement@gmail.com

www.khyberpakhtunkhwa.gov.pk Our Faith Corruption Free Pakistan INF(P)1358/2025

NOTICE TO MCB BANK CUSTOMERS

All customers are informed that MCB Bank Ltd. **Serai Naurang Branch (1638)**, currently located at Shop No. 1-8, Sahibzada Plaza, Al-Marof Kabir Market, Serai Naurang, District Lakki Marwat will be shifted to a new location on **12-May-2025** at the following address:

MCB Bank Limited
Serai Naurang Branch (1638)
Khata No. 216/204, Khatooni No. 316 to 317, Khasra No. 433, 962/434, Main Bazar Serai Naurang, Tehsil Serai Naurang, District Lakki Marwat.

Contact No. 0969-352357, 352457
Mobile No. 0326-8281638

Letters for the same have been dispatched to all account holders.





PESHAWAR: Female activities of Jamaat-e-Islami leading a protest demonstration against Israeli atrocities in Gaza.

CS vows to improve healthcare services, MTI performance

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah chaired a high-level meeting to review the performance, funding, and healthcare services of Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) across the province.

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders, including the Secretaries of Finance, Health, and Law, the Chief Minister's Focal Person on MTIs, and other senior officials. The primary focus of the discussion was to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of MTIs while maintaining their administrative autonomy.

During the meeting, participants discussed the establishment of clear performance evaluation criteria for MTIs, the implementation of third-party audits, and regular evaluations to ensure quality service delivery.

The Chief Secretary underscored the importance of optimizing public health services without compromising the autonomy of these institutions and ensuring judicious use of public funds.

The forum also reviewed various aspects of the province's healthcare system, including Sehat Card services, ICU bed capacity, emergency services, and budgetary challenges faced by MTIs. Strengthening the oversight role of the Healthcare Commission in both public and private hospitals was also discussed.

The Chief Secretary directed the strengthening of the Health Sector Reform Unit and called for consultation with sector specialists to broaden and improve its mandate. It was decided that a special audit of the MTIs would be conducted through the Healthcare Commission. The move aims to promote transparency and accountability while preserving the autonomous status of the institutions, ultimately contributing to the improvement of healthcare services in the province.

BISP data reveals funding inequality: Muzzammil Aslam

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Muzzammil Aslam has expressed concerns over the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) data, stating that developed provinces like Punjab and Sindh are benefiting more, while underdeveloped regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan are receiving less support.

Advisor on finance issued statement on Friday said that Punjab, being a developed province, receives the largest share, with 4.6 million beneficiaries and Rs 161 billion in funding, while Sindh, with 2.6 million beneficiaries, receives Rs 100 billion and 0.5 million beneficiaries, respectively, receive significantly less funding, with Rs 72 billion and Rs 18 billion allocated.

Muzzammil Aslam attributes poverty in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the merger of FATA, where 75 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Mr. Aslam questions whether Punjab and Sindh's poverty is due to poor governance or inaccurate BISP data. He emphasizes the need for extra consideration for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, given their security concerns and poverty rates.

PIC maintains its honor in recertification audit for 2025

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Institute of Cardiology (PIC), Pakistan's first ISO QMS certified public sector hospital has proved the ever best international standard hospital to get its successful recertification Audit for this year (2025).

According to the spokesperson PIC went through the ISO 9001:2015 Recertification Audit. During the two days audit, PIC was found to have documented, implemented, and maintained its Quality Management System in compliance with the requirements of ISO 9001:2015.

She said that evidence of compliance was successfully verified, and continuation to the certification was recommended by the audit team.

PIC has honored the first ever public sector hospital in the country to be ISO 9001-2015 certified in 2022. Maintaining the ISO standards of the hospital involves the tireless efforts of all the hospital staff, Spokesperson Riffat Anjum says.

The Dean of PIC Prof. Dr Shahakar Ahmad Shah, Medical Director Dr Ali Raza and Hospital Director Qazi Saad appreciated its staff for their continuous hard work, dedication, and commitment towards PIC.

The KP's first cardiac hospital providing the best national and international standard health care not only in the province but to all patients of the country. Peshawar institute of cardiology inaugurated December 2020.

Meeting held to finalize appointment of VCs of govt universities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting was held to expedite and finalize the process of appointing Vice Chancellors in 19 public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The meeting was chaired by Mina Khan Afridi, Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Archives, and Libraries.

The meeting was attended by Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Faisal, Secretary Law, Secretary Higher Education, and other senior officials from concerned departments. Discussions focused on ensuring that the appointment process is transparent, merit-based, and completed within the stipulated time frame.

The meeting also addressed the completion of pending project of the Engineering University at Swat and the rationalization of colleges across the province, among other key reform initiatives.

On this occasion, Minister Mina Khan Afridi stated that We are committed to strengthening our universities and aligning the higher education sector with a unified, transparent policy framework.

He further added we are eliminating corruption, favoritism, and nepotism from the system and enforcing merit and transparency at all levels. Minister reaffirmed that the provincial government's commitment to improving governance in educational institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education, and providing students with access to world-class academic facilities.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Syed Shahab Ali Shah presiding over on funding, performance and healthcare services of MTIs across the province.

Hundreds join women-led march to protest Israeli strikes in Gaza

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a powerful display of solidarity, hundreds of women and children took to the streets of Peshawar on Wednesday as part of a "Save Gaza" march organized by the women's wing of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI).

The demonstrators condemned Israel's ongoing military campaign in Gaza and denounced U.S. support for what speakers described as a brutal campaign of violence against Palestinian civilians.

On the call of Ameer JI Pakistan, Hafiz Naeemur Rehman a protest, which began at the Hashtnagri and proceeded along the city's busy GT Road before culminating at the Ashraf Road commercial hub, drew large crowds holding Palestinian flags, placards, and banners. Many bore slogans decrying Israel's airstrikes and criticizing the international community's silence. In a symbolic gesture, children at the front of the procession carried mock coffins wrapped in white shrouds, representing Palestinian children killed in the conflict.

Leading the march were senior JI leaders, including Abdul Wasi, Ameer Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Central, Bahrullah Khan, Ameer Peshawar district, former parliamentarians, members of the women's wing, and other party officials also joined the procession.

Addressing the crowd, Abdul Wasi labeled the Israeli bombing campaign as "the worst form of barbarism" and held the United States responsible for shielding Israel diplomatically.

"Under America's patronage, Israel has turned Gaza into ruins and continues to massacre innocent civilians," he said.

Speakers expressed that in the past 18 months of military attacks, more than 60,000 Palestinians have been killed and over 100,000 wounded. Independent sources, they added, suggest the death toll may be 40 percent higher. Among the martyred, they said, are at least 17,000 children and 12,000 women—figures they compared to atrocities carried out by historical tyrants.

The protest also condemned Israel's recent resumption of airstrikes during the holy month of Ramadan, following a short-lived ceasefire aimed at facilitating a prisoner exchange with Hamas. "Gaza is now gasping for its last breath," Bahrullah Khan said.

Criticism was also directed at Muslim-majority governments for what the speakers called "criminal silence" in the face of repeated violations of ceasefire agreements. They warned that if the U.S. fails to restrain Israel, JI will stage an indefinite sit-in protest outside the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad on April 20.

Workshop held to address extremism in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A three-day consultative workshop on countering violent extremism was organized under the auspices of the Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in a collaboration with United Nation office on Drug and Crime. The workshop brought together national and international experts, researchers, and academics from universities across the province and country who are actively working on the subject of violent extremism.

Distinguished participants included Mr. Kamran Afridi, Secretary of Higher Education KP; Mr. Muhammad Daud Khan, Secretary of Public Health Engineering KP; Dr. Ayaz, Chief Coordination Officer of the Centre of Excellence; Dr. Muhammad Qasim, Director General of the Centre; Dr. Irfan, Manager CVE; as well as prominent experts and scholars from diverse backgrounds.

Addressing the workshop, Secretary Higher Education Mr. Kamran Afridi highlighted that the department is developing a comprehensive ten-year roadmap to guide youth in the right direction.

He emphasized that the Centre of Excellence is playing a pivotal role by connecting colleges and universities across the province to instill constructive thinking among the younger generation. He further added that performance indicators are being introduced for institutions working under the Higher Education Department to measure their progress and ensure they are operating in the right direction.

Secretary Public Health Engineering Mr. Muhammad Daud Khan remarked that the eradication of extremism is not the responsibility of a single institution, but rather a collective national cause.

PHC acquits two doctors in medical negligence case

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Salahuddin acquitted two doctors, Dr. Muhammad Asghar and Dr. Zamir, who were accused of medical negligence leading to the death of a patient, Abdul Rahman, during an operation at Hangu Hospital, on Friday.

The doctors were alleged to have administered excessive anesthesia, resulting in the patient's death. The victim's family filed a complaint, and the doctors were subsequently charged and convicted by the Sessions Court in Hangu, fined Rs 23 lakh.

The Health Department conducted an inquiry, which formed the basis of the conviction.

The doctors' lawyer, Danyal Asad Chamkani advocate argued that the allegations were baseless and that there was no concrete evidence to support the conviction.

The Peshawar High Court, comprising Justice Salahuddin, acquitted the doctors, stating that the conviction was based solely on the Health Department's inquiry report, which was insufficient.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jihan, on Friday, inaugurated the upgraded gymnasium facility of the Peshawar University Teachers' Association (PUTA) during a ceremony held at the university's Teachers' Community Centre (TCC).

The event was attended by Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Naeem Qazi, senior faculty members, and teaching staff. The Minister was briefed on the upgraded sports and fitness facilities now available through the association.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Sports Minister Syed Fakhar Jihan emphasized the importance of promoting physical fitness alongside academic excellence in universities. "A healthy body is vital for a healthy mind," he remarked, highlighting the provincial government's commitment to enhancing educational institutions through comprehensive development initiatives.

He commended the efforts of the Teachers' Association, acknowledging their personal contributions made by faculty members towards establishing the gymnasium.

He described it as a commendable initiative and extended his gratitude to all members of the association for their dedication to improving staff well-being.

Historic milestone Launch of MSc in Oral Medicine and Diagnosis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a groundbreaking development, Khyber College of Dentistry (KCD) has become the first institution in Pakistan to receive official recognition from the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) for initiating the postgraduate specialty program—MSc in Oral Medicine and Diagnosis.

This achievement marks a proud moment not only for KCD but also for the entire nation, as it opens a new chapter in advanced dental education. This landmark accomplishment would not have been possible without the visionary leadership, unwavering dedication, and tireless efforts of Prof. Dr. Syed Nasir Shah, Dean of KCD. The Department of Oral Medicine and Diagnosis, through its consistent hard work and commitment, also played a vital role in securing this recognition.

Khyber College of Dentistry has always been a pioneer in maintaining excellence, innovation, and leadership in dental education and research. With the launch of this MSc program, KCD once again proves its commitment to setting new standards and pathways for dental health advancement in Pakistan.

This specialized program will not only offer unique opportunities for young dental professionals to pursue higher education and specialization, but it will also usher in a new era for the diagnosis, research, and clinical practice of Oral Medicine in the country.

Teacher Recruitment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa First phase begins with over 80,000 candidates set to appear ETEA completes all arrangements; government imposes Section 144 at exam centers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is initiating the first phase of its recruitment process for 16,454 teaching positions. The written examinations, organized by the Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA), will commence on April 12, 2025.

In this phase, more than 80,000 candidates will compete for 896 vacancies across three teaching cadres. These include 109 positions for CT-IT, for which 26,746 candidates have applied; 494 positions for Arabic Teachers with 30,716 applicants; and 293 positions for Qari/Qaria attracting 32,818 candidates. The exams will take place simultaneously on April 12 and 13 at 20 centers across the province.

ETEA has completed all preparations to ensure the examinations are conducted in a fair, transparent, and peaceful environment.

To maintain order and prevent any unauthorized or suspicious activities, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has enforced Section 144 at all exam centers. This measure aims to safeguard the integrity of the testing process and prevent any unlawful interference.

District administrations have deployed special monitoring teams comprising senior officers at each test center. These teams will oversee the examination process and address any complaints or irregularities on the spot.

In addition, a comprehensive security plan has been put in place by the police. Security personnel will be stationed inside and outside all exam centers.

Entry points will feature security checks, including the presence of female officers and surveillance using advanced technical equipment. Special Branch personnel have also been assigned dedicated duties to ensure a secure and smooth examination process.

In a video message, Executive Director of ETEA Adil Saeed Safi urged candidates to prepare thoroughly and participate with full focus and integrity. He strongly advised against the use of any illegal means, warning that law enforcement agencies are fully alert and that any attempt to cheat or disrupt the process will lead to immediate and strict action.

He expressed hope that candidates would rely on their own efforts, talent, and dedication, and contribute to making the entire recruitment process a success based on merit and transparency.



In brief

Father, son shot killed Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: A father and son shot killed over land dispute in while a pedestrian child was critically injured in the premises of Akbarpura police station while the murders fled the scene after committing the crime. According to First Information Report, the complainant Muhammad Yousaf, his father, Subedar, and brother, Atif, were going to their fields when Maqsood, Shah Saud, and Inayat Ullah, opened fire on them. Yousaf's father, Subedar, died at the scene, while his brother, Atif, was severely injured and later succumbed to his injuries at Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar. A passerby child, Musa, was also injured in the firing and is receiving treatment at Lady Reading Hospital. Police registered a case and started an investigation.

APJEA holds protest F.P. Report

BUNER: On the call of the leadership of APJEA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the judicial employees held strike in Buner against the ongoing cruelty and brutality in Palestine by Israel. On this occasion, APJEA District President Asad Khan and General Secretary Abdul Qayyum expressed that the land of Palestine is the artery and red line of all Muslims. They added the world's silence on the cruelty and brutality of Israel in the Holy Land for a long time is condemnable. The speakers demanded that the United Nations should play its role in solving the Palestinian issue in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and make sure an immediate ceasefire. They have warned that Muslims are ready to go to any extent to protect Al-Quds.

JI holds rally F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Jammata-e-Islami (JI) arranged rally in solidarity with Palestinians to condemn Israeli atrocities and bombing of Gaza at Takhtbhai in which people from every of walk of life participated in large number, on Friday. JI PK-60 Emir Nauman Yousaf, former member provincial assembly Mian Nadir Shah, former tehsil Nazim Muhammad Tahir Nawaz, Amjad Ali, Haji Khalid Mohmand, Haji Yousaf, Allama Sadiq, Sardar, Wahab Yousafi, Kashif, Saddam, Liaqat Ali, Habib-ul-Hajat and Mushtaq advocate addressed the participants. The speakers called Muslim world to act jointly against Israel to stop genocide of Palestinians and pave way for comprehensive boycott to compel international community to stand for Palestine. They added that collective efforts will compel International community to stand for International law and to hold Israeli leadership accountable for genocide.

Three killed

PIR MEHAL (INP): At least three youngsters were killed and one more was injured in a road accident involving a motorcycle and rickshaw in Pir Mehal. According to details, the accident occurred in Kharianwala area near Pir Mehal where a speeding motorcycle collided with a rickshaw, as a result three youngsters died on the spot and another sustained injuries. Police and rescue teams reached the spot after being informed and shifted the dead and injured to hospital.

Gaza solidarity rally held in Landi Kotal



F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: To express solidarity with the innocent people of Palestine, a rally was taken out at hospital chawk, tehsil Landi Kotal on Friday. On the call of the central leadership, Jamat-e-Islami (JI) Landi Kotal chapter, organized the protest rally that was attended by a number of the party workers and members of civil society.

The marchers were carrying banner inscribed with slogans favoring Palestinian people and the Palestine flags, chanted

against atrocities of Israel forces. Speaking on the occasion ameer JI Landi Kotal, Murad Hussein Afridi, Abdurrauf Shinwari, Imam of Quba Mosque Maulana Rehmatullah and others categorically condemned the Israeli aggression in Palestine and emphasized need of unity among the Muslims.

Had there been any honor and courage left in the Muslims of the world to stop Israeli barbarism in Palestine, they questioned. They stated that the true face of so-called civilized Western powers and the

Muslims regimes supporting Israel has now been exposed and emphasized the need for unity among the Muslims.

They added, "those betraying Ummah by collaborating with Israel are causing irreparable harm, and it is the collective responsibility of the Muslims world to raise voice for Al-Quds and the Palestinian people". It is to be mentioned here that hundreds of Palestinians have been martyred and over thousands injured in aerial strikes, launched by Israel from 18 March to 09 April, 2025.

Setup of National Skill Varsity campus discussed

F.P. Report

BANNU: Chairman Higher Education Commission Pakistan, renowned educationist Professor Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi. Kalam Bibi International Women's Institute Bannu Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Aurangzeb Khan was also present on the occasion. Matters related to the establishment of a campus of National Skill University in Dera Ismail Khan were discussed in the meeting.

The eminent higher education expert Professor Dr. Aurangzeb Khan will be the project director of this project. Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim

Kundi said that we have to play a full role for the promotion of education in the southern districts. He said that Kalam Bibi Institute will play an exemplary role in the field of education and training in this region.

Chairman Higher Education Commission Dr. Mukhtar appreciated the vision of the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and assured him of his full cooperation. In the meeting, matters related to laying an strip at the Gomal University Hockey Ground with the cooperation of the Higher Education Commission and organizing an international level hockey match in Peshawar were also discussed.

TMA achieved goals: Tehsil Municipal Officer

(TMO) Bannu said that officers and officials who have shown excellent performance in providing municipal services, eliminating encroachments and maintaining traffic flow, rehabilitating parks in the city and resolving public problems are the pride TMA, on Friday.

The goals achieved in implementing the orders of the provincial government and the local government department 100 percent in difficult and difficult circumstances will always remain a part of history. He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held in honor of those who have rendered excellent services during Ramazan, Eid and other various events.

Farmers receive horticulture, poultry kits

F.P. Report

ZHOB: In order to modernize farming practices and enhance crop yield in rural Balochistan, farmers associated both with horticulture and poultry farming, received modern agricultural and poultry farming equipment here in Zhob.

With the financial support of the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) have provided hundreds of agricultural and poultry farming kits to male and female farmers under the GRASP project (Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress), which aims at providing facilities to small and medium-sized farmers and poultry breeders at their doorsteps. The distribution was done under the 'Farmers Climate Business School' (FCBS) approach.

