

Cop martyred in gun attack  
F.P. Report

KARACHI: A police constable embraced martyrdom when unidentified accused opened fire on him in Karachi on Monday. The incident took place in Ranchore Line Police Station area of the megacity. The martyred cop was performing his duty in Chakiwara Police Station. The policeman was standing in front of a Biryani shop when unidentified gunmen sprayed him with bullets, killing him on the spot.



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# Pakistan's economy gaining momentum

## SBP Governor says remittances hit \$4.1b for March; launches PFLW 2025

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Mr. Jameel Ahmad, while attending the gong ceremony at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Monday, highlighted noticeable progress made by Pakistan on macroeconomic front.

Reflecting on the country's recent economic journey, the Governor emphasized that Pakistan has successfully transitioned from a period marked by macroeconomic instability characterized by high inflation, low reserves, and fears of default to one of stable macroeconomic conditions, renewed confidence, and recovery in economic growth. He pointed to significant improvements across multiple economic indicators, signaling a much-needed revival of economic growth.

He highlighted that inflation has come down substantially, external current account balance has turned into a surplus, FX buffers have been rebuilt, and public debt indicators have improved considerably during the past couple of years. He highlighted that workers' remittances reached an all-time high level of \$4.1 billion in March 2025 - partly reflecting the result of government and SBP efforts to incentivize the channeling of inflows via formal channels, as well as smooth functioning of domestic FX market. He said that total remittances for FY 25 are expected to be around USD 38 billion.

The Governor noted that with a sound macroeconomic base and renewed investor confidence, we have the opportunity to set Pakistan on a trajectory of broad-based, inclusive prosperity. He emphasized that this macroeconomic stability has been achieved through difficult policy decisions. Now, it is crucial to focus on sustainable growth. He pointed out that enhancing productivity and boosting exports must become central

to Pakistan's growth model, as export activity directly contributes to greater productivity, innovation, and foreign investment.

Ahmad urged stakeholders to come together and commit to long-term strategies that ensure sustainable and inclusive growth for Pakistan. While the country is on the path to recovery, he underscored the need for reforms to address structural issues for avoiding boom-bust cycles and economic stagnation. He reaffirmed the SBP's commitment to creating a resilient and inclusive financial ecosystem, supported by an enabling regulatory environment, as the foundation for Pakistan's economic prosperity.

The Governor also emphasized the need for financial literacy to achieve true financial inclusion. He highlighted that the SBP is holding the Pakistan Financial Literacy Week from April 14 to 18, where various activities are planned across the country to engage different segments of society in financial literacy efforts.

Mr. Ahmad reaffirmed that enhancing financial inclusion remains a top strategic goal within the SBP's Strategic Vision 2028, alongside building an innovative and inclusive digital financial ecosystem. The Governor shared key initiatives under the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2024-28, including efforts to increase financial inclusion from 64% to 75% by 2028, while reducing the gender gap in financial services from 34% to 25% by 2028.

The Governor SBP also expressed his appreciation to the PSX management for their continued efforts in providing a vital platform for the country's capital market. Mr. Ahmad highlighted the importance of the PSX in enabling corporations to raise capital and offering investors the opportunity for substantial returns on their savings.

Meanwhile, the inaugural ceremony of Pakistan Financial Literacy Week (PFLW) 2025 was held on Monday at the National Institute of Banking and Finance (NIBAF) Pakistan-Karachi. The event brought together key stakeholders from across the financial sector to promote the importance of financial education and inclusive growth under the theme "Financial Inclusion through Collaboration and Innovation."

Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and delivered the keynote address. A key highlight of the event was the launch of the National Financial Education Roadmap, unveiled by the Governor SBP. This strategic document outlines Pakistan's vision and actionable framework to expand the knowledge and access to quality financial services for all segments of society.

Ahmad emphasized the crucial role of financial literacy in building a more inclusive and resilient financial system. He highlighted SBP's efforts towards increasing the numbers of financial inclusion in the country and appreciated banking industry and other stakeholders for their role in financial literacy efforts. The Pakistan Financial Literacy Week 2025 will continue through April 18, 2025, featuring a wide range of activities including awareness campaigns, financial education sessions, school outreach programs, digital engagement initiatives and financial literacy walks across the country.