The distribution ceremony held at the FAO office was attended by Deputy Director of Livestock and Dairy Development Dr Alla ud Din Kibzai, Deputy Director of Agriculture (Extension) Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Research Officer of Water Management Atta ur

Rehman Mandokhel, master trainer for FAO (Agriculture) Imran Shah, Engineer Shehr Yar Khan of the Asian Development Bank, Livestock Officer Masam Khan Kibzai, master trainer for FAO (Livestock) Dr Karim Dad Babar, Dr Humayun Khan, and male and female farmers in large numbers.

District Value Chain Facilitator FAO Zain ud Din Mardanzai, while briefing the participants about the project, said that state-of-the-art kits have been distributed among the small- and medium-scale farmers from various union councils of the district, including Meena Bazaar, Takei, Garda Babar, Appozai, and Badinzai, so that the farmers could benefit from these modern pieces of equipment and put the agriculture and poultry farming sectors on modern lines.

"The GRASP project aims to strengthen the rural economy, promote food self-sufficiency, and increase the production of small-scale farmers, especially rural women, by empowering them," adding that an important aspect of the project is to provide hands-on training to women in poultry farming, animal husbandry, and agri-

culture to make them economically independent, keeping in mind gender equality.

On this occasion, Deputy Director of Agriculture Jamal Khan Mandokhel, master trainer at FAO Dr Karim Dad Babar, farmers Toti Jana, Abdul Khaliq, Nadeem Jan, Maula Dad, and others, while talking to journalist Rafiullah Mandokhel, appreciated the initiative of the European Union, FAO, and ITC and said that now they will benefit from the modern equipment and hands-on training as well as modern agricultural and poultry farming practices.

They said the GRASP project is a positive step towards sustainable development as it reduces rural poverty and strengthens agribusinesses and entrepreneurship in rural areas. 'Climate Smart Agriculture' and 'Farmers Climate Business School' are the significant models of the project. "The FAO-GRASP project is transforming the lives of rural communities by improving their livelihoods, boosting agricultural productivity, and empowering rural women. The farmers have been trained on modern agriculture, climate-smart farming, and business skills," they added.

Monitoring Officers laud DG M&E

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team of the Planning and Development (P&D) Department expressed heartfelt appreciation to the Director General M&E Usman Zaman for

his tireless efforts in transforming the department into a more efficient, effective, and results-driven unit. His visionary leadership has played a pivotal role in uplifting the performance and morale of the entire team, said a press release issued here on Friday.

Divisional and Districts Staff of M&E System extend special thanks to the Director General of M&E for the provision of electronic equipments and machinery plants including other facilities to the M&E offices around khyber-pakhtunkhwa.

AC to hold Revenue Darbar on 15th



F.P. Report

PABB: Assistant Commissioner Pabbi, Atta Ullah has announced a Revenue Darbar scheduled for April 15th at the Service Delivery Center, on Friday.

This event will take place at 11 am and aims to address public grievances related to revenue issues. The Assistant Commissioner, Tehsildar, and all Patwaris of Tehsil Pabbi to address public complaints during the revenue Darbar.

The primary goal is to resolve revenue-related issues and problems faced by the public on the spot. The Assistant Commissioner has extended an invitation to the people of Tehsil Pabbi through a video message, encouraging them to participate in the Revenue Darbar for resolving their revenue-related issues.

Varsity employees' hold sit-in F.P. Report

LARKANA: Employees Welfare Association (EWA), Larkana University sit-in as protest on 2nd day at the main gate of the university after locking the office, on Friday. EWA president Siraj Ahmed Bhutto, general secretary Abdul Jabbar Chandio and others said that charter of demand in writing was present but unfortunately, the university administration has not taken any action yet.

The speakers claimed that the legitimate problems of the employees have not been resolved, due to which the university employees have become restless. On the other hand, there are many other problems such as medical bills, redundancies of exam duty, overtime for office employees after office hours, and many other problems which are not being solved by the university administration.

They have met with the vice chancellor and other officials of the University of Larkana many times and complained to them about such injustices to the employees, but nothing could be found except complaints, which is a complete injustice. They demanded strongly from the elected representatives of the assembly and the vice chancellor of D University of Larkana that the demands of the employees should be resolved on the basis of priority, otherwise the scope of the protest will be increased.

NH&MP held awareness seminar: Last day in Larkana Press Club, Motorway Police N-55 Sector-2 Larkana organized an awareness seminar, under the "Late arrival is better than no arrival".

The event was attended by SP Motorway Qalib Abbas, DSP Hanif Arif Atiro, DSP Mansoor Ahmed Bughio and other staff members. We are always alert, that's why we give instructions to the people traveling on the motorway to be safe from accidents. Before going on a long journey, get your vehicle checked by a mechanic and wear a helmet.

Facilities reviewed

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naeem Sindhu visited the e-Khidmat Center and conducted a detailed review of the available facilities. He also inspected various service counters, including the 'Apni Chhat Apna Ghar' counter.

The Deputy Commissioner interacted with the individuals present at the center and gathered information about the services being provided to them.

Work on WSS launched in Kohat

F.P. Report

KOHAT: An important development project for the clean drinking water has formally been launched with the funds from Daud Afridi MPA and Shehryar Afridi MNA in the Shakardara Union Council at Barghazi Khurd of PK-91 constituency of Kohat district. This was the long-standing demand of the people of the area. More than 30 houses will be able to benefit from the completion of this project.

The people of the area while welcoming the project, said that the people were facing severe difficulties due to acute water shortage and low pressure in the area for the last few decades. This acute drinking water problem is now going to be solved with the efforts and personal interest of our elected representatives Daud Afridi and Shehryar Afridi. This project will ensure water supply in the area.

The elders and common people of the area thanked Daud Afridi and Shehryar Afridi, saying that they are truly public representatives who understand public problems and are working on merit, keeping in view the needs of each area. They assured their all out support to them in the future.

Schemes approved: A meeting of the District Development Committee (DDC) Kohat was held with Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram in the chair at his office today. The meeting beside others was also attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (F&P), authorities concerned of the Public Health, Irrigation, C&W, Local Government and other concerned departments and institutions.

The meeting in its sitting approved 26 developmental projects including 5 of the Public Health Engineering Department, 1 of PESCO, 2 of the Sports Department, 5 of the Local Government Department, 1 of the C&W Department, 7 of TMA Kohat, 3 of TMA Lachi and 2 of the Irrigation Department.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat directed the authorities concerned to complete the projects in its stipulated time as per the standards, ensure the provision of better services to the public and all the officers to perform their duties efficiently so that the provision of all possible facilities to the public can be ensured.

Law and order situation reviewed: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has chaired the important meeting of the Divisional Intelligence Coordination Committee (DICC) under the Program

"Awami Agenda" of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government, in which a detailed review of the overall law and order situation in Kohat Division was reviewed.

The meeting was attended by the Regional Police Officer Kohat, all Deputy Commissioners, District Police Officers, representatives of the Pak Army and Heads of sensitive agencies. The participants of the meeting given a detailed briefing on security, crime prevention, anti-terrorism measures and making inter-district contacts effective.

Commissioner Kohat, while addressing the meeting, said that close coordination and mutual cooperation between all the institutions are indispensable to maintain an atmosphere of law and order in the division. He issued instructions to the administration and police officers of the concerned districts to make security measures more effective and ensure the safety of lives and property of the people.

The points and recommendations of the meeting will be sent to the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Performance Management and Reforms Unit (PMRU) so that these factors can be taken into account in policy making at the highest level.

Policeman dismissed for links with drug dealers

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Police Head Constable dismissed for alleged ties with drug dealers. In a significant move against internal corruption, District Police Officer Atif Nazir has dismissed Head Constable Zubair Ahmad Ranjha from service after credible allegations surfaced linking him to drug dealers and systemic corruption.

According to official sources, Zubair Ahmad Ranjha, formerly posted at Kassoki Police Station, was reportedly operating as a central figure in facilitating the drug trade within the region. It is alleged that he had long been receiving monthly payments from local drug dealers in exchange for protection and non-interference in their illicit activities.

Further investigations revealed that Ranjha maintained close associations with certain Station House Officers (SHOs), who would repeatedly ensure his posting alongside them, regardless of their transfers. This protection allowed him to operate with impunity, making it difficult for other officials to hold him accountable.

Following the appointment of DPO Atif Nazir, numerous complaints were submitted by citizens, highlighting the alleged misconduct and criminal

collusion of the head constable. Taking swift action, DPO Atif Nazir initiated an inquiry into the matter. Once the allegations were substantiated during the investigation, he exercised his authority to dismiss Zubair Ahmad Ranjha from service.

The decision has been widely welcomed across Hafizabad, with public, social, and business communities lauding the DPO's firm stance against corruption and his efforts to restore integrity within the police force.

Officials have reiterated their commitment to uprooting corruption and ensuring that those entrusted with law enforcement responsibilities are held to the highest standards of accountability and public trust.

Farmers protested against growing unrest in forms of thefts; The growing unrest has been compelled the farmers and landowners in the Vanike Tarar area due to protest against thefts of agricultural motors and solar panels. Residents staged a strong protest against what they termed as the increasing lawlessness in the region, holding the local police accountable for their inaction.

The protestors, comprising mainly of local farmers and agricultural landowners, expressed deep frus-

tration over the frequent incidents of theft, particularly targeting expensive agricultural equipment such as motors and solar panels. They said that these essential tools are vital for irrigation and crop production, and their loss has severely disrupted agricultural activities, which are already under strain due to economic challenges and rising input costs.

Speaking to the media, protestors alleged that despite repeated complaints, the Vanike Tarar Police has failed to take effective measures to curb the thefts or apprehend the culprits. They accused the police of negligence and claimed that the increasing sense of insecurity has left them sleepless and financially burdened. The affected farmers demanded immediate action from the district police authorities.

The speakers called for a comprehensive investigation, the swift recovery of their stolen equipment, and strict punitive action against those involved in the thefts, so as to set a strong example and deter future crimes. The protest reflects growing concerns about rural security and the urgent need for proactive policing in agricultural areas to protect the livelihoods of farmers and landowners.

Girls' school organizes awareness walk



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: For the first time in the region, Government Girls Community Model School Dheri Talash organized an awareness walk on Friday as part of the ongoing school enrollment campaign on the directives of the District Education Department.

The walk was led by Sub-Divisional Education Officer (Female) Ms. Naseem Begum, Assistant Sub-Divisional Education

Officer Ms. Nehar Iqbal, and the headmistress of the host school, Ms. Nargus Begum. Holding banners and placards inscribed with slogans highlighting the importance of education, participants walked along the Dheri Talash road, drawing attention to the cause. The staff and students of the school had made thorough preparations to ensure the success of the campaign.

Speaking at a ceremony held inside the school premises, Ms. Naseem

Begum urged female teachers to play an active role in making the enrollment drive successful. Emphasizing the significance of girls' education, she remarked that an educated mother can better serve her family, community, and the nation at large.

She added that this year's enrollment campaign is in full swing across all girls' schools in the district, with efforts underway to persuade out-of-school girls to enroll through various means.



WARSAW: Poland's conservative party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski attending a memorial service in Poland, during 15th anniversary of plane crash in Russia that killed his brother President Lech Kaczynski.

Kim’s sister denounces denuclearization calls

SEOUL (AP): The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un mocked Washington and its Asian allies for what she called their "daydream" of denuclearizing the North, insisting that the country will never give up its nuclear weapons program.

The statement by Kim Yo Jong, one of the country's top foreign policy officials, was in response to a meeting last week between the top diplomats of the United States, South Korea and Japan where they reaffirmed their commitment to push for the North's denuclearization. Noting that North Korea's goals for nuclear weapons expansion are enshrined in its constitution, she insisted that any external discussions of denuclearization constitute "the most hostile act" and amount to a denial of her country's sovereignty.

"If the US and its vassal forces continue to insist on anachronistic 'denuclearization' ... it will only give unlimited justness and justification to the advance of the DPRK aspiring after the building of the strongest nuclear force for self-defense," she said in comments released by state

media, using the initials of North Korea's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. She said North Korea's nuclear weapons status can "never be reversed by any physical strength or sly artifice." Tensions in the regions have increased as Kim Jong Un continues to flaunt his military nuclear capabilities and align with Russia over President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine. Kim is ignoring calls by Seoul and Washington to resume denuclearization talks.

US President Donald Trump has said he would reach out to Kim again to revive diplomacy, but the North has not responded to that offer. Trump and Kim met three times during Trump's first term, but their diplomacy quickly collapsed over disagreements about ending US-led sanctions in return for North Korea taking steps to wind down its nuclear and missile programs. Kim's foreign policy priority is now Russia, which he has supplied with weapons and troops to help prolong its warfighting in Ukraine. Seoul fears that Kim may receive economic assistance and advanced tech-

nology to develop his arsenal in exchange for its military supporting Russia.

Kim Yo Jong's statement came a day after South Korea fired warning shots to repel a group of North Korean soldiers who had crossed the border. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said about 10 North Korean soldiers, some carrying weapons, violated the military demarcation line in the eastern section of the border. When South Korea issued warnings and fired warning shots, they did not return fire and returned to North Korea. It wasn't immediately clear whether acting president Han Duck-soo discussed the North Korean nuclear threat with US President Donald Trump during a telephone conversation.

Trump said in a social media post that the two leaders discussed tariffs, trade and Seoul's payment for what he called the "big time" military protection the United States provides to South Korea. There are concerns in Seoul that Trump might push South Korea to pay significantly more of the costs for the some 28,000 US troops stationed in the country.

China not being drawn into Ukraine conflict: Kremlin

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Kremlin dismissed comments by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that China was being drawn into the conflict in Ukraine, saying that Beijing has a "balanced position". China warned Ukraine against making "irresponsible" remarks after Zelenskyy said Ukrainian intelligence had revealed at least 155 Chinese citizens were fighting on the side of Russia in Ukraine. Zelenskyy said Russia was recruiting Chinese nationals via social media and that Chinese officials were aware of it.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian called Beijing "a firm supporter and active promoter of a peaceful settlement of the crisis" and said China always attempts to dissuade its citizens from signing up to fight in foreign conflicts. Asked about Zelenskyy's remarks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow was not dragging Beijing into the conflict. "This is not the case. China takes a balanced position. China is our strategic partner, friend (and) comrade," Peskov said. "Zelenskyy is wrong." Russia and China declared a "no-limits" strategic partnership days before President Vladimir Putin ordered tens of thousands

of troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

Meanwhile, China reaffirmed its support for peace efforts in Ukraine and said relevant parties should avoid "irresponsible remarks", in an apparent jab at President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's comment about Chinese citizens fighting there for Russia. Zelenskyy said that Ukrainian intelligence had information about 155 Chinese citizens fighting in Ukraine. He was speaking after the capture of two Chinese nationals in eastern Ukraine, where Russian troops have been advancing.

"I would like to reiterate that China is not the initiator of the Ukrainian crisis, nor is China a participating party. We are a firm supporter and active promoter of a peaceful settlement of the crisis," foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. "We urge the relevant parties concerned to correctly and soberly understand the role of China and to not release irresponsible remarks," he told a regular news conference, without naming Zelenskyy or any other officials.

China, which has declared a "no-limits" partnership with Russia, has tried to position itself as an actor in attempts to negotiate an end to the war. It has refrained from criticising

Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Zelenskyy said Russia was recruiting Chinese citizens via social media, that Chinese officials were aware of it and that Ukraine's security service had compiled lists of names, birth dates and the Russian military units where they were assigned. Zelenskyy also said that Ukraine was trying to assess whether the Chinese recruits had been receiving instructions from Beijing.

Reuters could not independently verify Zelenskyy's claims, which China dismissed as "groundless". Spokesperson Lin reiterated that the Chinese government always requested its citizens to stay away from armed conflict zones, "and in particular to refrain from participating in military action on either side". Zelenskyy decried the deployment of Chinese nationals as Russia's "second mistake" in the war, after what Ukraine and Western countries have described as the dispatch of more than 11,000 North Korean troops to Russia's Kursk region. Russia has made no public comment on Zelenskyy's statements about Chinese fighters and has never explicitly confirmed deploying North Korean troops in its Kursk region.

Russia says future of nuclear arms control with US and others

MOSCOW (Reuters): Senior Kremlin officials said there was little chance of striking a new nuclear arms reduction treaty with the United States soon because there was not enough trust and cautioned that a host of other countries would gain nuclear weapons. The bleak assessment from Moscow comes amid the disintegration of the tangle of arms control treaties which sought to slow the arms race and reduce the risk of

nuclear war, and the swift expansion of China's nuclear arsenal. Asked about the prospects for a replacement to the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, which runs out in February 2026, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was very difficult right now to imagine even starting such talks.

"At the moment, it is very difficult to imagine the beginning of such negotia-

tions," Peskov, who also serves as a deputy chief of staff in the presidential administration, told reporters. To discuss such complex strategic issues, Peskov said, there needed to be a certain level of mutual trust - and that trust had "yet" to be restored between Moscow and Washington but could be if Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump had the political will.

Protesters try to disrupt Poland’s commemoration

WARSAW (AP): Poland's ambassador to Russia said a small group of Russians tried to disrupt a commemoration marking the 15th anniversary of the plane crash that killed Polish President Lech Kaczyński and 95 other people.

The protesters held banners and chanted anti-Polish slogans as Krzysztof Krajewski, the Polish ambassador to Russia, led the event in Smolensk, Russia, where the plane crashed on April 10, 2010, he told RMF FM radio. "They questioned everything, including the war in Ukraine. I heard slogans that were already familiar to me, that Poland is a sponsor of terrorism, that we are falsifying history," Krajewski said told the private broadcaster.

Back in Poland, observances were being held to remember what is widely considered the greatest tragedy in the nation's post-World War II history, one that has led to greater mistrust of Russia and deep divisions within Poland. Immediately after the crash, gestures by Russian President Vladimir Putin created hopes for better ties between Russia and Poland. But Russia's ensuing refusal to hand over the wreckage to Poland has instead engendered greater distrust as fears grow of Russian aggression in the region.

Spain defends closer trade ties with China

MADRID (Reuters): Spain will pursue closer trade ties with China in the interests of its citizens and of the EU, its agriculture minister Luis Planas said, rejecting a US warning that moving closer to the Asian country would be "cutting your own throat".