During the speech, Governor said that Pakistan has made significant strides in promoting financial inclusion through a range of initiatives. He elaborated that the National Financial Literacy Program for Adults and Youth has successfully trained over 3.4 million individuals, with women making up 58% of the participants.



RAWALPINDI: Youngsters bathing in a pond of tube well to get relief from scorching hot weather.

## PM hails foreign remittances crossing record

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday expressed his pleasure as foreign remittances sent by overseas Pakistanis in a month crossed the \$4 billion mark for the first time in the country's history, terming it a reflection of their trust in the government's policies.

The prime minister, in a statement, also thanked the Pakistani expatriates for sending a record \$4.1 billion during March this year, taking the current fiscal year's foreign remittance volume to \$28 billion. He said that a surge of 37.4% in foreign remittances was recorded compared to March last year.

He said that the announcement of a record increase in remittances during the ongoing Overseas Pakistanis Convention in Islamabad reflected the dedication, passion, and trust of overseas Pakistanis in the country's economy and the government's policies. Calling them a valuable asset, Prime Minister Shehbaz said that overseas Pakistanis working tirelessly abroad not only made the nation proud but also strengthened the national economy through remittances. He said that the entire nation was proud of hardworking overseas Pakistanis and the incumbent government was fully committed to providing them with all necessary facilities.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended his warm greetings to Sikhs living in Pakistan and around the world on the joyous occasion of Vaisakhi being celebrated. "This festive occasion marks the ripening of the Rabi harvest-a time of great joy for farmers as they reap the fruits of their hard labour," he said in his message on the occasion.

The prime minister said that the festival also served as a reminder of the enduring spirit of hope, unity, and renewal inspiring and uniting our communities and forming the strength and soul of our great nation. He wished that the Vaisakhi festival brings "prosperity to every field, peace to every heart, and progress to every corner of Pakistan."

# NA condemns Israeli atrocities in Gaza

## Azam calls for immediate end to violence

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Monday reaffirmed Pakistan's firm and long-standing position regarding the ongoing humanitarian crisis and genocide of innocent people in Palestine.

During his address in the National Assembly on Palestine issue, he expressed deep gratitude to colleagues from both opposition and treasury benches who joined in a bipartisan effort to discuss the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. "From day one, the people of Pakistan and the government of Pakistan-whichever government is in power-have maintained a clear and unwavering stance: we stand with our oppressed Palestinian brothers and sisters, and we will continue to do so. We strongly condemn this cruelty and barbarism in the strongest terms."

He further emphasized Pakistan's active role in providing humanitarian aid to the best of its ability, and its

continued efforts to do more as the situation evolves. "In terms of relief, we are doing everything within our capacity. Moreover, when it comes to decisions made at the international level under international law for peace-keeping, you will find Pakistan at the forefront," he declared. He also emphasized Pakistan's deep commitment to justice, peace, and solidarity with the oppressed.

Tarar emphasized the significance of October 7, 2023, calling it a dark day in modern human history due to what he described as a brutal and genocidal military campaign launched by the State of Israel against Palestinians, especially in Gaza. "This date will be remembered as a day of crisis," he said, adding that the unprecedented level of violence and destruction marked a grim chapter in modern warfare.

Citing figures based on international consensus, Tarar revealed that at least 65,000 Palestinians, including women, children, and civilians, have lost their lives over the past 17

months. He noted that the actual number may be higher, with an estimated 150,000 people impacted by the ongoing Israeli aggression. He further stated that approximately 15,000 individuals remain missing, their remains buried under the rubble following intense bombings and the use of heavy explosives by Israeli forces.

Tarar lamented the silence of certain global powers in the face of what he called clear violations of international law, stating that history would remember those who chose inaction. He praised countries and regions - including parts of Europe, the United States, Australia, Asia, and particularly the Islamic world - for raising their voices in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Highlighting a notable international effort, Tarar commended the South African government for taking the matter to the International Court of Justice, initiating legal proceedings to hold Israel accountable.

# SC hears pleas against judges transfer

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A five-member constitutional bench of the Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) acting chief justice and its two other judges as it took up pleas against their recent transfer to the court and the subsequent changes in the seniority list.

The bench headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and comprising Justices Naeem Akhtar Afghan, Shahid Bilal Hassan, Salahuddin Panhwar, and Shakeel Ahmed took up petitions filed by five IHC judges, the Karachi Bar Association (KBA) and the IHC Bar Association, among others.

Supreme Court of Pakistan has refused to immediately restrain judges who have been transferred to the Islamabad High Court (IHC)

from performing their duties. The Supreme Court issued notices to Acting Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court Justice Sardar Sarfraz Dogar, Justice Khadim Husain, and Justice Muhammad Asif, based on the petition filed by five IHC judges.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that there are five separate petitions before the court, all revolving around similar issues. He noted that the core issues are whether the transferred judges retain their previous seniority or start afresh in the new high court, and whether civil service seniority rules apply to the judiciary which, he clarified, they do not. During the proceedings, senior lawyer Munir A. Malik, representing the petitioners, said the objection is both to the transfers and the changes in seniority. Justice Mazhar asked Malik to read Article 200 of the Constitution,

which governs judicial transfers. Malik argued that such transfers should be temporary and based on the judge's consent.

However, Justice Mazhar pointed out that the Constitution does not distinguish between temporary and permanent transfers—it simply states that the President can transfer a judge with the consent of the judge and the Chief Justices of the concerned high courts, as well as the Chief Justice of Pakistan.

Justice Mazhar further explained that a judge's seniority is counted from the date of their initial oath, even if they are re-administered the oath after transfer. He noted that if seniority is considered afresh from the new oath, it would negate the judge's previous service. The court also dismissed the request to summon the record of the judges' transfers.

## Repatriation of Afghan immigrants underway

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Repatriation of illegal Afghan nationals is in progress and last day 3345 Afghan citizens returned to the country through Torkham crossing, official informed. The immigration official in Torkham said that approximately 452 Afghan families residing in various cities and districts of the countries were deported to Afghanistan on Sunday.

He added that after necessary documentation in the transit camp in Landi Kotal or immigration office in Torkham, the deportees were sent back to their country. As per Home and Tribal Affairs department, government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in last 13 days as many as 5072 families comprising 46987 illegal Afghan citizens have returned to Afghanistan via Torkham border.

Meanwhile, a number of charity donor organizations and local philanthropists have set up their makeshifts outside the transit camp and in Torkham to serve the home return Afghanis besides government facilitation in the transit camp. They provide food, water and juices to the repatriated families and gifts and sweets to their children.

# China, Vietnam sign deals as Xi visits Hanoi

HANOI: China's President Xi Jinping on Monday called for stronger ties with Vietnam on trade and supply chains amid disruptions caused by US tariffs, as he attended in Hanoi the signing of dozens of cooperation agreements between the two Communist-run nations.

The visit, planned for weeks and part of a wider trip in Southeast Asia, comes as Beijing faces 145% US duties, while Vietnam is negotiating a reduction of threatened US tariffs of 46% that would otherwise apply in July after a global moratorium expires. "The two sides should strengthen cooperation in production and supply chains," Xi said in an article in Nhandan, the newspaper of Vietnam's Communist Party, posted ahead of his arrival on Monday. He also urged more trade and stronger ties with Hanoi on artificial intelligence and the green economy.

"There are no winners in trade wars and tariff wars," Xi added, without mentioning the US specifically. After he met Vietnam's top leader To Lam, the two countries signed dozens of cooperation agreements, footage of the documents reviewed by Reuters showed, including deals on enhancing supply chains and on cooperation over railways.

The content of the agreements was not disclosed and it was unclear whether they involved any financial or binding commitments. On Saturday Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Bui Thanh Son had said around 40 agreements would be signed. A separate aviation business deal was signed on Sunday. Under pressure from Washington, Vietnam is tightening controls on some trade with China to make sure goods exported to the United States with a "Made in Vietnam" label have sufficient added value in the country to justify that.

One memorandum of understanding signed on Monday is to boost cooperation between the China Council for the

Promotion of International Trade and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which issues certificates on the origins of goods. Vietnam is a major industrial and assembly hub in Southeast Asia. Most of its imports are from China while the United States is its main export market. The country is a crucial source of electronics, shoes and apparel for the United States.