"We have excellent trade relations with China which we intend to not only continue having, but expanding," Planas told reporters from Ho Chi Minh City, where he was accompanying Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on a trip to Vietnam and, China. Planas had been asked about earlier comments by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who criticised Spanish Economy Minister Carlos Cuerpo's suggestion that Europe should more closely align with China.

"That would be cutting your own throat," Bessent told a banking event in Washington, adding that China would continue to produce too many goods and dump them on markets elsewhere. Sanchez and Planas are heading to Beijing later this week to forge closer economic ties amid the global fallout of US President Donald Trump's tariff policy, seeking to position Spain as an interlocutor between China and the EU and attract Chinese investment.

Trump's punishing tariffs, which the president says are aimed at ending US trade deficits with many countries, have upended the global trading order, raising fears of recession and wiping trillions of dollars off the market value of major firms. Planas said that the way the US was negotiating with trading partners did not appear "respectful". He added that Spain defended its interests within the framework of the European Union, which sought dialogue with the US to resolve differences.

Ukraine says accepting curbs to its military would be red line in talks to end war

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine has told the US that accepting curbs on the size of its armed forces or on its military's overall readiness would be a red line, a senior Ukrainian official said, as Donald Trump strives to negotiate an end to the war with Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said he wants the size of Ukraine's army to be limited. He has also said Kyiv must drop its ambitions to join NATO and that Moscow must control the entirety of four Ukrainian regions it claims as its own. "This is a principled position of Ukraine - no one, and certainly not the aggressor country Russia, will dictate to Ukraine what kind of armed forces Ukraine should have," the senior official, Pavlo Palisa, told Reuters in an interview.

Palisa is a deputy head of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office and was part of the Ukrainian delegation that met US officials for talks in Saudi Arabia last month. A well-prepared Ukrainian military would be Kyiv's best security guarantee against new Russian attacks if and when a ceasefire or peace deal is reached, he said.

"I can guess what the Russian Federation is guided by - maybe they want to prepare, to make it easier for themselves in the future, but no. Our task is to learn the lessons (of the past) well," Palisa added. During a first meeting with US officials in Saudi Arabia, Ukraine agreed to an unconditional 30-day ceasefire pro-

posed by the US after which Washington resumed military aid and intelligence sharing with Kyiv following a brief pause. But Russia said crucial conditions needed to be worked out before a ceasefire could be reached. The sides then separately agreed to halt attacks on each other's energy facilities, but have since accused each other of flouting the agreements. Kyiv says it may hold a new round of talks with US officials next week. Ukrainian officials say they have shared evidence of Russian attacks on energy infrastructure with the United States. Kyiv is honouring the agreement, Palisa said. Trump's administration has pushed for a quick end to the full-scale war launched by Russia in February 2022, but a lasting peace deal appears far from imminent.

Fighting rages on and Ukraine's top general has said a new Russian offensive push is already underway in the northeast of the country. Russia already controls around a fifth of Ukrainian territory. Apart from the matter of its armed forces, Ukraine has said it will never recognise Russian sovereignty over Ukrainian land, though it has publicly acknowledged that it will not be possible to recover some of the territory by force. In addition to maintaining a strong Ukrainian army, Palisa emphasised the importance of security guarantees from Kyiv's US and European partners that could help deter future Russian attacks.

The United States has not committed to providing security guarantees, though some European powers have discussed a "coalition of the willing" that could deploy a troop contingent to bolster deterrence. Palisa said he expected Russia to step up its assaults later this month and in May. The official said he thought Russia would focus its offensive push on the eastern city of Pokrovsk, but could also push around the eastern fronts near Kupiansk and Lyman as well as the southeastern fronts of Zaporizhzhia and Novopavlivka.

"The absolute priority, in my opinion, will now be on the Pokrovsk direction," he said. Russian forces have been trying to encircle the strategically important city of Pokrovsk to advance its goal of taking full control of Ukraine's Donetsk region. Kyiv meanwhile faces uncertainty over the future of US military aid. A lack of new aid could in time impact the supply of missiles for its Patriot air defence systems, as well as its offensive HIMARS and ATACMS systems. Palisa said earlier this month that Ukraine had not yet discussed additional aid with the US, but that the issue could be raised as the ceasefire negotiations continue. Ukraine is investing resources in developing its own air defences, he said, adding that several nations had agreed to transfer licences and technical documentation for the production of "certain equipment" in the country. "The process is moving, and quite dynamically."

France struggles to find new home for two orcas

PARIS (AFP): France is struggling to find a new home for an orca mother and her son after a marine park on the French Riviera closed down over a law banning shows featuring marine mammals. Founded in the city of Antibes in 1970, Marineland closed to the public in January following a drop in attendance and a 2021 law banning orca and dolphin performances from December 2026.

The government, under pressure from animal rights activists, has struggled to find a new home for the park's two orcas, 24-year-old Wikie and her 11-year-old son, Keijo. In February, the park's management submitted a request to urgently transfer the two orcas -- also known as killer whales -- and 12 dolphins to two parks in Spain by mid-April, when the contracts of its employees run out. The management says it is now a matter of "extreme urgency" to find a solution.

But animal welfare groups, who have for years insisted that orcas have suffered at the French marine zoo, say conditions for such animals in Spain would be even worse. Activists argue that such a transfer would violate the spirit of the 2021 law and have called for the creation of sanctuaries where the captive-born animals could live more freely. French Ecology Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher says she has been working with her Spanish, Italian and Greek counterparts to address the problem, but has not been able to find an immediate solution.

In mid-March, the minister suggested that Wikie and Keijo be temporarily moved to Spain until a better alternative is found. Following a lengthy legal battle from the animal rights group One Voice, two experts appointed by a French court released a report this week on the living conditions of orcas at Marineland. One Voice had requested such an assessment in 2019 before the performance ban, and a

court requested the report in 2023.

In the report released, the experts concluded that the park's water and infrastructure complied with the standards and that the shows provided useful distractions and stimuli for the mental health of the captive animals. But it also pointed to health problems among the captive animals. In 2023, an orca called Moana died aged 12 of an infection, while another orca, 23-year-old Inouk, died last year after ingesting a small metal spring. According to the report, in the eight months preceding his death, Moana had been on antibiotics for 107 days, corticosteroids for 31 days, painkillers for 36 days and antifungals for 21 days.

Despite this, the autopsies of the two orcas revealed severe untreated infections. When the animal welfare law was adopted, Berangere Abba, then secretary of state in charge of biodiversity, said the government would be on hand to provide help to find a new home for retired dolphins and orcas. But few people initially responded to a government call for ideas, Pannier-Runacher's office told AFP.

By 2024, her office had finally received five sanctuary proposals, but none of the solutions were immediately operational. Sea Shepherd France has objected to the proposal to move the orcas to Spain, even temporarily. "As soon as the animals are moved to Spain, France will no longer have any control over their destiny", the conservation group said in an open letter to the minister that gathered more than 90,000 signatures. The group offered to pay five million euros (\$5.5 million) to keep the orcas in Antibes until the sanctuaries are ready. Marineland declined to comment on the proposal. "We will do everything in our power to prevent these shameful transfers," Sea Shepherd France said.

Unbearable wait for relatives in nightclub disaster

SANTO DOMINGO (BBC): Máximo Peña had been coming to the Jet Set nightclub every single for the past 30 years. This week, excited to see a concert by the popular Dominican singer Rubby Pérez, he took his wife and his sister. Now all three are buried beneath the rubble of the collapsed discotheque, after the roof caved in part way through the performance, leaving at least 184 dead.

"I haven't heard any news about any of them," says Shailyn Peña. Máximo's 17-year-old daughter as she sits on a wall outside the devastated venue. "It was just another for them. In fact, my dad invited my mum to come too but at the last minute she decided not to go. It was a blessing in disguise."

Behind her as she speaks, a team of rescue workers is meticulously going through the rubble inside the building, listening for the slightest sound of a survivor beneath them. They have been joined by Israeli and Mexican search teams and are using sophisticated heat-seeking equipment to try to locate anyone still alive. Shailyn tells me her cousin is one of the rescue workers, sifting through the debris for her own uncle, which brings her peace of mind that a relative is inside, doing everything in her power to try to track

him down. But the uncertainty and the endless wait for information are becoming unbearable, Shailyn says.

"I feel the urge to just go in there and push aside all the rocks and pull him out. But as much as I want to, I really can't. I just have to sit here and wait it out." For their part, the authorities are doing what they can to keep the public informed, delivering grim updates on the number of dead, which has risen steadily with every passing hour. At regular intervals, a team emerges from the site carrying a body covered by a blanket on a stretcher. Occasionally, although more rarely now, someone is brought out alive, bolstering the hopes of the relatives. The emergency services insist survivors can still be reached in the debris.

"Nothing can be ruled out," said the Director of the Emergency Operations Centre, Juan Manuel Méndez. "We are going to go over every inch of the rubble here to give the families of those caught up in the disaster some kind of closure." The president of the Dominican Republic, Luis Abinader, declared three days of national mourning, a reflection of the scale of the tragedy unfolding at the site. Among those confirmed to have lost their lives in the accident were some well-

known national figures including Pérez himself, two much-loved former baseball players, Octavio Dotel and Tony Blanco, and a regional governor. And alongside them, scores of merengue music-lovers and Pérez fans also died in the collapse.

For as long as there is a feasible chance of success, the authorities' focus remains on the search and rescue operation. However, eventually the questions will turn to the cause of the collapse and government investigators will have to provide meaningful answers to the families in due course. One theory is already circulating outside the venue. Many are pointing the finger of blame at a fire at the nightclub around two years ago. Some fear the blaze structurally weakened the site or that any repairs carried out were insufficient or not up to code. The owner of the Jet Set nightclub, Antonio Espaillet, delivered a video message via social media expressing his condolences and those of "all the Jet Set family", to the victims' relatives.

He also insisted that he and his team were co-operating "totally and transparently with the authorities" over the disaster. Shailyn Peña has heard about the fire at the nightclub and is among those who thinks it played a part.

South Sudan’s main opposition party shows rift

JUBA (AP): Divisions emerged in South Sudan's main opposition party after the detention of its long-time leader, as some voted to replace him with a government minister accused of conspiring with the country's president.

Riek Machar, whose political tensions with President Salva Kiir recently threatened to tip South Sudan back into civil war, remained in house arrest as Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In-Opposition party leaders loyal to him skipped the meeting. Other loyalists have fled the country. The selection of Stephen Kuol Par, South Sudan's minister of peacebuilding, as the party's interim chair came two days after the exiled party deputy suspended him and accused him of conspiring with South Sudan's president to replace Machar. Oyet Nathaniel also suspended three other members, accusing them of fostering disunity. Party members had been warned not to attend meeting.

Par dismissed the suspension, calling it "the joke of the year" and saying the party "cannot be led or take orders from self-exiled leaders." When asked if his appointment was a coup against Machar, Par said it wasn't. He said choosing an interim chair was a way to resolve the party's leadership crisis.

He also appealed for the release of Machar and other senior SPLM-IO members who were detained two weeks ago following deadly violence in the country's north. "This act of detention undermines the principles of peace and dialogue essential for our nation's recovery," Par said. SPLM-IO spokesperson Lam Paul Gabriel in a social media post called Par and others who attended the meeting "betrayers."

Oil-rich South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after a long conflict. The country slid into civil war two years later when forces loyal to the president, an ethnic Dinka, battled those loyal to Machar, an ethnic Nuer. More than 400,000 people were killed. A 2018 peace deal has been fragile and implementation has been slow. The country has never held a presidential election, and the vote has been postponed until 2026. Peace efforts have seen Machar assume a vice presidency role multiple times.

The recent fighting in the north was between government troops and a rebel militia, known as the White Army, widely believed to be allied with Machar. The White Army overran an army base. Government troops responded with airstrikes. Government forces also attacked opposition forces' training barracks outside the capital, Juba.

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Baerbock's controversial UN bid

GERMAN Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's intention to run for the post of president of the UN General Assembly, while she is still in office, has met with a large, consistently negative response from the German public. Baerbock's sudden declaration of interest and subsequent nomination by the German government forced the withdrawal of career diplomat Helga Schmid, who had already been nominated last year. What makes this even more remarkable is that Schmid had already undergone numerous interviews, and her withdrawal was due solely to Baerbock's personal ambitions rather than any objective reason. Germany's partners and other member states in the UN have also failed to understand the process. Former German Ambassador to the UN Christoph Heugens quoted a comment to the effect that such a process was previously only considered possible in authoritarian states.

What is the office about? The president chairs the annual General Assembly, which begins in September. This task of chairing the meeting is shared between the president and her deputies, who have the same rights. It is therefore a rather formal office, which has often also been held as a secondary office, for example by a sitting foreign minister or a permanent representative to the UN. Nevertheless, it brings visibility in the UN system and requires stamina and diplomatic tact, especially when chairing meetings. As the nations rotate, the office is associated with particular national visibility. In 1980, for example, then German Ambassador to the UN Rudiger von Wechmar, performed this task for the Federal Republic of Germany with prudence and aplomb. No special mathematical skills are required to calculate that Germany will probably not be asked to assume the presidency of the General Assembly again for another 50 years.

Why did Annalena Baerbock accept the poor media response to her late candidacy and the ousting of a proven diplomat who had already been nominated and had already prepared herself extensively for the task? First of all, this probably has to do with personal ambitions. Up until the federal elections on Feb. 23, Baerbock had let it be known that she would very much like to remain in the office of foreign minister. After the Greens' election defeat, it became clear that the party would probably no longer be part of the next government. When her election as the leader of the parliamentary group was anything but certain due to the turmoil within the party, Baerbock made it clear that she would be taking a step back in future to focus on her family.

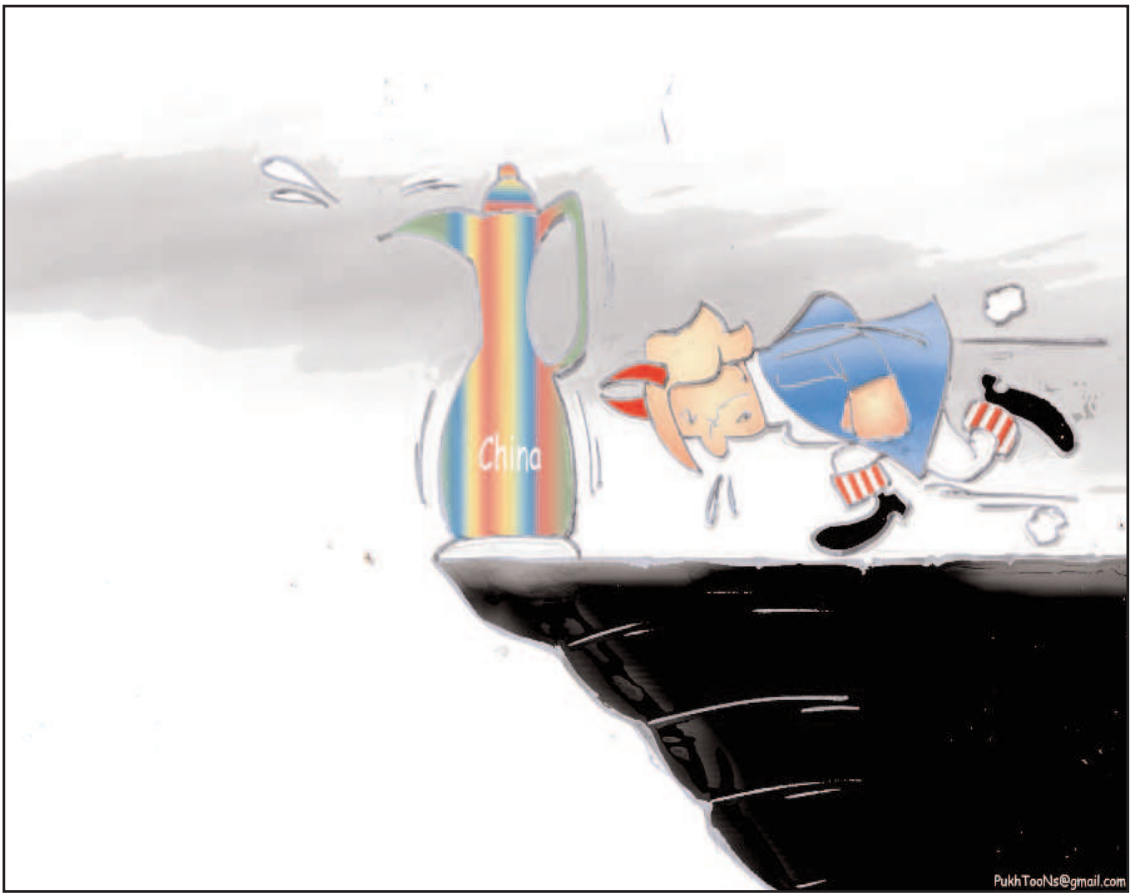
Immediately afterwards, news leaked out that she had been nominated by the German government as a candidate for the UN. These rapid and contradictory statements cast doubt on her political judgment. She comes across as a tactician who is only interested in her own personal gain and who is willing to accept that an experienced diplomat could be damaged by her withdrawal. However, her most recent statements are aimed at damage limitation. For example, the statement that the issue at stake is Germany's profile at the UN, that the personnel decision by the current Federal Government had already been coordinated with the incoming government and that it is not about her personally. All these explanations can be quickly recognized as self-serving justifications. Her vague reference to the United Nations facing an important year also raises questions. This leads to speculation about Baerbock's personal career ambitions, especially considering that next year will see the election of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' successor. Would Annalena Baerbock have a chance of winning this high office? It is to be expected that she could speculate on this office herself. However, a realistic answer is: probably not. Although Germany, admitted to the UN alongside the GDR in 1973, has never held the secretary-general position, it has traditionally been underrepresented in top UN positions. This is also due to the fact that the importance of the UN was downplayed, especially during the government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl from 1982 to 1998, and that other countries -- such as the Netherlands, Australia or New Zealand -- have a much more ambitious profile, especially with regard to UN peacekeeping and humanitarian aid initiatives.

Previous service as a foreign minister is an important but not exclusive qualification; historically, successful candidates have often had extensive diplomatic or governmental experience. For example, Kurt Waldheim, who was elected the secretary-general of the UN in 1972 and later became Austrian federal president, can look back on a career as a diplomat and foreign minister of his country. At that time, of course, he already had a great deal of foreign policy experience and benefited from a situation in which China had finally given up its blockade. The next secretary-general of the UN will also be elected by the Security Council, and each of the five permanent members has the power to exercise their veto. Under the current political circumstances, it is inconceivable that Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov will give his stamp of approval to Baerbock. As a foreign minister, Baerbock has often polarized opinion. As the head of the Federal Foreign Office, she has raised many questions about her character and tactical skills with her ice-cold action of removing an already nominated candidate from the race out of self-interest.

Germany's profile in the UN has become more visible in recent years. The interest in a permanent seat on the Security Council, a declared goal of German foreign policy for many years, is unrealistic in the current world situation. It would be desirable for the next German government's appointment policy for top positions in the UN system to be carried out with a more strategic view and a wiser hand than has been shown by the current rush to nominate outgoing Foreign Minister Baerbock as a candidate for the president of the next UN General Assembly. Baerbock has lacked the instinct necessary for political success, as has the outgoing German government with its personnel decision. Germany's position in the international arena has not benefited from this decision.

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How Trump's backfiring trade war could crash Putin's economy

Jason Corcoran

US President Donald Trump's policies, once seen as a potential lifeline for his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, are finally delivering a harsh and unintended punishment to Moscow. In a stunning irony, Trump's tariff war and reckless trade policies have sent Russian stocks plummeting and oil prices crashing to their lowest levels in four years - potentially sinking the Russian economy in the very way he sought to avoid.

Brent crude is now at just \$63, while Urals, Russia's key export blend, plunged to almost \$50 per barrel. This is far below what the Kremlin needs to break even, delivering a severe blow to an already fragile economy. These rock-bottom prices threaten Russia's strapped budget and all but guarantee another devaluation of the ruble in the coming months. RBK Daily, a Russian business newspaper, said today that the decline in oil prices "poses serious problems for Russia's GDP, the state budget and will inevitably lead to a collapse of the ruble exchange rate."

What Putin hoped would be an opportunity for sanctions relief and economic revival is now shaping up to be a deepening crisis. But the Trump slump isn't just an economic blow - it's also a direct consequence of Putin's refusal to make peace in Ukraine and his continued defiance of international norms.

For years, Putin banked on a close relationship with Trump back in the White House, which could lead to sanctions relief and a quick reintegration of Russia into the global community. He gambled that Trump's admiration for strongmen and America First approach would translate into economic opportunity for Russia. But as the oil market nosedives and Russia's economy begins to fragment, the dream of relief seems to be slipping beyond his grasp. Russian authorities are now scrambling to shield the country from the growing economic storm triggered by new US tariffs, with Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov vowing to do "everything necessary" to minimise the damage.

But the reality is grim: Urals oil has plummeted 25% below the budgeted

level, dropping to almost \$50 per barrel - nearly \$20 lower than expected for this year. The Kremlin is no stranger to the devastating impact of external shocks on Russia's economy. Putin and his finance team will be acutely aware that the last two major economic crises in 2008 and 1998 were both triggered by events beyond its control: the global credit

crunch and the Asian financial crisis. Each time, Russia's economic stability was pulverised by turmoil in the international markets, exposing its extreme vulnerability of its economy to global forces and leading to waves of bankruptcies and bailouts.

With oil and gas revenues making up about 30% of Russia's budget, the slide in energy prices poses a major fiscal threat. This correction in commodities could destabilise the federal budget, particularly as skyrocketing military spending on the Ukraine conflict has already expanded the deficit and drained the nation's rainy-day reserves. Putin's over-reliance on oil prices has always been a risky bet. His administration has failed to diversify Russia's economy, leaving the nation vulnerable to fluctuations in global markets. The slump in oil prices, fuelled by Trump's trade policies, has only

streak since Russia's 1998 debt default. Russian stocks remain largely off-limits for foreign investors due to ongoing sanctions, though there was a brief window of interest during the early days of the current Putin-Trump alliance. Meanwhile, the prospect of a ceasefire in Ukraine becomes increasingly remote. As Russia's economic outlook darkens, Putin is unlikely to pivot towards peace talks or negotiations. His regime, already under siege from economic instability, will not entertain concessions in Ukraine. Rather than pursuing diplomacy, Putin will likely dig in his heels, further entrenching Russia's isolation from the West.

The Trump slump reveals just how fragile Putin's position truly is. The idea that the Russian leader could exploit a cosy relationship with Trump for economic and geopolitical gain has proven to be a

naive miscalculation. With oil prices sinking, sanctions intact, and global pressure mounting, Putin's ambitions of reintegration into the international community are fading fast. What once seemed like an opportunity for Russia to break free from its isolation has turned into another painful reminder of the Kremlin's failures.

Despite the early rhetoric of a reset between Washington and Moscow, the reality has been far different. Trump's wavering stance on Russia, coupled with bipartisan opposition in the US to any form of sanctions relief, has left Putin's economic ambitions in ruins. The Trump slump has exposed the limits of Putin's ability to manipulate global markets and politics. What was once seen as a potential alliance is now turning into an economic albatross for Russia. The economic pain that Russia is now experiencing, fuelled by falling oil prices and the consequences of Trump's tariffs, underscores the reality that Putin's refusal to negotiate in good faith has left him isolated.

The chance of sanctions relief, once a cornerstone of Putin's strategy, is now fading fast. With the US economy riding high on its own energy boom and Trump increasingly focused on domestic political survival, there is little appetite in Washington to entertain any moves toward lifting sanctions. Russian companies, already reeling from sanctions and burdened with trillions in ruble-denominated debt, had hoped for a swift return to international capital markets and re-entry into the SWIFT payments system. But that now seems like an increasingly distant dream.

The irony of the Trump administration unintentionally sinking the Russian economy through sheer incompetence might be the most fitting punchline to his absurd trade war. After all, Trump went out of his way to exclude both Russia and its vassal Belarus from his lengthy list of nations targeted with tariffs. Yet, Russia's over-reliance on oil and gas exports turned it into collateral damage from the broader fallout. In the end, Putin's economic ambitions may be crushed. Not by the sanctions, but by Trump's chaotic blunders.

The Moscow Times

Politics still trumps economics, that's why our times are now so dangerous

Robert Tombs

THOSE who thought that "Davos man" and the World Economic Forum ruled the world have been given a shock by Donald Trump's declaration of economic war on the rest of the planet. His closest and wealthiest allies are astonished and alarmed as billions of dollars evaporate. I don't pretend to know whether this is a gigantic bluff. But in any conceivable interpretation, the deciding factor - as tonight's pause on tariffs showed - is what is happening inside Trump's head. This should make us think again about how the world works.

The belief that "it's the economy, stupid" that governs politics is an old one. It replaced Divine Providence as the fundamental explanation of human affairs in the 18th century. Enlightenment philosophers David Hume and Adam Smith thought that modern "commercial society" was governed by economic interest operating

behind the scenes as a "hidden hand" to make everyone better off. Karl Marx took it further: how mankind made a living explained everything, past, present and future. Politics and culture were merely the façade hiding the real source of power: economic control.

Underlying this was the assumption that there were immutable rules, that people behaved rationally, and there was therefore "progress" as humanity understood the world better. This belief has taken many knocks since its mid-19th-century heyday: wars, genocides, crashes, and the collapse of empires and states. Yet we seem to need the religion of progress so much that we cling to it. However bumpy the road, we want there to be "experts" somewhere (remember the outcry when Michael Gove said we'd had enough of them?) who understand the rules, and politicians who follow their advice.

Hence, in a "rules-based order", voters cede power to

quangos, courts and lobbies. The Enlightenment utopia seemed finally to have arrived in the 1990s, when Hume's "commercial society" went global. It is therefore frightening, disorienting or, for some, exhilarating when one man decides to smash it all up. It is difficult to present Trump as obeying great historic forces such as "capitalism" or "populism" or "nationalism" or even (whatever the man himself might think) "progress". It is just him.

Despite the lip service we pay to Enlightenment rationalism, we have seen a succession of individual disruptors over the past century: Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Putin, even Osama bin Laden. Unlike the "great men" lauded in the 1840s by Thomas Carlyle, these were not creative geniuses, but destroyers who fed on the disasters of the 20th century. By 1914, 194 international treaties included provision for arbitration of disputes; there were more than 400 peace organisations in the world, and a Palace of Peace to house their conferences opened in The Hague in 1913. In 1910, a best-selling book, The Great Illusion by Norman Angell (who received a Nobel Peace Prize) argued that economic interdependence made war irrational, even impossible. Lenin believed it was the inevitable explosion of those toxic forces, capitalism and imperialism.

In reality it was a deliberate, yet unnecessary, decision made at a crucial moment by a small number of ordinary, inadequate men. Three years earlier, or three years later, the crisis might have passed. But in 1914, all the peace campaigners, economists and bankers terrified of financial collapse were powerless. Sometimes individuals do change history, and sometimes their personalities - even their obsessions - are decisive, for good or ill. But

Will Trump abandon Washington's security commitments to Taiwan?

Jonathan Fenton-Harvey

US President Donald Trump's "America First" doctrine, marked by backing away from support for Ukraine and taking a more transactional approach to European allies, has raised concerns among longstanding US partners in the Asia-Pacific that they, too, could face a harsh reassessment of their strategic value.

As many expected, Trump hasn't hesitated to ramp up economic pressure on China, similar to his first term when he launched a trade war against Beijing in 2018. With Trump's second term underway, Beijing is another primary target, with Trump imposing an across-the-board 20% tariff on all Chinese imports by March. Yet Trump's additional sweeping tariffs announced on April 2 increased the cumulative tariffs on Chinese imports to 54% [1].

Trump's actions rattled not only China, but paradoxically also Washington's regional allies, who are crucial to countering Beijing's assertiveness in the South and East China Seas. These nations also faced significant tariff increases on April 2. For example, Japan received a 24% tariff, South Korea 25%, and Taiwan as high as 34%. This clearly demonstrates Trump's transactional, deal-making approach to foreign policy. The tariffs have certainly alarmed allies, with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba describing them as a "national crisis" that could hit Japan's export-driven economy [2], given its vast sales of automobiles, electronics, and machinery to the US. The tariffs are expected to slash nearly 1% of Tokyo's economy.

Beyond the tariffs, allies worry that Washington might step back from its long-standing security commitments. Trump's past remarks - criticizing [3] the US-Japan post-World War II security alliance as "unfair" and accusing South Korea of exploiting the US economically - have only fueled anxiety about America's long-term commitment to regional security. Additionally, some of his own allies in Washington are skeptical about multilateral agreements such as AUKUS, the security pact between the US, UK, and Australia, designed to counterbalance China's influence in the Asia-Pacific.

Meanwhile, Taiwan remains a critical flashpoint, with many fearing it may also suffer a similar fate to Ukraine, in terms of diminished US support in the face of a neighboring larger power. As with other regional partners, Trump previously criticized Washington's longstanding unconditional military support for Taiwan, arguing the island should do more to protect itself from a possible Chinese invasion, beyond relying on the US.

In July 2024, he declared [4] in an interview "I think Taiwan should pay us for defense," while he further emphasized this viewpoint in October 2024, arguing that Taiwan should allocate a vast 10% of its gross domestic product (GDP) to defense spending. Many have warned this rhetoric could embolden China's long-standing ambition to invade the island. That being said, Trump's position on Taiwan has been anything but consistent. In February, his administration removed the longstanding statement that "we do not recognize Taiwan's independence" from the US State Department. That marks an overt shift in US policy, one that predictably provoked anger within Beijing.

Yet in Trump's view, there are significant differences between Taiwan and Ukraine-primarily economic ones. Taiwan is the global hub of semiconductor manufacturing, producing the advanced chips that power AI and cutting-edge technology-sectors vital to US economic and military dominance. And in an appeal to Trump's business-like nature, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) pledged [5] on March 5 to invest \$100 billion in the US, constructing five "cutting-edge" fabrication plants on American soil, including in the state of Arizona.

From Washington's perspective, this move is invaluable: it strengthens US control over the semiconductor supply chain, reducing reliance on East Asian hubs like Japan and South Korea. It also provides an advantage in Washington's competition with China over semiconductor dominance.

Despite heavy tariffs on Taiwan, security cooperation and semiconductor collaboration between Washington and Taipei are likely to continue relatively smoothly, at least for now. This may ease fears that Trump would abandon Taiwan anytime soon. Former President Ma Ying-jeou accused Taiwan's current government of effectively "selling TSMC" to Trump as a form of "protection fee." This illustrates the transactional approach Trump is expected to adopt throughout the region.

Given the uncertainty over Trump's intentions, Washington's regional allies are likely to engage in discussions about enhancing their own defense capabilities, similar to ongoing debates in Europe. On March 22, the foreign ministers of Japan, China and South Korea convened [6] in Tokyo, to discuss cooperation and concerns over regional security, including from North Korea. The timing of that meeting, shortly after Trump's initial tariff threats in March, suggests that Washington's unpredictability pushed Japan and South Korea to improve relations with Beijing as a form of strategic hedging.

Yet with China remaining as a primary US competitor, Washington will still look to contain Beijing, meaning Washington's security support for Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and the Philippines likely won't disappear. Instead, we could expect to see more demands from Washington to keep individual nations within its military umbrella, such as "paying their fair share" as Trump put it. Of course, it's notoriously difficult to be sure with Trump. However, one thing is certain: business as usual is off the table. America's allies are bracing for a more transactional, less predictable relationship with Washington - one where past loyalty is no longer a guarantee of future security.

Can Trump channel Nixon to turn Russia against China?

THE Trump administration has been quite open about why exactly it wants to get into bed with Moscow: it believes closer ties will prize Russia away from China, which it sees as the real existential threat to the United States. A previous US president - Richard Nixon - came up with a similar plan at the beginning of the 1970s. The only difference is that Nixon's plan was supposed to work the other way around: improving relations with China to isolate the Soviet Union. Back then, the US strategy worked - more or less. Donald Trump's modern-day imitation of Nixon, however, is unlikely to succeed.

"The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker. This honor now beckons America," Nixon said in his 1969 inaugural address. Trump has hidden neither his admiration for Nixon, nor his desire to go down in history as a peacemaker. This aping of Nixon has not been limited to rhetoric. Nixon sent a clandestine mission to Beijing led by his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger; Trump secretly sent his special envoy Steve Witkoff to Moscow to negotiate a prisoner exchange. Nixon allowed China to return to full membership of the United Nations despite ideological differences; Trump has begun reestablishing diplomatic ties with Russia. Just as Nixon sought to cooperate with Beijing, so Trump wants to work with Moscow.

Admittedly, the prognosis for Trump is worse than it was for Nixon in the 1970s. The architect of the US-China rapprochement, Kissinger, said at the time that both Washington and Beijing were

interested in containing the Soviet Union. The same is not true today. Russia is extremely unlikely to want to contain China - they have too much in common. Unlike the situation in the early 1970s, when warming ties between Beijing and Washington were preceded by a decade and a half of rising tensions between Moscow and Beijing, the current relationship between Moscow and Beijing is built on the solid foundations of a long shared border, complementary economies, and similar political regimes. These foundations are reinforced by the good personal relationship between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. While it is true that Russia and China do not call themselves "allies," they certainly would not pick a fight with one another.

Indeed, the good relations between Moscow and Beijing right now are, in large part, the result of a shared hostility toward Washington. US sanctions against Russia and trade restrictions on China have pushed the two countries closer together, both ideologically and economically. Their trade turnover is approaching a record \$250 billion per year; Russia shares advanced military technology with China; and China sells Russia dual-use goods essential for its war in Ukraine. Even in Central Asia, where the interests of the two countries overlap, Moscow and Beijing have been cooperating closely.

In addition, Trump cannot offer Russia anything like what Nixon gave China. At the end of the 1960s, Beijing was experiencing serious economic problems as a

Temur Umarov

result of a falling out with Moscow, and the warming ties with the United States opened up a whole new range of opportunities (marking the beginning of what would become known as the Chinese economic miracle). The Russian economy today is very different: it was and largely remains an integral part of the global system. This is why Western sanctions have not been as effective as their architects had hoped.

Nor do the Russian and US economies have much to offer one another (there was little overlap even before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine), in contrast to the US and Chinese economies in the 1970s, which complemented each other. There is not much of a political foundation for Trump to build better relations with Russia either. Before Nixon came to power, Beijing was isolated, and was only able to return to the international fold thanks to Washington. Today, Russia is deeply disillusioned with the very concept of global integration under what it sees as "Western rules." Trump's idea of allowing Russia to rejoin the G7 group of advanced economies was seen by Russian officials as all but meaningless. The truth is that Moscow is happy not to participate in Western institutions, preferring instead to take a leading role in groups such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS.

Any attempt to set China and Russia against one another will most likely end up having the opposite effect. In Moscow, Trump is seen as an anomaly for the US establishment from whom it might

be possible to extract some short-term gains, but around whom it would be foolish to plan a long-term foreign policy shift. In both Moscow and Beijing, Trump's actions are seen as proof that it's impossible to come to any agreement with Western leaders who are fixated on their own short-term electoral cycles: in four years, when his term expires, Trump will no longer be president. But Putin and Xi still intend to be in office. The only reason Trump appears to have enjoyed some success in his bid to build ties with Moscow in recent weeks is because he started from such a low point. One phone call with Putin is seen as a breakthrough. However, with time, the contrast with his predecessor, Joe Biden, will become less obvious - and there will be fewer easy wins.

Trump is driven by his business instincts, not the search for geopolitical advantage. These instincts suggest Russia would agree to make strategic concessions (like giving up its relationship with China) for significant economic gains. If that is what US officials are expecting, though, they are deeply misguided. It would seem they have forgotten that Putin was prepared to sacrifice Russia's economic development upon the altar of its geopolitical ambitions when he launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The Kremlin will likely play along with Trump: at a minimum, increased interest from Washington strengthens Moscow's position vis-à-vis Beijing. But it's extremely unlikely Moscow will make any serious concessions. However hard he may try, Trump will not be able to pull off the same strategy with Russia that Nixon managed with China.

Trump is pushing world into recession

Gordon Brown

coordinating macroeconomic and financial policies across continents. Global inflation will rise, even after taking into account the deflationary impact of low-priced Asian exports. But this shock is outweighed by a bigger problem: collapsing consumer confidence and declining business investment. That means we may need a synchronised reduction in interest rates - an initiative the US might well join - backed by fiscal activism in the countries where there is space to expand.