In the first three months of this year Hanoi imported goods worth about \$30 billion from Beijing while its exports to Washington amounted to \$31.4 billion. Vietnam's customs data show, confirming a long-term trend in which imports from China closely match the value and swings of exports to the US. After a two-day stop in Hanoi, Xi will continue his Southeast Asian trip on Tuesday by visiting Malaysia and Cambodia from April 15 to 18. He last visited Cambodia and Malaysia nine and 12 years ago, respectively.

Xi's trip to Hanoi, his second in less than 18 months, aims to consolidate relations with a neighbour that has received billions of dollars of Chinese investments in recent years as China-based manufacturers moved south to avoid tariffs imposed by the first Trump administration. Vietnam's Lam in an article published on Monday on state media said Hanoi wanted to boost cooperation in defence, security and infrastructure, especially on rail links.

Vietnam has agreed to use Chinese loans to build new railways between the two countries, in a major confidence-building step that would boost bilateral trade and connections. However, no loan agreement has yet been announced. After prolonged pressure, Beijing obtained Vietnam's approval for planes authorised by the Chinese aviation regulator, which paves the way for the use of China-made COMAC passenger jets in the Southeast Asian nation. — Aljazeera

# KP financial matters, NFC discussed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As a significant step toward resolving financial matters of the province related to the federation, was held in Islamabad on Monday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair. Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Water Resources Muhammad Mueen Wattoo, and relevant federal secretaries attended the meeting. From the provincial government, the Chief Minister's Advisor on Finance Muzzammil Aslam, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Tariq Sadozai, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, and concerned administrative secretaries were present.

On this occasion, detailed discussions were held regarding pending issues such as the arrears owed by the federation to the province under net hydel profit, the new NFC Award, and the provision of development funds for the merged districts. Officials of the provincial government briefed the partici-

pants on these matters and presented the province's stance in a well-reasoned manner. The federal officials attending the meeting, agreed in principle with the provincial government's stance and assured that efforts would be made at the federal level to resolve these matters on a priority basis.

The participants were informed that the federation owes the province Rs. 1,900 billion under net hydel profit arrears, while Rs. 77 billion are also payable by the federation under the interim mechanism for net hydel profit payments. The provincial government wishes for an early convening of a meeting of the Out-of-the-Box Committee to determine the payment mechanism for these dues, and for the committee's recommendations to be presented in the next meeting of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) for final decision. The Chief Minister has already sent a letter to the Prime Minister in this regard.

Regarding the funds for the former tribal areas, it was pointed out that although administrative integration of these areas with the province has taken place, financial integra-

tion has yet to occur. Due to the merger, the province's population increased from 14.7% to 17.7% of the national population, and its share in the NFC increased from 14.2% to 19.46%. Based on this, the province is entitled to receive Rs. 350 billion annually under the NFC. It was emphasized that the federal government should convene a meeting of the relevant forum as soon as possible to review the current NFC Award.

Provincial officials further stated that the recurring expenditures of the merged districts are also the responsibility of the federal government. For the current fiscal year, the recurring expenditure of these districts amounts to Rs. 127 billion, against which, the federal government has allocated only Rs. 66 billion. The remaining shortfall is being met by the provincial government from its own resources, and immediate steps should be taken by the federal government to increase this budget. Similarly, the federation is also liable to provide an additional Rs. 66 billion for the resettlement of temporarily displaced persons (TDPs) from the merged



districts. It was also conveyed to the participants that under the ten-year accelerated development program for the merged districts, the federation was to provide Rs. 100 billion annually. However, against a total commitment of Rs. 600 billion, only Rs. 122 billion have been provided so far. Additionally, the formation of a federal-level committee for the AIP (Accelerated Implementation Program) has been termed an illegal move by the provincial government.

Federal officials assured that priority steps will be taken to significantly increase the funds allocated for the merged districts. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur said that the province's

demands regarding net hydel profit, NFC, and funds for the merged districts are all constitutional and legal. "We are not making any illegal or extra demands."

The federal government must fulfill its constitutional and legal obligations regarding these matters," he said. He further added that the unique circumstances of the merged districts require special attention from the federation, and that to eliminate unrest and restore public trust in these areas, rapid development in the social and economic sectors is essential. Therefore, a review of the current NFC Award should be carried out promptly to ensure that the people of the merged districts receive their constitutional rights, he concluded.