NO more than a narrow window of opportunity remains if we are to prevent an unnecessary global recession. As China and the US decouple, disruptive trade wars are intensifying and threaten to descend into currency wars; import, export, investment and technology bans; and financial fire sales that will destroy millions of jobs worldwide.

It seems barely credible that the world is being brought to its knees by one economy, outside of which live 96% of the population, who produce 84% of the world's manufactured goods. But even though US officials to have previously talked of a tariff policy of "escalate to de-escalate", Donald Trump's aim is to force manufacturing back to the US, and his 90-day relaxation of some tariffs does not mean he intends to defuse the crisis.

On Monday, Keir Starmer warned that the world will never be the same again, and reminded us that "attempting to manage crises without fundamental change just leads to managed decline". He is right. As I learned in the financial crisis of 2008, global problems require globally coordinated solutions. We need a bold, international response that measures up to the scale of the emergency. In the same way that, to his great credit, the prime minister has been building a coalition in defence of Ukraine, we need an economic coalition of the willing: like-minded global leaders who believe that, in an interdependent world, we have to coordinate economic policies across continents if we are to safeguard jobs and living standards.

The immediate challenge is to mitigate the supply-side shocks caused by the Trump tariff wall. As Rachel Reeves is proposing, we need to keep world trade moving. No two crises are ever the same, but offering extended credit to exporting and importing firms was central to the global response as trade collapsed in 2009. We also have to remind China that if it is to present itself as a champion of free trade, it is in its interests to focus more on expanding domestic consumption than flooding the world's markets with cut-price goods it cannot now sell in the US.

Yet the global challenges go well beyond managing the tariff shock. Resuscitating trade will not be easy without

the UK-EU defence cooperation agreement should be extended to enable joint and more cost-effective weapons procurement. And, to release resources elsewhere, we should advance discussions on a Europe-wide, off-balance-sheet, special-purpose defence and security fund.

Europe may be required to lead in another respect if the US's willingness to act as a lender of last resort to the world is ever in doubt. The global Financial Stability Board should be asked to report immediately on what risks to stability may need to be addressed within the bank and non-banking sectors. If it became necessary, the European Central Bank could also be asked to fill a gap left by the US (and which China has been trying to occupy) by extending currency swaps to a wider group of countries in need of liquidity support.

Coordinated multilateral action is essential if Britain is to secure the export-led growth we need. That growth will be turbocharged by refocusing industrial policy on boosting internationally competitive sectors - from life sciences and AI, to the energy transition and the creative industries. Promoting such world-beating clusters requires us, as the chancellor has said, to invest more heavily in research and development and high-level skills. But it also demands that we champion a pro-competition regime that does not favour the tech giants at the expense of their smaller UK competitors, or dilute copyright and intellectual property laws so vital to creative talent.

It is not only the multilateral economic system that is under assault, but every single pillar of the rules-based order, from respect for the law to the self-determination of nations and historic commitments to humanitarian aid. Indeed, we are seeing a simultaneous breakdown in economic and geopolitical orders. In a follow-up article, I will suggest how we might build a new order out of what are fast becoming the ruins of the old. But first, we need to show that the world can act together to support people's living standards. Doing so will demonstrate the fundamental principles at stake: that international cooperation is in our collective interests, and that a zero-sum world of competing nationalisms leaves us all poorer and less secure.

The Guardian

Le Pen shouldn't succeed with martyr act

Aurelien Mondon

MARINE Le Pen, figurehead of France's Rassemblement National (RN), one of the most established far-right parties in Europe, has been found guilty of embezzling funds from the European parliament. During her time as an MEP between 2004 and 2017, Le Pen and her team paid party staff with funds that should have gone to European parliamentary aides. The ruling estimates that a total of 2.9 million euros in European parliament funds were involved in the crimes and that Le Pen personally embezzled 474,000 euros of that total.

She has been sentenced to four years in prison, two of which would be electronic monitoring. She is also unlikely to see the inside of a cell for the other two years as she is appealing her conviction. More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that she has been banned from holding public office for five years. Crucially, the ban is to start immediately, meaning that even with an appeal, Le Pen is highly unlikely to be able to stand as a candidate in the next presidential election in 2027. For many in the RN, the court's decision will be a major blow. The party appears to have lost the candidate they believed was on course for victory in 2027.

However, others will no doubt see this as a chance to distance the party further from the Le Pen name, following the death of Marine Le Pen's father Jean-Marie Le Pen earlier this year. This process has been in motion for some time. Jordan Bardella took over from Le Pen as president of the party in 2022 and has clearly been waiting and preparing for this eventuality. Allegations were first levelled at Le Pen many years ago and her crimes relate to her time as an MEP between 2004 and 2017.

He has been the plan B option throughout her trial. Bardella led the RN to victory in the 2024 European

election in France. He also managed to send a record number of parliamentarians to the National Assembly after French president Emmanuel Macron called a snap election just weeks later. This was, nevertheless, a somewhat disappointing outcome as many on the far right had started to imagine Bardella as prime minister. Since failing to meet this expectation, his leadership has come under more scrutiny. His reaction to Le Pen's sidelining will be watched carefully. Overall, it is good news to see corruption being taken seriously and justice being served. However, Le Pen's conviction comes after years of embezzlement which has allowed the far right to build its strength. All this has come on the back of a system it has vowed to destroy. As such, it feels like too little too late. Furthermore, this decision, and the fact that it is tied to the European Union, is likely to feed into typical farright propaganda on the domestic stage.

Le Pen and the party will play the victim, blaming Le Pen's fate on a wide conspiracy organised by something akin to the deep state operating via Brussels. The deep levels of distrust in public institutions and mainstream politics are likely to play a role here. Le Pen will aim to paint the decision of an independent court as the political assassination of the "champion of the people". She could become a martyr, turning her cause into a revolt against "the system". Bardella has already said that Le Pen's conviction amounted to the "execution" of democracy. Crucially, though, this outcome isn't inevitable. Whether such a narrative takes hold is a choice that is very much in the hands of mainstream elite actors.

Those who have a privileged access to shaping public discourse, such as journalists, politicians and experts will therefore play a

key role. Instead of giving pride of place to Le Pen and the far right in a tempting sensationalising coverage, the mainstream media must turn to serious analysis. This would involve removing the focus from individuals and putting it on the wider issues at hand. That would lessen the potential for a narrative of victimisation to take hold. Beyond providing an accurate picture of the case itself, good coverage should predominantly focus on politics rather than on the spectacle the RN will inevitably try to construct as a diversion tactic.

This would mean engaging seriously with what the RN actually proposes as a model of society: one that is not against the "elite" and for the people, but merely in favour of a different elite taking control at the head of a top-down authoritarian state. This would then allow voters to understand that the far right is not on their side, but on the side of power, wealth and hierarchies. Those who oppose such a takeover could go some way to fix the damage that has been done with carelessly associating these parties with "populism".

Finally, good coverage would also mean shifting the agenda away from the far right and its pet issues. Had politicians-left, right and centre-not continuously used the far right as a diversion from their own failures to tackle the many crises their countries face, the far right would not be as powerful as it seems. As opinion polls show, when people are asked what are their biggest concerns personally, issues core to the far right such as immigration are low. Instead, it is issues that would require radical measures to tackle economic and social insecurity which are prioritised. The far right offers nothing to address these - only division to make citizens powerless to fight back. Now that Le Pen is out of the picture, it is a good time to shift the agenda back to democracy and hope.

The war on student activists and disappearance of academic freedom in US

MAHMOUD Khalil, Yunseo Chung, and Rumeyza Ozturk are just some of the international students who are currently facing deportation due to their political expression on US campuses. Their abductions are not isolated incidents but the initial implementation of a systematic campaign of political repression by the Donald Trump administration. In recent weeks, hundreds of student visas have been preemptively revoked without due process, based solely on political views expressed in support of Palestinian rights. This unprecedented assault on campus speech signals a frightening new phase in the suppression of dissent in American higher education.

These actions originate from the Heritage Foundation's "Project Esther," [1] released on Oct. 7, 2024. Taking a page directly from the fascist playbook, this initiative reframes any form of critical inquiry that challenges its political positions as inherently subversive - not merely disagreement, but an attack on the state itself that constitutes a national security threat requiring immediate suppression.

As a group of scholars has revealed in a new report, "Rejecting Project Esther," [2] behind this new attack stands an alarming alliance of right-wing interests, led by self-identified Christian Nationalists whose support for Israel stems from End Times theology. Why are they targeting higher education with such unprecedented fervor? The answer is both simple and profound: They do not fear us as isolated individuals, but as a collective force capable of challenging systemic power, dedicated to exposing injustice and cultivating critical thinking.

Universities remain one of the few institutional spaces where systemic racism, classism, imperialism, and other forms of oppression upon which their power rests can be named, studied, and challenged through rigorous scholarship.

Project Esther's most disturbing feature is its fabrication of a shadowy "Hamas Support Network" allegedly operating throughout American institutions. This fictional network supposedly encompasses virtually all pro-Palestinian organizations, student groups, academic programs, and individual activists. This fabricated narrative mirrors antisemitic conspiracy theories that have targeted Jews throughout history, deploying the same rhetorical structures found in the notoriously antisemitic text from a century ago, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," [3] but redirecting them toward Palestine solidarity activists - many of whom are Jewish themselves.

The consequences are already evident. International students face deportation not for any criminal activity but for political expression on American campuses. By targeting those with the most precarious legal status first, Project Esther tests the boundaries of what the American public will tolerate, creating precedents that can later be expanded to target citizen activists, faculty members, and entire academic programs.

While claiming to combat antisemitism, Project Esther diverts attention from the actual sources of anti-Jewish violence in America today. In reality, white supremacist and Christian Nationalist movements pose the greatest threat to Jewish communities today. Ironically, these are the same ideological camps from which the

Barry Trachtenberg

Heritage Foundation has emerged.

The receptivity of many university administrations to these tactics stems partly from the corporatization of higher education. Our universities have been reconfigured according to market logic - prioritizing revenue generation, brand management, and donor relations over their educational and social missions. This creates institutions more concerned with rankings and reputation than with their moral responsibilities to foster critical inquiry and protect academic freedom. At the same time, the systematic suppression of Palestinian voices reflects a deeply entrenched narrative of Jewish exceptionalism that makes it nearly impossible for many to reconcile Jewish historical victimhood with current Israeli state violence. This framework creates an intellectual paralysis: legitimate criticism of Israeli policies is reflexively labeled as antisemitism. As a result, it becomes almost unthinkable to consider that a Jewish-led state can engage in systemic violence.

The implementation of Project Esther's vision transforms universities from sites of learning into instruments of ideological enforcement. This fascist-inspired logic reframes dissent as a direct threat to national security, justifying immediate repression. By criminalizing certain forms of political expression, purging faculty who hold dissenting views, and creating an atmosphere of surveillance and fear, this approach fundamentally contradicts the mission of higher education in a democratic society. Moreover, the false equation of criticism of Israel with antisemitism ultimately undermines genuine efforts to combat antisemitism. By focusing resources on suppressing pro-Palestinian

Germany finally getting a new government

John Kampfner

GERMANY is about to get a new fitness trainer. So declared Markus Söder, one of the political leaders who have just announced a coalition agreement. In one of the quirks of the country's constitution, the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) will play a significant role in the new administration, and Söder used his moment in the limelight to play the entertainer.

It was a curious way to announce the arrival of a new government, expected to be sworn in during the first week of May. Since the elections of 23 February, Germany will have been in limbo for two and a half months, and all while Donald Trump rampages across the world.

The circumstances could not be more inauspicious. The new chancellor, Friedrich Merz, must deal with an out-of-control United States, Russia taking advantage of the mayhem by feigning interest in a peace deal while making further military inroads in Ukraine, and China increasing influence as anti-US sentiment increases. Domestically, Germany's economy, already stuttering, faces the 20% US tariffs imposed across the European Union, plus further punitive levies on its all-important auto industry. To compound it all, a few hours before the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU and Social Democrats (SPD) took to the stage to seal their deal, an opinion poll put the far-right Alternative für

Deutschland (AfD) in the lead for the first time.

All of this will concentrate minds. Germany and Europe can't afford a repeat of the last coalition, which foundered amid acrimony and under the lacklustre leadership of Olaf Scholz. The stakes were high then; they are stratospherically higher now.

"Germany is getting a government that is capable of action and is strong," said Merz. "We will govern well together," he added, as he looked smilingly towards the SPD leader and probable next deputy chancellor and finance minister, Lars Klingbeil. It is an unlikely bromance, but they will have to get on. As both pointed out, the "political centre", as Germans call mainstream parties, must show it can work. Otherwise the AfD is waiting in the wings for the next election, due by 2029 at the latest.

During the negotiations, which were carried out with little turbulence and few leaks, Merz was accused by party hardliners of giving away too much to the SPD. The result, as set out in the coalition agreement, is a necessary compromise, which as ever leaves all sides feeling they have won some and yielded some.

Merz has secured tougher immigration controls - checks at borders, no family for the first two years, and five years rather than three for citizenship applications.

Corporation tax will be reduced. Rules around the minimum income guarantee will be tightened. Klingbeil and his team have preserved increases to the minimum wage and other welfare measures.

All parties were agreed on their approach to Ukraine and Russia. The introduction of a national security council within the chancellery to deal with the many emergencies the country faces is a welcome if belated move. Some form of national military service will be reintroduced, but it is expected to be opt-in, with benefits for participants, rather than compulsory. The climate crisis barely got a mention. Everyone is talking the talk about modernisation and removing bureaucracy. A new digitisation ministry is designed to kickstart Germany's lamentable digital provision. Will this analogue and cash-based society finally join the modern world?

As ever in modern Germany, gloom has enveloped the country. Some of it is understandable - a country that craves stability is having to come to terms with a world more on edge than at any time since the formation of the Federal Republic in 1949. Yet much of it is self-indulgent. Having just voted in a general election, with the highest turnout since reunification in 1990, and having ensured a relatively stable two-party coalition (the CSU is not seen as a separate entity),

Germans have turned on Merz before he has even been given the seals of office.

His biggest "crime" was to force constitutional changes through the outgoing parliament rather than waiting for the new one to be formed. He knew he had to do this, as the far right and radical left would have voted the changes down. In so doing, he has paved the way for an injection of more spending on defence and an injection of 500bn to tackle the country's ailing infrastructure. As I wrote a few weeks ago, he used unprincipled means for principled ends, and he, the SPD and the Greens should be lauded for pushing it through. Even in these desperately difficult times, and despite its fraught beginnings, this coalition could work. Merz and Klingbeil seem to work well; Boris Pistorius, the popular defence minister, is expected to stay in his job, providing much-needed stability. Under Scholz, Germany was absent without leave. The EU was rudderless. The economy atrophied. Just over two months after the end government took over, Vladimir Putin had invaded Ukraine, and all the parties' preparations were torn apart. This time, darkness has descended even before the work has begun. There will be no honeymoon for Merz, no first 100 days. It is hard to imagine an accession as fraught as this one. This will be the last time anyone cracks jokes.



Senator Sherry Rehman said that justice delivery is at the heart of any democratic system. She termed gender-based violence as a silent epidemic with only 5 per cent conviction rate and 64 per acquittal rate. She stressed the need to understand that when a woman finds a courage to report, she is crossing many red lines.



In brief

Kabaddi, handball trials held

FAISALABAD (APP): In connection with national games-2025, trials for kabaddi and handball players were held at University of Agriculture, Faisalabad in collaboration with Directorate General Sports Youth Affairs and Sports Board Punjab on Friday. According to Divisional Sports Officer Shah Manzar Fareed, over 100 kabaddi players and 63 handball players participated in the trials. Deputy Director Planning Tariq Khanzada, Director Sports Agriculture University Atif Bhatti, former Divisional Sports Officer M Tariq Nazir, District Sports Officer Sajida Latif, Secretary General Punjab Handball Association Sohaib Shafiq, officials and other office bearers were present on the occasion.

National Padel C'ship kicks off

KARACHI (APP): The National Padel Championship, organized by the Pakistan Padel Federation under the umbrella of International Padel Federation and Asia Padel, has officially commenced in Karachi on Friday. The event was inaugurated by the President of the Pakistan Padel Federation, Muhammad Mateen, who cut the ceremonial ribbon to mark the beginning of the tournament. In the Women's Category, Sindh Whites secured a decisive 6-2 Victory over Islamabad Whites, while Rally Rebels also recorded a 6-2 win against Power Salyers. While in the Men's Category, Allah Wala defeated Team Sindh with a clean sweep of 6-0, and Team Zain Rehman registered a commanding 6-0 win over Cherry Popped. Speaking at the event, Muhammad Mateen said that significant efforts are being made to promote the sport of padel across the country. "The National Championship offers an excellent platform for athletes to showcase their talent," he stated. He further emphasized the federation's commitment to supporting young players and providing them with opportunities to excel.

Anderson given knighthood

LONDON (APP): Former England fast bowler James Anderson has been awarded a knighthood in ex-Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's resignation honours list. Anderson retired from Test cricket in July 2024 having taken 704 wickets, the most by a fast bowler in the history of the five-day format. The 42-year-old is still playing for Lancashire but has missed the start of the English County Championship season with a calf problem. The resignation honours list is a tradition that gives outgoing Prime Ministers the opportunity to nominate people for honours. Only spin bowling stars Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and Shane Warne (708) took more Test wickets than Anderson. He made his one-day international debut for England against Australia in December 2002 and his Test bow came in May 2003. Anderson finished his international career having played 188 Tests and 194 ODIs. He was nudged into international retirement last year by England captain Ben Stokes and head coach Brendon McCullum. However, Anderson thinks he could still be playing for another three years. He has signed a one-year deal with Lancashire for the County Championship and Vitality Blast, saying: "I am not ruling out playing for another one, two or three years. We'll see how it goes."



RAWALPINDI: Riley Meredith had Fakhar Zaman caught behind in his first over.

Pakistan thrash Scotland in Women's WC Qualifier

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan women's cricket team Friday secured a thrilling six-wicket victory over Scotland in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier at the LCCA Ground in Lahore. The hosts successfully chased down the 186-run target in the 31st over.

Batting first, Scotland posted a competitive total of 186 runs for 9 wickets

in their allotted 32 overs due to early.

Captain Kathryn Bryce played a sensational knock of 91 runs off 96 balls.

She was well supported by Alisa Lister with a quickfire 31 runs off 24 balls, and Sarah Bryce, who added 21 runs from 25 deliveries.

Fatima Sana delivered a match-winning performance by taking 4 wickets for 23 runs in 5 overs.

Sadia Iqbal chipped in with 2 wickets for 43 runs in 7 overs, while Nashra Sandhu and Diana Baig claimed a wicket each, maintaining consistent pressure on the Scottish batters.

In reply, Pakistan's chase was powered by a brilliant batting display, particularly from openers Muneeba Ali and Aliya Riaz. Muneeba laid the foundation with a com-

posed yet aggressive 71 runs off 72 balls before being dismissed.

Aliya Riaz remained unbeaten on 68 runs off 70 balls, anchoring the innings till the end with remarkable poise.

Pakistan comfortably reached 189/4 in 31 overs, clinching a well-earned victory.

Now Pakistan will face the West Indies women on 14th April.

Parkha, Shabbir shine in JA Zaman Memorial Golf C'ship

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The 11th JA Zaman Memorial Open Golf Championship 2025 concluded on Friday at the Lahore Gymkhana Golf Course, offering a rich display of talent.

In the Ladies Amateur Division, Parkha Ijaz secured the top gross title with a cumulative score of 234. Parkha's brilliance was especially evident in the second round, where she carded exceptional scores of 71 and 70.

Trailing her were Bushra Fatima with 239 and Aania Farooq Syed with 247, finishing second and third in the gross category, respectively. In the net category, Saqiba Batool emerged as the winner with a net score of 230, capitalized on her 17-handicap and smart course strategy to take top honors.

Aleesa Rashid (262) and Ana James Gill (238) followed close behind, their performances marked by admirable determination and focus. The men's professional segment of the championship, heavily affected by rain-induced delays, still delivered spectacular golf.

Muhammad Shabbir led the charge with a phenomenal 65, a four-stroke improvement over his already strong opening



round of 69. Notable comebacks were made by Talib Hussain and Asif Ali, both of whom bounced back from lackluster first rounds to shoot impressive 67s. Their nine-stroke turnarounds reflected strategic adjustments and mental fortitude. Muhammad Minhaj also shone with a 68, lifting him to second

place overall. However, others like Kamran Shafiq (74 from 70) and Muhammad Zubair (73 from 70) slipped under the mounting pressure, their inconsistencies laid bare by the demanding conditions. Statistically, six of the top ten golfers improved in Round 2, with the average score among them dropping from 71.8 to 70.7. In contrast, the overall field average increased by 1.5 strokes, highlighting how adaptability defined the upper echelon.

The organizers commended the sportsmanship of the players and the diligence of tournament staff.

Chief Referee Munazza Shaheen was particularly lauded for her fair enforcement of the rules, especially in rain-affected zones, ensuring the competition's integrity remained intact throughout.

McLaren dominate Bahrain practice as Verstappen struggles



SAKHIR (AFP): Oscar Piastri topped the times as McLaren dominated second practice at the Bahrain Grand Prix on Friday with Max Verstappen struggling to make an impact in his Red Bull. Piastri posted a quickest lap of 1min 30.505s with his teammate Lando Norris only a tenth of a second adrift. The chasing pack was led by the Mercedes of George Russell albeit over five tenths of a second back in an ominous display of force by McLaren at a track where the Bahraini-backed team have yet to win in 21 visits.

Verstappen, who moved to within one point of championship leader Norris after his win in Japan last weekend, was given plenty of food for thought ahead of this fourth race of the season as he trailed in seventh, close to one second back.

To add insult to injury immediately in front of the four-time world champion were two rookies - Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli and RB's Isack Hadjar, who both did brilliantly to finish fifth and sixth. Red Bull's plight was not helped by the sight of Yuki Tsunoda coming in 18th, six places behind RB's

Liam Lawson, the driver he replaced at Red Bull last time out. Second practice at the Bahrain International Circuit got underway as the sun set to make the session more meaningful than opening practice held in the searing mid-afternoon heat.

With the floodlights illuminating the track to give like-for-like conditions with Saturday's qualifying and Sunday's race it placed extra importance on the 60 minutes evening run out. Verstappen, Russell and Charles Leclerc were among six established drivers to lend their cars to rookies to gain valuable experience in F1 as per the sporting guidelines.

"The car is jumping" Leclerc's teammate Lewis Hamilton, in the upgraded Ferrari kit-ted out with a new floor panel and a record five-time winner in Bahrain, put his foot down early to lead the timesheets. Verstappen got his weekend up and running but was soon grumbling on the team radio: "The ride is very bad, the car is jumping a lot."

Things were worse over with Fernando Alonso, who told his Aston

Martin engineer: "Change the steering wheel" as the veteran Spaniard headed back to the pits, the wheel literally coming off in his hands.

A human wall of Aston mechanics blocked any inquisitive competitors as they frantically worked to resolve the unusual and worrying issue.

Back on track Leclerc pushed his teammate Hamilton off the top of the time sheets to give early encouragement to the scuderia. With plenty of action on track as teams tried to cram in effectively three practice sessions in one - Saturday's third session is also unrepresentative being held in daytime - the Ferrari duo dropped down the field as the McLarens rose to the surface.

Piastri and Norris both stepped on the gas to pull well clear. As Alonso, who will be having his 50th race for Aston on Sunday, rejoined the circuit, there was no change at the top as McLaren set out their stall for the business part of the weekend.

Earlier teams took the opportunity to use 'FP1' to give a half dozen rookies a shot as a 'Friday driver' as per the governing body's guidelines. Verstappen had some down time with Ayumu Iwasa taking the wheel of his Red Bull. Dino Beganovic was handed the keys to Leclerc's Ferrari. Other new faces were Fred Vesti (in for Russell), Luke Browning (Williams/Carlos Sainz), Felipe Drugovich (Alonso) and Ryo Hirakawa, in for Ollie Bearman at Haas.

Browning had a scary moment with his temporary teammate Alex Albon, the pair coming close with a quarter of an hour left of the session. The stewards investigated the incident, with Albon deemed guilty of impeding Browning and given a smack on the wrist with a four-figure fine.

Islamabad United thump Lahore Qalandars in PSL 10 opener

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): Islamabad United kicked off the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 with a convincing win over Lahore Qalandars at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Friday.

The defending champions chased down the target of 140 with ease, losing only two wickets and finishing the game with 14 balls to spare. The home team started their run chase on a challenging note, losing debutant opener Andries Gous in the second over with only eight runs scored.

After this early setback, Colin Munro came out to bat alongside Sahibzada Farhan, and together they mounted a recovery by adding 55 runs for the second wicket. However, Farhan fell victim to Haris Rauf in the ninth over, contributing 25 runs off 24 balls.

Munro partnered with Salman Ali Agha, and the

two formed a match-winning partnership of 80 runs, guiding the team to victory. Munro top-scored with an unbeaten 59 runs off 42 balls, featuring seven fours and a six, while Agha contributed 41 not out from 34 balls, which included three fours and a six.

For Lahore Qalandars, both Abbas Afridi and Haris Rauf managed to take one wicket each.

Earlier, United's captain Shadab Khan's decision to bowl first proved to be a masterstroke. The United bowlers, led by Jason Holder's four-wicket haul, dismantled the Qalandars' batting lineup, restricting them to just 139 runs in 19.2 overs. The Qalandars' innings got off to a poor start, with Fakhar Zaman falling for just one run in the second over.

Abdullah Shafique, who batted at number three, was the lone bright spot for the

visitors, scoring 66 runs off 38 balls. He shared crucial partnerships with Daryl Mitchell and Sikandar Raza, but the rest of the team struggled to cope with the United bowlers.

Jason Holder's impressive bowling figures of 4/26 in four overs set the tone for United's dominance.

Shadab Khan chipped in with three wickets, while Imad Wasim, Naseem Shah, and Riley Meredith took one wicket each. Colin Munro's unbeaten half-century sealed the win for United, who looked comfortable throughout the chase.

The 10th edition of the Pakistan Super League kicked off with a star-studded opening ceremony in Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. The PSL 10 will consist of 34 matches from April 11 to May 18, with Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium hosting 13 matches, including the two Eliminator and the final.

PSL X kicks off with dazzling opening ceremony

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): A mesmerising musical show and a colourful display of fireworks during the impressive ceremony marked the start of the 10th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Friday.

The night promised a blend of music, fireworks, and cricketing excitement as PSL kicked off its landmark season in style. This is the first time that Rawalpindi will host the inaugural game of the league.

Among the star-studded lineup of performers were the legendary Abida Parveen, pop sensation Ali Zafar, Natasha Baig, and the chart-topping rap duo Young Stunners — all of whom set the stage ablaze with their electrifying acts at the opening ceremony.

Following the ceremony, defending champions Islamabad United took on two-time winners of the trophy, Lahore Qalandars, in the opening match of the tournament.

The 34-match tournament comprises three double headers scheduled on



April 12, May 1 and May 10, while the remaining fixtures will take place across Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi.

The six teams will lock horns to take away the \$500,000 prize money set for the winners, while the runners-up will be awarded \$200,000. The PSL X Draft, which took place on January 13, gave the six franchises an opportunity to refurbish their squads ahead of the historic tenth edition.

The newly renovated Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore is set to play host to 13 PSL X matches, including the Qualifier, Eliminator and

the May 18 final. The Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium will host 11 matches, while Multan Cricket Stadium and National Bank Stadium will witness five PSL X matches each this season.

Babar Azam, the leading run-scorer in HBL PSL with 3,504 runs to his name, will be leading the HBL PSL 2017 winners Peshawar Zalmi. Australia's David Warner becomes the fourth overseas player to lead the 2020 champions Karachi Kings after Ravi Bopara, Kumar Sangakkara and Eoin Morgan.

Salah signs new two-year deal with Liverpool

LONDON (AFP): Mohamed Salah ended months of speculation over his future by signing a new two-year contract with Premier League leaders Liverpool on Friday.

Salah could have left the club for free at the end of the season had he not extended his stay at Anfield. The 32-year-old has scored 243 goals in 394 appearances for the Reds since joining from Roma in 2017, making him the club's third highest goalscorer of all time.

His form has been instrumental to Liverpool's charge towards a record-equaling 20th English top-flight title this season.

"Of course I'm very excited. We have a great team now. Before also we had a great team. But I signed because I think we have a chance to win other trophies," Salah said in a club statement. "It's great, I had my best years here. I played eight years, hopefully it's going to be 10."

Salah has netted 27 goals and provided 17 assists in the Premier League as Liverpool have amassed an 11-point lead with just seven games remaining in Arne Slot's first season as manager. "He has shown at this club for so many years in a row how much of a value he is for the club and the team," said Slot.

"As like all our fans and his team-mates, we are very happy that he has extended for two more years."

Salah helped fire Liverpool to Champions League glory in 2019 and a first league title for 30 years in the 2019/20 season. He has also won the



FA Cup, two League Cups, Club World Cup and UEFA Super Cup during his time at Anfield to go down as one of the best players in the Premier League era.

Saudi interest Salah could become the first man to win the Professional Footballers' Association Player of the year award for a third time this season and is on course to match Thierry Henry's record for four Premier League Golden Boots.

His signing comes as a timely boost during both his and Liverpool's most difficult spell of the season.

Slot's men have lost three of their last four games in all competitions to bow out of the Champions League to Paris Saint-Germain, lose the League Cup final to Newcastle and have their 26-game unbeaten run in the Premier League come to an end at Fulham.

Salah has failed to score in six of his last seven games at club level with his only goals in that run coming against relegated Southampton from the penalty spot. "That's something that drives me crazy every day — to come to work and push myself and push the other players also,

because we are closer than ever now," Salah added on winning the title.

Liverpool's charge to the top of the Premier League table has come despite the distraction over contract negotiations for three of their star players last season.

Captain Virgil van Dijk and right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold are also out of contract at the end of the campaign. Van Dijk has said there "has been progress" on extending his deal, but Alexander-Arnold is reportedly close to joining Real Madrid on a free transfer.

Salah has stoked the speculation in a series of post-match interviews where he expressed his frustration at the speed of negotiations and previously said he was "probably more out than in". However, he has committed his future to the club despite rumours he had been offered a lucrative move to the Saudi Pro League.

Another two more years on Merseyside offers Salah the opportunity to further write his name into the record books. He currently stands joint-fifth in the all-time standings for Premier League goals on 184 and 103 behind Ian Rush's record 346 for Liverpool.



In brief

IRSA releases 88,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 88,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 112,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1412.00 feet which was 10:00 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 38,500 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1100.30 feet, which was 50.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 34,200 cusecs and 17,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 60,700, 31,600, 27,000 and 6,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 29,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 10,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

DHA's plan for dengue prevention

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Health Authority is preparing for the dengue preventive campaign with enhanced measures. Focusing on human resources, the authority has started hiring contingent staff in the first phase. The health authority will hire 52 entomologists to be assigned to different targeted population clusters, for which the posts have been advertised in the newspaper. According to the 'Staff Hiring Ad', females and males have been provided equal opportunity to apply for the temporary vacant jobs. Talking to APP, the CEO of the District Health Authority Rawalpindi, Dr. Asif Arbab Niazi said that following the last year's approach, the authority has begun preparations this year as well, keeping preventive measures in mind. "The District Health Authority Rawalpindi is starting the temporary recruitment of entomologists for the Dengue Program. Under this initiative, 52 entomologists will be hired for 3 months." The Health Authority has decided to recruit entomologists as part of a well-planned strategy to control dengue effectively. Dr. Asif Arbab further said that the fresh appointees would be assigned in any Tehsil or town of Rawalpindi as needed, ensuring a highly coordinated approach to dengue monitoring and surveillance.

11 drug dealers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Friday arrested 11 suspects with more than 11.5 kg charas during ongoing crackdown against drug dealers. According to the spokesman, the Naseerabad Police nabbed accused Kamran and Sajjad with 2.35 kilograms and 550 grams charas respectively. The Wah Cantt Police also recovered 1.75 kg and 1.64 kg charas from accused Khalid and Shahzad respectively. Likewise, the Jatli and Kahuta Police held accused Naeem and Naseer Ahmad with 1.34 kg and 1.1 kg charas respectively. Similarly, the Ratta Amral, Police nabbed accused Behrooz, 530 grams. The Taxila and Waris Khan Police recovered 600 grams each of the contraband item from accused Ilyas and Bilal respectively, while the Mandra and Rawat Police also caught accused Shahid Iqbal and Irfan respectively with 540 grams Charas each.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi presents a souvenir to Omani Ambassador Fahad Bin Sulaiman Bin Khalaf Alkharusi during a meeting in federal capital. —APP Photo

NA Speaker regrets opposition walkout, quorum pointing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday expressed regret over the opposition's walkout and the subsequent pointing out of quorum during the session.

He said most of the questions on the day's agenda were submitted by opposition members, making their absence all the more unfortunate. "It is disappointing that the opposition chose to walk out during proceeding when was discussing important national issues," he added.

Referring to recent discussions in the House, the Speaker said that 30 members had participated in a

debate on water canals earlier, while most opposition parties—except JUI—were absent on that day.

He clarified that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had submitted a resolution on canals issue on April 7, and the matter was discussed in detail on same day. However, another similar resolution was again submitted by the opposition on April 10.

Addressing broader concerns raised by opposition parties, Ayaz Sadiq said that those who frequently speak out on issues such as Palestine and border security often fail to show up when these matters are scheduled for debate in the

House. "It is regrettable that the opposition distances itself from the Parliament's core responsibilities," he added.

Due to a lack of quorum, Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah adjourned the session until Monday at 4 PM.

Earlier, the sitting—chaired by Speaker Ayaz Sadiq—started but was interrupted when Iqbal Afridi of the Sunni Ittehad Council pointed out the lack of quorum. A headcount followed, and although the session was briefly suspended for 30 minutes, it was later adjourned due to insufficient attendance.

ANF arrests five smugglers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force, during seven operations in various cities on Friday, arrested five drug smugglers, recovering over 11 kilograms of drugs worth about Rs 5 million.

According to an ANF spokesman, in the first operation, 500 grams of hashish were recovered from the possession of an accused at KKH Road, Manshera, who was involved in selling drugs in educational institutions.

In another operation, 1.184 kilograms of Ice was recovered from a passenger bag going to Qatar at Islamabad International Airport.

As much as 37 grams of Cannabis oil and 150 grams of Wed were recovered from a parcel sent from the UK at a Courier office in Rawalpindi.

The ANF team recovered a 250-gram parcel of Opium being sent to the Canada in a Courier office located in Karachi.

In another operation, 4 kg of Charas was recovered from an accused near Guddu Chowk in Hyderabad.

As much as 3.4 kg of hashish was recovered from a woman near a Housing Society on Kohat Road. The ANF team traced 1.5 kg of hashish from the possession of a person in Sailkot.

Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Police foil arms smuggling bid

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) foiled a major attempt to sabotage law and order by recovering a huge cache of illegal weapons from two vehicles near Sial Mor on the M-2 Motorway.

According to an NHMP spokesperson, the operation was carried out after a car was signaled to stop for overspeeding. The driver, however, attempted to evade the police, accelerating the vehicle in an attempt to flee. The motorway police patrol team acted swiftly and managed to intercept the car shortly afterwards.

As officers approached the vehicle, the suspects attempted to escape and threatened the police with firearms. Demonstrating courage and professionalism, the officers managed to apprehend all suspects at the scene. On searching the car, the officers recovered one SMG, a 295mm rifle with 100 bullets, and a 30-bore pistol along with 42 bullets.

Further investigation revealed that another vehicle was also traveling alongside the suspects on the same route. Acting on this lead, the second car was also stopped in time. Inside, police found three SMGs along with 500 bullets.

The arrested individuals, along with the recovered weapons and vehicles, were handed over to the local police for further legal action and investigation.

Naqvi, Omani envoy discuss expansion of bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi met with the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Pakistan, Fahd Suleiman Khalaf Al-Kharousi, at the Ministry of Interior in Islamabad on Thursday.

The two dignitaries discussed matters of mutual interest and expressed their shared resolve to further strengthen the deep-rooted bilateral relations between Pakistan and Oman.