## CM Murad urges acceleration on key development projects across Sindh

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday chaired a joint meeting with the P&D, Finance, and Works departments to assess the progress of various development initiatives throughout the province, as reported by a government representative.

The meeting, which took place at the CM House, saw the attendance of several provincial ministers and senior officials.

During the session, the Coastal Highway Project was a focal point. The Chief Minister recalled that citizens in Thatta had requested quicker progress during his recent visit. He

acknowledged the preliminary phase of the 36-kilometre highway and urged the Works Department to expedite efforts, noting its significance for traffic facilitation and protection against sea intrusion.

In the SITE Karachi Roads project, the CM noted the ongoing construction worth Rs5 billion, with Rs500 million already released. He pushed for the project's completion within the new fiscal year.

The meeting also covered the reconstruction of 1,800 flood-damaged schools under the Prime Minister's program, jointly funded by Sindh and the federal government. With a

total allocation of Rs12 billion and tenders finalized, Murad Ali Shah directed the immediate release of funds to start construction.

Furthermore, the CM reviewed the Rohri to Guddu Barrage Road project, a 150-kilometre link via the M-5 Interchange, and approved the release of Rs. 5 billion for this fiscal year. For the Tando Allahyar to Tando Adam Road dualization, valued at Rs9.2 billion, he allocated Rs1 billion and instructed the commencement of work.

Shah stressed the urgency of completing these projects, underscoring their role in enhancing the province's infrastructure and connectivity.

## Sindh decided to launch entrepreneurship sessions for students

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh government has decided to launch entrepreneurship sessions for 3,000 young male and female students across 10 universities in Karachi and Hyderabad.

A spokesperson for the Sindh Sports and Youth Affairs Department stated that the decision aims to provide training to young students on developing business models and starting their own ventures. The sessions will be conducted in 10 universities across Karachi and Hyderabad divisions.

According to the spokesperson, sessions have already been organized at Indus University in Karachi and Isra and GC University in Hyderabad. Meanwhile, sessions will be held on Tuesday at Sir Syed University and UIT University.

In the second phase, sessions will also commence at Mehran University, Jinnah University, Qaid-e-Awam University, Greenwich University, and the University of Karachi.

The spokesperson further mentioned that the Sports Department is providing training to young individuals on business modeling and entrepreneurship. The sessions include entrepreneurship training, expert panel discussions, and success stories of young entrepreneurs to both educate and inspire the youth.

## Govt committed to promoting Punjabi culture: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjabi Culture Day was celebrated with traditional fervour across Punjab, with vibrant events organised in all districts by the Punjab Department of Information and Culture. Government employees donned traditional attire and Punjabi turbans, proudly embracing their cultural roots.

Special cultural activities, including music, dance, and theatrical performances, were held at all Punjab Arts Councils. Government schools also actively participated in the celebrations, engaging students in efforts to strengthen their understanding of Punjabi heritage.

Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said that the Punjab government is fully committed to promoting Punjabi culture and connecting it with the younger generation. She announced a grand ceremony scheduled for April 17 at Alhamra Arts Council in Lahore, where Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz will deliver a special address.

"CM Maryam Nawaz has a deep emotional connection with Punjabi culture," Bukhari said. "Under her leadership, we are taking concrete steps to preserve and promote our cultural legacy."

Highlighting the symbolic value of the traditional Punjabi turban, Bukhari noted, "It is a matter of pride and honour for all Punjabis. Our rich heritage sets us apart on the global stage." She emphasised that the provincial government's cultural initiatives aim not only to preserve Punjab's unique traditions but also to elevate its global cultural standing.



LAHORE: President IPP & Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan was called on by Kh. Saad Rafique. —APP Photo

## EU delegation meets Azam Tarar, discuss bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): A European Union delegation, led by Serban Dimitrie Sturdza, Chair of the Delegation for Relations with the Countries of South Asia (DSAS), met with the Federal Minister for Law & Justice and Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar.

The delegation included Dr. Riina Kionka, EU Ambassador to Pakistan, along with Members of the European Parliament Michael McNamara (Renew, Ireland), Ruth Firmenich (NI, Germany), Cristina Stanculescu, Songul Dogan, and Liviu Adrian Natea, said a press release.