During the meeting, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to broadening cooperation across various sectors, particularly in the area of security. They agreed to enhance collaboration to address emerging regional challenges, bolster people-to-people contacts, and facilitate greater exchanges between the security agen-

cies of the two countries.

Highlighting the fraternal ties between the two nations, Minister Naqvi emphasized that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relationship with Oman. "Pakistan and Oman share historical and brotherly relations rooted in common faith, traditions, and cultural affinities," he remarked.

Mohsin Naqvi noted the significant contribution of the Pakistani community residing in Oman, stating that over 300,000 Pakistanis are actively participating in the development and progress of the Sultanate. He expressed hope that in the coming years, Pakistan would be able to send even more skilled and trained workers to Oman, thus further strengthening the socio-economic ties between the two countries.

The Omani Ambassador, Fahd Suleiman Khalaf Al-Kharousi, lauded the role of the Pakistani community in Oman's development, acknowledging their hard work, professionalism, and commitment. He affirmed that Pakistan and Oman's relations, which span several decades, continue to grow stronger with each passing year.

Both sides expressed optimism about the future of Pakistan-Oman relations and stressed the need for sustained engagement at all levels to promote mutual prosperity, regional stability, and enduring friendship.

The meeting concluded with a shared pledge to continue working closely together to achieve the common goals of peace, security, and development for both nations.

Minister briefed on preparations for Overseas Convention

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, presided over a meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where preparations for Pakistan's first Overseas Pakistani Convention were reviewed.

During the meeting, Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain was briefed on the preparations for the overseas convention.

He stated that overseas Pakistanis are the backbone of the country's economy, and protecting their rights

and addressing their issues is essential for national development.

The significant increase in remittances in recent months is evidence that overseas Pakistanis have faith in Pakistan's future, said a press release.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain further noted that the government not only appreciates the financial support of overseas Pakistanis but also views them as key partners in national development. This convention will prove to be an important milestone in highlighting the issues, roles, and contributions of Pakistanis living

abroad.

The convention will not only pave the way for resolving issues but will also lay the foundation for including the overseas community in national policy-making.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Overseas Pakistanis Aoun Chaudhry, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Bajwa, officials from the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, OPF, Islamabad administration, and representatives from other institutions.

Severe heatwave expected across country: PMD

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast severe heatwave conditions likely to grip the country during the coming week due to the development of a high-pressure system in the upper atmosphere from April 13.

According to the Met Office, most parts of the country will experience rising temperatures, with the southern regions including Sindh, southern Punjab, and Balochistan expected to face severe heatwave conditions from Monday, April 14.

Daytime temperatures in these areas may remain 6-8 degrees Celsius above normal from April 13 to 18.

In the northern and central parts - including upper and central Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir - the temperatures are predicted to be 4-6 C above normal from April 14 to 18. Night temperatures are also expected to remain higher than usual throughout the forecast period.

Excessive heating may also result in duststorms and windstorms, potentially damaging vulnerable infrastructure such as electric poles, trees, vehicles, and solar panels. The general public, particularly children, women, and senior citizens, are advised to avoid direct

sun exposure and remain well-hydrated.

Farmers are urged to manage their crop activities, particularly wheat harvesting, according to the forecast, and ensure the safety of livestock. Rising temperatures in northern areas may lead to an accelerated snow melt between April 14 and 18, increasing the risk of flooding.

All concerned authorities have been instructed to stay alert and take precautionary measures to mitigate any potential risks.

The PMD has urged citizens to stay informed and follow the latest updates by visiting the official website: <https://www.pmd.gov.pk/en/>.

Over 1 million youth registered on DYH: Rana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, announced that over 1,500 overseas representatives from 80 countries will attend the upcoming Overseas Convention scheduled for next week.

In a press conference held on Friday, Rana Mashhood said over 1 million young people have registered on the Digital Youth Hub (DYH) in just 14 days while highlighting the platform's rapid growth and popularity among the youth. Additionally, 100,000 young individuals planning to go abroad and they will be provided interest-free loans of up to Rs. 1 million.

In June, one lakh laptops will be distributed on merit, and under the "Laptops for All" scheme, an additional 150,000 laptops will also be distributed. Rana Mashhood said due to the current government's positive and wise policies, all economic indicators are moving in a favorable direction.

International institutions, including the IMF, are praising Pakistan, and the country is on a path to development and attempts by anti-Pakistan elements, funded from abroad, to destabilize the nation will fail. He added that the Pakistan Muslim League (N), under

the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif, is resolving the issues facing the country.

He also mentioned that during the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2025, investors from around the world expressed a desire to invest in Pakistan. He acknowledged the vital role of overseas Pakistanis in remittance contributions.

He reiterated that more than 1,500 overseas representatives from 80 countries will attend the convention next week. Rana Mashhood highlighted that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif launched the game-changing project "Digital Youth Hub" on March 23.

This unique program provides information and awareness to youth about job opportunities both locally and internationally, scholarships, IT, technology, and other sectors. Within the last 14 days, over 1 million youth have registered on the platform and in the future, millions more are expected to register. Young people can register through the PM Youth Programme website: www.pmyy.gov.pk.

He stated that the Digital Youth Hub currently lists over 150,000 job opportunities, and youth will be able to find jobs based on their skills, qualifications, and

professional training.

Under the PM Youth Programme's loan scheme, interest-free loans of up to Rs. 1 million will be given to 100,000 youth going abroad for work. This initiative is a collaborative effort of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, and a consortium of banks.

It aims to ease the burden for those seeking foreign employment while boosting remittances to Pakistan. He added that the Digital Youth Hub has reached 15 million youth via social media and is expected to reach 100 million soon. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is committed to providing all possible resources to support the youth and a National Youth Employment Policy will be announced soon.

He also said that in June, one lakh laptops will be given on merit under the PM Youth Programme, and another 150,000 laptops will be distributed under the "Laptops for All" scheme, supported by interest-free loans of Rs. 500,000 each.

Rana Mashhood further stated that the 2028 Olympics is a target, and a talent hunt scheme for 28 sports will begin soon. A boxing talent hunt will launch next week, followed by a cricket hunt scheme after the PSL.

Fire erupts at Serena hotel, no injuries reported

ISLAMABAD (APP): A fire broke out on the top floor of Serena Hotel on Friday prompting a swift response from emergency teams. The spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration confirmed the blaze was quickly brought under control, with no loss of life or property.

According to the ICT administration spokesman, a fire broke out on the top floor of the Serena Hotel, triggering an immediate response from local fire and emergency services. He said that the fire started due to an electrical short circuit in the hotel's HVAC system.

The fire was reported in the cooling system installed on the top floor of the hotel. As soon as the alarm was raised, four fire brigade vehicles were dispatched to the scene. Officials from the Assistant Commissioner's office, Disaster Management Authority, and Emergency Services also reached the site.

District administration representatives confirmed

that the fire was contained quickly. Cooling operations were carried out after the flames were extinguished to prevent any further risk of ignition. The spokesman said, the fire began in the HVAC unit—a component of the hotel's ventilation and air conditioning system—which caught fire due to a short circuit. Firefighters present at the hotel at the time responded without delay and began the extinguishing process immediately.

The fire brigade's swift action was credited for preventing the fire from spreading to other parts of the building. Meanwhile, the officials confirmed that hotel guests and staff were safe and there was no need for evacuation as the fire was limited to a technical area on the rooftop.

Throughout the emergency, personnel from the Assistant Commissioner's Secretariat, the Emergency and Disaster Management teams, and the fire brigade remained at the scene to

monitor the situation and ensure public safety.

Authorities stated that the hotel's safety protocols helped minimize the impact and allowed firefighters to operate without obstructions. An investigation into the exact cause and timeline of the fire incident has been initiated, but initial findings suggest the source was purely technical, with no foul play suspected.

The district administration praised the coordination between the firefighting units and emergency response teams, highlighting how their timely action prevented what could have been a major emergency in a busy part of the city.

Authorities urged all public and private buildings to review their fire safety systems and electrical infrastructure, especially in critical areas like HVAC systems, which are prone to short circuits. Meanwhile, the district administration has reaffirmed its commitment to safety and rapid emergency response.

National policy to embrace newborn mental health initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Health Dr. Nelson Azeem on Friday announced that newborns' mental health will be incorporated into Pakistan's national health policy.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the country's first international Infant Mental Health Conference, he said that the earliest years of life lay the foundation for lifelong mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

He highlighted that around 40 percent of Pakistan's population is under the age of 15. "If we nurture our children properly today, we can build a healthy, capable, and productive workforce that ensures economic progress and social stability," he said.

The conference was jointly organized by the Health Services Academy (degree-awarding institution), The Healing Triad, and the Pakistan Institute of Living and Learning.

The central theme of the event was "Baby Matters,"

aimed at promoting mental health services for children from birth to age three.

Key speakers included Dr. Alexander Harrison, Dr. Nadeem Zafar, and Prof. Mudat H. Rana, while representatives from the Ministry of National Health Services, World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, Pakistan Paediatric Association, Pakistan Psychiatric Society, Institute of Psychiatry (Benazir Bhutto Hospital Rawalpindi), Health Services Academy, and other national and international organizations also participated.

Director Projects at HSA, Nadeem Sajjad Kayani, and Additional Controller of Examinations Dr. Khalid Iqbal Malik, along with HSA's senior faculty, were in attendance. Representing the HSA Vice Chancellor, Head of Public Health Department Dr. Babar Tasneem Shaikh welcomed the participants and outlined the critical gaps in infant mental health services in Pakistan, along with their serious social and medical consequences.

Dr. Shaikh emphasized the need for effective parenting, early intervention services, and community-level awareness for this age group.

The conference provided a unique platform for dialogue and collaboration between international and local experts. Local participants included Dr. Abid Malik, Dr. Asad Tameezuddin, Dr. Ayesha Minhas, Dr. Sarwat, Dr. Wajid Malik, Dr. Alia Khalid, Dr. Roop Zainab Rana, and Ms. Farwa Naqvi from Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Dr. Azeem pointed out that research clearly indicates how adverse early childhood experiences—such as stress, abuse, or neglect—have a lasting impact on brain development. He noted that maternal depression during pregnancy, stress in newborns, and lack of early stimulation contribute to developmental delays, malnutrition, and academic failure, threatening the nation's future.

Blast reported in Kunduz

KUNDUZ (Amu tv): An explosion struck the northern city of Kunduz on Thursday evening, targeting a Taliban patrol unit, local sources told Amu. The blast occurred at approximately 8:05 p.m. in Hilal Alley, located in the second police district (PD2) of the provincial capital, the sources said. They added that the explosion appeared to have been aimed at a Taliban night patrol operating in the area. As of Thursday night, no information had been released regarding casualties or the extent of damage.

Authorities recover illegally occupied land

KABUL (BNA): The Commission for Preventing Land Usurpation in Logar Province announced the recovery of more than 56,000 Jerib (over 27,600 Acres) of state land illegally occupied during the previous solar year (1403), which corresponds to the period from March 21, 2024, to March 20, 2025. Commission Secretary Mawlawi Shafuallah Shahin reported that the reclaimed land, located in the provincial capital (Pul-e-Alam), Abchakan Desert, Wazir Kala.

Taliban appeal for aid to support migrants in meeting with British envoy

KABUL (Amu tv): Taliban officials in a meeting with Robert Dickson, the UK's charge d'affaires for Afghanistan, called for increased humanitarian aid and cooperation in support of migrants amid mounting deportations from neighboring countries.

The Taliban-run Ministry of Refugees said that Abdul Kabir, the Taliban's minister of refugees, urged greater international assistance during the meeting. He said that Afghan migrants are being subjected to "oppression and injustice" that violates Islamic values, humanitarian principles, and international law.

This comes as many activists who have fled over Taliban threats said they are concerned about being sent back to Afghanistan.

This comes as Pakistan and Iran continue large-scale deportations of Afghans, many of whom had lived in the countries for years without formal legal status. Pakistani officials have said the deadline for the voluntary return of undocumented Afghan nationals has expired, and have rejected calls to extend it.

According to the statement, Dickson told Taliban officials that a new proposal related to Afghanistan is under consideration at the United Nations and will be shared with the Taliban administration at a later stage. Dickson has not commented on the meeting so far. Taliban have faced



growing international criticism over their human rights record, especially regarding the treatment of

women and girls. Despite this, they continue to seek foreign engagement, particularly in addressing the

humanitarian crisis affecting millions of Afghans displaced both inside and outside the country.

Afghan-Uzbek trade volume exceeds \$1b

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Uzbek ambassador to Kabul has said that trade volume between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan has reached \$1.1 billion and is expected to rise to \$2 billion next year.

In a statement published on its X account, Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said that Acting Minister Maulvi Abdul Kabir met Uzbek Ambassador Oybek Usmanov in Kabul.

During the meeting, Ambassador Usmanov highlighted the growing trade volume between the two countries, noting that it had reached \$1.1 billion and is projected to increase to \$2 billion in the coming year.

Maulvi Kabir welcomed the strengthening of economic ties and emphasized the Islamic Emirate's commitment to expanding relations with Uzbekistan and other neighboring countries.

He underscored the importance of implementing projects such as Afghan Transit, saying that enhanced regional cooperation would contribute to economic development and stability.

The acting minister also criticized Pakistan for the forced deportation of Afghan refugees, stating that many are currently facing severe hardships.

4 convicted murders publicly executed

KABUL (Pajhwok): Four individuals were publicly executed on Friday in the western provinces of Farah and Badghis, and the northwestern province of Nimroz, the Supreme Court (SC) announced.

According to a statement from the SC, the executions were carried out following the endorsement of verdicts by courts at all three levels and final approval from the leadership of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

In Badghis, two individuals were executed. The first, identified as Sulaiman, was a resident of Chah Jalal village in Tagab Alam district.

He had murdered three people using a Kalashnikov rifle. The second, Haidar, son of Majnun, hailed from Nakhcharistan village in Dara Bum district, and had shot and killed one person.

In Nimroz, another execution was carried out at the Shaheed Haqqani Sports Stadium in Zaranj City, the provincial capital. The convict, Abdul Qadir, a resident of Zaranj, had gunned down one person with a pistol.

Meanwhile, in Farah province, Mohammad Sadiq, a resident of Sheb Koh district, was executed after being convicted of stabbing a person to death.

The Supreme Court noted that these executions were carried out in accordance with Sharia law after due judicial process.

MoRR inks \$2.5m agreements with 3 NGOs

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) has signed four agreements worth more than \$2.5 million with three organizations. On X, MoRR wrote it had signed the agreements with Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Rural Rehabilitation and Development Program, and the Organization for Environmental Education and Development.

The ministry said that the total value of the four agreements is \$2,550,270.

Under these agreements, the organizations will spend the allocated funds on food distribution, shelter construction, vocational training, and public awareness programs. The projects are expected to benefit 6,660 displaced and returned families in the provinces of Nangarhar, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Herat, Badghis, Kunar, Balkh, and Sar-i-Pul.

54m afs customs parking facility being built

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has launched the construction of a large-scale vehicle parking facility worth over 54 million afghanis to support customs operations in the northwestern province of Nimroz.

In a post on X, the ministry said that the facility will span approximately 47 jeribs of land and will be built to modern standards.

Once completed, it will provide improved infrastructure and essential services for customs personnel, traders, and drivers, it added. The project, valued at 54.2 million afghanis, is being funded through the MoF's development budget.

According to the ministry, the construction is being carried out by an Afghan company and is expected to be completed within the next six months.

1 killed in Baghlan accident

PUL-I-KHUMARI (Pajhwok): One person has been killed and two others injured in a traffic accident in northern Baghlan province. According to a statement from the provincial police headquarters.

IEA supreme leader urges officials to serve diligently

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has said that government authorities are obligated to serve the public, just as the people supported the Mujahideen during the "Jihadi era."

He emphasized that the time has come for officials to return that service to the people.

Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesman for the IEA, wrote on his X account that Sheikh Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada on Thursday met with Pakia Governor Mullah Mehruallah Hamad, the head of the Ulema Council, the provincial police chief, the intelligence director, and heads of all government departments in the province.

During the meeting, the

IEA leader said: "Allah the Almighty has granted us a great opportunity. Be thankful to Him for providing a favorable environment for the promotion of knowledge, religion, Islam, unity, solidarity, brotherhood, and faith-based cooperation. Preserving and protecting these blessings is our shared responsibility."

He urged officials to remain vigilant in their duties and avoid negligence. Mullah Haibatullah stressed the importance of implementing Islamic and Sharia law, particularly the principle of "enjoining good and forbidding evil," which he described as a central goal of Islam.

He said the time had come to apply Sharia in economic, political, and military affairs. He added: "Strive to main-

tain strong coordination among yourselves. Obey your superiors, and ensure good cooperation with ministers and department heads in your respective ministries. Obedience to ministers is mandatory for all officials and must be taken seriously."

Reiterating his message, he said: "Just as the people once served the Mujahideen during the Jihadi era, now it is the officials' turn to serve the people."

The IEA leader also called on authorities to work actively to address public grievances, resolve local conflicts and tribal disputes, and contribute to the restoration of peace and security.

He urged officials to make strong efforts toward fostering reconciliation and harmony within their communities.

Mansoor: No Secret Annexes in the Doha agreement



KABUL (TOLONews): The acting minister of water and energy has said that the Doha Agreement between the United States and the Islamic Emirate contains no secret annexes.

Abdul Latif Mansoor said that removing the names of Islamic Emirate officials from the UN blacklist was part of the agreement's next stages, which have yet to be implemented.

"The bounties have been lifted — there's no doubt about that. They [the US] said it's under their authority, as they had

imposed them. But the blacklist was imposed by the United Nations. Since there are many member states involved, full consensus is required to remove the names. So now, Alhamdulillah, the Islamic Emirate remains committed to everything that was agreed upon in the Doha Agreement. The world should also honor its commitments and lift these lists," he said.

Referring to the Doha peace process, Mansoor said that intra-Afghan talks were part of the agreement's next phase,

but due to the lack of unity among the previous Afghan government's negotiating team, those talks yielded no results.

He continued: "The team that came from Afghanistan for the intra-Afghan negotiations consisted of individuals from various parties and with differing views.

Even the former government was formed based on political compromise. So when discussions took place, no quick consensus could be reached. They would often disagree among themselves."

Mansoor also noted that the main pillars of the Doha Agreement were: the complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, the start of intra-Afghan dialogue, a permanent ceasefire, and a guarantee that Afghan soil would not be used against the United States.

This comes as both the Islamic Emirate and the United States have previously accused each other of violating parts of the agreement.

Taliban expand ban on filming living beings to more provinces

KABUL (Amu tv): The Taliban have expanded their ban on capturing and broadcasting images of living beings to the provinces of Zabul and Parwan, according to the Afghanistan Journalists' Center (AFJC).

The directive, issued by the Taliban-run Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, prohibits local media and institutions from filming or photographing people and animals — a move the AFJC warns will have "far-reaching negative consequences" for press freedom and the public's right to information.

Sources also confirmed that similar instructions were recently issued in Badakhshan and Jawzjan, where Taliban departments for the promotion of virtue ordered a complete halt to filming and photography under the group's so-called Promotion of Virtue Law.

In Jawzjan, a formal letter was sent to the provincial governor's office declaring that all government departments in Sheberghan and surrounding districts must refrain from capturing images of individuals. The letter, signed by Taliban-appointed governor Gol Haidar Shafaq,

warned that violating the order would be considered a "grave sin" and would carry consequences.

In Zabul, local journalists told the AFJC that the ban was communicated verbally. As a result, the local branch of National Television has ceased its televised programming and now only broadcasts via radio.

The AFJC expressed deep concern over the escalating restrictions on media, saying such orders not only violate freedom of expression but also undermine the ability of citizens to access accurate and timely information.

Iranian economic delegation visits western Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): An Iranian economic delegation has visited Afghanistan's bordering province of Herat and held talks with local officials about expanding trade with the country.

The delegation is headed by Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Rasoul Mohajir, and comprises Deputy Minister of Planning and Resource Management of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and the Governor of South Khorasan Province.

The Iranian embassy in Kabul said the delegation visited the Khaf-Herat railway and the industrial township of Herat, met with the provincial governor and a group of businessmen and discussed the expansion of trade between the two countries.

After Herat, the delegation will also visit Farah province to discuss ways to develop bilateral cooperation and facilitate the transportation of goods between Iran and Afghanistan.

UNICEF provides health services to over 20 million people



KABUL (Khaama Press): UNICEF provided essential health services to over 20 million people in Afghanistan, including nearly 10 million children and mothers, during the year 2024.

In 2024, UNICEF provided essential health services to more than 20 million people in Afghanistan, half of whom were children, according to its annual report released on Thursday, April 10. These services were delivered through health centers supported by the UN agency across various provinces in the country.

The report also highlights that nearly 12 million mothers and children

benefited from UNICEF's nutrition programs, which were critical in addressing widespread malnutrition and food insecurity under challenging humanitarian conditions.

UNICEF emphasized the role of community-based education in reaching vulnerable populations, especially girls. Around 564,000 children, 64% of whom were girls, accessed learning opportunities through its "Community-Based Education" initiative, aimed at bridging educational gaps in rural and underserved areas.

Despite these achievements, UNICEF acknowledged the complex humanitarian landscape in

Afghanistan, citing ongoing challenges related to access, security, and restrictions imposed under Taliban governance that affect program delivery and community outreach.

In September 2023, UNICEF reported its support of approximately 2,400 health centers across Taliban-controlled regions, ensuring continued access to basic medical services for remote and conflict-affected populations.

The agency's efforts were particularly vital in the absence of a fully functioning public health system. Humanitarian organizations have filled critical service gaps as Afghanistan continues to grapple with economic collapse and institutional disruptions since the change in regime in 2021.

UNICEF has called on the international community to maintain funding and support for humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. Sustained efforts are deemed essential to protect the rights and wellbeing of Afghanistan's children and ensure continued access to health, nutrition, and education services.

Residents urge govt support for small-scale power dams

HELMAND (TOLONews): The regional directorate of Da Breshna Sherkat stated that over 10 megawatts of electricity are being generated through small-scale power dams in the province.

One of these small hydroelectric systems is located in the Fasel Babaji area of Lashkar Gah city, where five families are benefiting from it. This mini power station was built by local residents and provides electricity around the clock.

Asadullah, the person in charge of the unit, told TOLONews: "We built this dam collectively. Five families contributed, each investing 50,000 afghani. If the government supports this, the dam could provide electricity to many more families."



Several other small-scale power systems have also been installed along the Boghra Canal in Helmand, although some of them do not meet standard quality.

Meanwhile, residents of Helmand say the province has abundant water resources, and proper hydroelectric dams should be built. They believe that if stan-

dard small-scale power dams are developed, it would greatly improve local living conditions.

Sayed Mohammad, a resident of Helmand, said: "If the government sends a team to assess these dams, that would be very good. We have water here, but it is not being used for power generation. The government should invest in the non-

functional micro dams and repair them." The Helmand electricity authority stated that there are seven locations in the Bashran area and 18 in the Garmsir district where small-scale power dams with a capacity of up to 10 megawatts could be constructed.

Shir Ahmad, head of energy regulation at the Helmand Breshna authority, told TOLONews: "We have surveyed all areas in Helmand where small hydro turbines can be installed. If the private sector invests in electricity production, both sides will benefit more. We will also provide additional facilities for them." The Helmand Breshna company pledged that it is ready to provide various facilities to investors interested in the electricity sector in the province.



HYDERABAD: Supporters of Sunni Tehreek burning effigy of Israeli PM during a protest against attacks on Gaza.

PHC orders govt to formulate policy on cryptocurrency

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has ordered federal government to develop a comprehensive policy regarding cryptocurrency and digital currency within two months and submit report in this regard, on Friday.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Syed Arshad Ali and Dr. Khurshid Iqbal heard a petition filed by Barrister Huzaifa Ahmad highlighting the need for regulation in the cryptocurrency to prevent illegal activities.

The petitioner argued that while technology has introduced digital currency, there are no laws in Pakistan to regulate or control it. Although the State Bank of Pakistan declared online cryptocurrency trading illegal in 2018, many individuals continue to engage in this activity through various digital platforms.

Barrister Huzaifa argued that cryptocurrency and forex trading are

being promoted on social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, with coaching centers and training academies operating illegally in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

There is no governmental monitoring of these academies, allowing operators and traders to collect and withdraw funds online without any checks. Digital currency poses a risk to the state and security, as it can be used for terrorism, gambling, and other anti-state activities, the petitioner stated.

Deputy Attorney General Bilal Durrani informed the court that the federal government is already working on legislation to regulate cryptocurrency trading and requested for provision of one month for legislation in this regard. However, the court has given the government two months to finalize the policy and submit a report.

PHC directed the federal government to formulate a policy to regulate cryptocurrency trading and take

actions against illegal trading activities. The government has been given two months to submit a report to the court, outlining the steps taken to address the issues raised in the petition.

PHC extends Jhagra's bail: PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal has extended the protective bail of former provincial minister Taimur Saleem Jhagra, barring authorities from arresting him.

The counsel Ali Gohar Durrani advocate informed the court that the petitioner had received a notice for sharing a post on social media and was summoned by a Joint Investigation Team (JIT). PHC asked about Taimour Jhagra's whereabouts, the lawyer revealed that the petitioner currently abroad and would return to Pakistan in two days, prompting the court to consider the protective bail application to prevent his arrest at the airport.

US envoy Witkoff holds talks with Putin

MOSCOW (Reuters): US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff held talks with President Vladimir Putin on Friday in St Petersburg about the search for a peace deal on Ukraine as Trump told Russia to "get moving".

Putin was shown on state TV greeting Witkoff in St Petersburg's presidential library at the start of the negotiations. The Izvestia news outlet earlier released a video of Witkoff leaving a hotel in the city, accompanied by Kirill Dmitriev, Putin's investment envoy.

Witkoff has emerged as a key figure in the on-off rapprochement between Moscow and Washington amid talk on the Russian side of potential joint investments in the Arctic and in Russian rare earth minerals. However, the talks come at a time when US-Russia dialogue aimed at agreeing a ceasefire ahead of a possible peace deal to end the war in Ukraine appears to have stalled over disagreements around conditions for a full pause in hostilities.

Trump, who has shown signs of losing patience, has spoken of imposing secondary sanctions on countries that buy Russian oil if he feels Moscow is dragging its feet on a Ukrainian deal. On Friday, he said in a post on Truth Social: "Russia has to get moving. Too many people [are] dying, thousands a week, in a terrible and senseless war — A war that should have never happened, and wouldn't have happened, if I were president!!!"

Putin has said he is ready in principle to agree to a full ceasefire, but has said that many crucial conditions have yet to be agreed upon about how it would work and has said that what he calls the root causes of the war have yet to be addressed. Specifically, he has said that Ukraine should not join Nato, that the size of its army needs to be limited and that Russia should get the entirety of the territory of the four Ukrainian regions it claims as its own despite not fully controlling any of them. With Moscow controlling just under 20 per cent of Ukraine and Russian forces continuing to advance on the battlefield, the Kremlin believes Russia is in a strong position when it comes to negotiations and that Ukraine should make concessions.

Senate confirms Dan as top US general

WASHINGTON: The US Senate has confirmed Air Force General Dan Caine as chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff after his predecessor's abrupt sacking two months ago. Caine's nomination by President Donald Trump was approved with some bipartisan support by an overnight vote on Friday of 60 to 25 before a two-week recess.

At his confirmation hearing earlier this month, he promised to be apolitical and said he would be candid in his advice to Trump. When asked by Michigan Democratic Senator Elissa Slotkin if he would "stand up and push back" if ordered to direct the military to do something potentially illegal, Caine said it was "duty and the job that I have, yes".

Last week, at his confirmation hearing, Caine told senators that he would "continue the traditions and standards of my oath of office and my commission as a nonpartisan leader who will always strive to do the right thing". But Caine, who has served in various positions, including associate director for military affairs at the CIA, and flown more than 150 hours in combat as an F-16 fighter jet pilot, does not meet the prerequisites for the Joint Chiefs of Staff position in the 1986 law.

The legislation outlines that the chairman must have been a combatant commander or service chief. However, the president can waive requirements if "such action is necessary in the national interest". Trump's relationship with Caine dates back to his first administration when they met during a trip to Iraq. Still, his confirmation comes after Joint Chiefs chairman, General Charles "CQ" Brown, the second Black general to serve in the position, was dismissed as part of a sweeping cull of military leaders who support diversity and equity shortly after Trump came to power in January. — Aljazeera

Air Chief discusses ties with Chinese military leadership

E.P. Report



ISLAMABAD: Air Chief Marshal Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, called on various dignitaries during his visit to China. In these meetings, the Air Chief called on Chinese Minister of National Defence, Admiral Dong Jun, General Chang Dingqiu, People's Liberation Army Air Force Commander and Major General Cao Xiaojian, Director General Bureau of Military Equipment & Technical Cooperation (BOMETEC).

On his arrival, the Air Chief was warmly welcomed by Chinese military leadership. The visit aimed at enhancing the existing strategic partnership between the two nations, included high-level discussions and agreements geared towards deepening military cooperation. During this historical engagement between the highest level military leadership of the two nations, Chief of the Air Staff said that Pakistan values its strong diplomatic and defence ties with China which are based on convergence on all important issues related to regional peace and security while reiterating strong strategic partnership in the face of shared challenges.

A smartly turned out contingent presented Guard of Honor to Air Chief Marshal Baber Sidhu on his arrival at the People's Liberation Army Air Force Headquarters in Beijing, China. The PLAAF Commander expressed his admiration for the professionalism of PAF personnel and praised the remarkable progress made by the Pakistan Air Force through indigenization. Chief of the Air Staff expressed sincere gratitude for the warm hospitality extended by the host country, underscoring the long-standing ties and

collaboration between Pakistan and China.

He emphasized the importance of enhancing institutional collaboration, joint exercises and high-level exchanges with the People's Liberation Army Air Force to effectively address shared security challenges. Both Commanders agreed to establish a Joint Working Group to further enhance the existing collaboration between the two Air Forces. The initiative will facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices, vital for both nations in developing robust Air Force capabilities.

In the meeting with Chinese Defence Minister, Admiral Dong Jun, both the dignitaries reaffirmed their shared commitment to revitalize the existing bilateral ties in military-to-military cooperation and strategic alliance between the two countries. Admiral Dong Jun highlighted that the two militaries have achieved significant progress in areas of strategic communication, joint exercises and training domains. Both sides agreed on enhancing Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation, particularly through complex and aggressive tactical-level scenarios during aerial exercises. The cooperation is aimed at addressing challenges in multiple domains during joint exercises, equipping air and ground crew of both Air Forces with the skills necessary to counter modern Air and Space Warfare challenges effectively.

In a separate meeting with Major General Cao Xiaojian, Director General

of the Bureau of Military Equipment & Technical Cooperation (BOMETEC), Chief of the Air Staff highlighted the significance of exploring opportunities for technology transfer and collaborative development of advanced military hardware aimed at enhancing the operational capabilities of both sides. Policy-level decisions were made to increase cooperation in industrial domains, with a focus on identifying weaknesses and bridging gaps in capacity and capability. The Air Chief also met the industrial heads of Chinese Defence Industry.

As part of the discussions, Chief of the Air Staff invited Chinese companies to participate in the National Aerospace Science & Technology Park being spearheaded by Pakistan Air Force. He emphasized the importance of fostering joint ventures and corporate-to-corporate collaboration focusing on cutting-edge technologies. The Air Chief highlighted that NASTP offers a tax-free regime and an optimum environment for the development of pioneering initiatives in Unmanned Aerial Systems, Advanced Guided Weaponry, Space Programs, Electronic Warfare domains, Cyber Warfare, ISR as well as multi-domain operations.

This visit of Chief of the Air Staff to China is a testament to the mutual commitment of both countries to deepen their longstanding partnership through continued dialogue and military collaboration, which will yield strategic dividends for both the countries.

Command & Staff moot at Naval HQs concludes



E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Command & Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy concluded at Naval Headquarters in Islamabad today. The conference was chaired by Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf.

During the conference, participants assessed the evolving maritime situation in the region with a focus on national security, geostrategic affairs, and combat readiness. Progress on ongoing Pakistan Navy projects, along with future plans, was also reviewed.

The Naval Chief emphasized the importance of maintaining perpetual combat readiness to effectively counter both traditional and non-traditional threats in the maritime domain. He appreciated Navy's efforts in acquiring advanced platforms and technologies, expressing confidence in its operational preparedness to safeguard Pakistan's maritime frontiers.

Admiral Ashraf also commended the successful conduct of multinational exercise AMAN-25 and AMAN Dialogue, underscoring their significance in

fostering maritime collaboration among regional and extra-regional naval forces. He noted that these initiatives reflect Pakistan's commitment to cooperative maritime security, in line with Navy's vision for a secure and stable maritime environment.

The Command & Staff Conference is the apex decision-making forum of Pakistan Navy, where the Chief of the Naval Staff, along with all Principal Staff Officers and Field Commanders, reviews the policies and strategic plans of the service.

Saif: Terrorism eradicated during Imran's tenure

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, said that human rights violations have become a daily occurrence in the country since the regime change.

He warned of a renewed wave of terrorism that had been eradicated during Imran Khan's tenure. "Pakistan is facing international isolation, and the people are suffering under unprecedented inflation," he said.

Dr. Saif emphasized that

prior to the regime change, Pakistan was on a path of development under the leadership of Imran Khan. "Electricity prices, which were Rs. 15 per unit, have now soared to Rs. 40-50 per unit," he said. "Petrol, which cost Rs. 150 per liter, has reached nearly Rs. 260 per liter. Basic food items are now out of the reach of the common man."

He criticized the current administration for boasting about a minor Rs. 7 reduction in electricity rates after previously raising them significantly. "Those who used to criticize petrol prices at Rs. 150 per liter

are now selling it at Rs. 260, despite global crude oil prices being lower than during Imran Khan's government," he remarked. "According to international market rates, petrol in Pakistan should cost less than Rs. 100 per liter."

Dr. Saif labeled the current administration a "fake government" and accused it of being responsible for the country's current economic and social downfall. He demanded accountability and questioned the true motive behind the regime change, asserting that it was the root cause of the ongoing crisis.

Two-year transfer policy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — Bureaucratic resistance or a struggle for systemic reform?

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government enforced a two-year transfer policy for civil servants on February 28, 2025, aimed at removing long-serving officials from fixed posts to promote transparency and improve administrative efficiency. However, the policy's implementation has faced stiff resistance from within the bureaucracy itself.

According to sources, in several departments the policy remains largely confined to official documents, with reports of officers using bribes or connections

to either block their transfers or return to the same positions within days. In one notable case, the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, removed a senior officer from their post — a move seen as a strong message to others. The health department appears to be the most problematic, with many transfers involving nothing more than a shift from one room to another, and several not taking place at all. In the education and higher education departments, orders were allegedly ignored, with transfers either canceled or rebrand-

ed as mutual changes to allow officials to retain their original positions. The situation in the Archives and Libraries department is even more alarming. Some officials who were transferred on April 4 were reinstated to their previous posts by April 8 — with a few reportedly occupying the same seats for up to 19 years. The Tourism department hasn't been immune either. In some cases, transfers were carried out superficially to create the illusion of compliance and satisfy the Chief Secretary. All this comes amid clear directives from Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah that any

officer serving on the same post for more than two years must be removed immediately. The rationale behind this policy is rooted in concerns that prolonged occupancy of a post enables officials to engage in non-transparent practices for personal financial gain — undermining the very system they are meant to uphold. The pressing question now is whether the Chief Secretary can effectively act against bureaucrats obstructing this reform — and whether the government has the resolve to dismantle what many see as a mafia-like resistance from within.



of Shuhada received their awards posthumously.

The Corps Commander interacted with the families of the Martyrs and paid a

glowing tribute to their sacrifices. A large number of senior Army officers and families of awardees attended the ceremony.

Rawalpindi Corps honors heroes with awards

E.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Corps investiture ceremony of Rawalpindi Corps was held on Friday. Commander Rawalpindi Corps, Lieutenant General Shahid Imtiaz was Chief Guest on the occasion. Awards of Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military), Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and Tamgha-i-Basalat were conferred on Army officers and soldiers.

Two Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) and 15 soldiers were awarded Tamgha-i-Basalat. 47 officers were awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and 102 officers were awarded Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military) for rendering meritorious services to the nation. Next of kin (NOK)