The meeting reaffirmed the strength of Pakistan-EU bilateral relations, underscoring shared commitments to democratic values, human rights, and inclusive development. Both sides acknowledged the positive trajectory of cooperation under the GSP+ framework, with the Minister appreciating the EU's support and emphasizing Pakistan's resolve to align its legal and institutional frameworks with international human rights conventions.

The minister highlighted Pakistan's steady progress in promoting democracy, constitutionalism and

the rule of law, despite complex internal and regional dynamics. He reaffirmed the country's strong commitment to peace, pluralism, and institutional resilience as part of its vision for a stable and inclusive future.

He further noted that Pakistan's democratic institutions are actively working to promote dialogue, tolerance, and constitutional protections for all communities. "Pakistan's commitment to democratic governance remains unwavering. As we continue to navigate complex political and security challenges, we expect our international partners, including the

European Union, to recognize and acknowledge our ongoing journey toward a more inclusive, just and peaceful society," the Minister stated.

Azam Nazeer Tarar briefed the delegation on the government's plan to establish a National Commission for Minorities (NCM) through an Act of Parliament, with quasi-judicial powers to independently address grievances and monitor rights violations.

He noted that while the existing independent human rights bodies; NCHR, NCSW, and NCRC are functioning effectively within their respective mandates, the establish-

ment of the NCM will further strengthen the institutional framework for protecting minority rights, reinforcing the government's broader commitment to accountability and fundamental freedoms.

The EU delegation appreciated Pakistan's steps to implement reforms in areas such as access to justice, protection of fundamental rights, and institutional transparency.

The ongoing cooperation under the "Promotion of Human Rights in Pakistan II" project and the outcomes of the 14th Pak-EU Joint Commission were acknowledged as positive indicators of continued engagement.

Both parties reiterated their intent to strengthen existing dialogue mechanisms, including the Joint Commission, the Strategic Engagement Plan, and enhanced cooperation in trade and investment. These platforms will continue to address shared global challenges such as climate change, regional instability, and human rights concerns. The meeting concluded with a reaffirmation of mutual respect, partnership, and a shared vision for a just, democratic, and equitable global order.

## Haleem calls for Muslim nations unity against Gaza aggression

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh today denounced Israel's continued actions against Palestinians in Gaza, urging Muslim nations to unite against what he calls a blatant act of aggression.

Sheikh emphasized the need for a strong, unified response from the Muslim Ummah to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the besieged region.

Sheikh in a statement highlighted Israel's disregard for United Nations resolutions and its longstanding attacks on civilians and religious sites in Palestine, describing these actions as severe violations of international

human rights laws.

He insisted that the United Nations must act, as the situation in Gaza represents an open genocide. Despite calls for a ceasefire, the violence persists, underlining Israel's unchecked aggression, he noted.

The PTI Sindh leader criticized the silence of global powers and human rights organizations, urging them to take a more active role. He expressed disappointment at the lack of response from those who claim to champion human rights, while people worldwide support Gaza.

Sheikh further warned that the crisis threatens not just regional, but glob-

al stability, calling for a united front from Islamic countries to address Israeli aggression.

He urged the Pakistani government to take firm steps against the ongoing brutality. Sheikh praised PTI Chairman Imran Khan for his advocacy for Palestine and Kashmir, lamenting his current imprisonment. He stressed the importance of Khan's release to continue representing oppressed communities.

In his concluding remarks, Sheikh reiterated the urgency for the Muslim Ummah to take action, asserting solidarity with the Palestinian people and the intolerability of further aggression.

## Vaisakhi, 326th Khalsa birth anniversary celebrated

LAHORE (APP): A grand and spiritually charged celebration of the Vaisakhi Mela and the 326th Khalsa birth anniversary took place on Monday at the revered Gurdwara Janam Asthan in Nankana Sahib.

Thousands of Sikh pilgrims from across the globe gathered to participate in the religious festivities with immense devotion. The main ceremony witnessed the special participation of prominent federal and provincial dignitaries including Federal Minister for Religious Affairs

Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, Minister of State for Minority Affairs Khalil Das Kohistani, and Punjab Minister for Minorities Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora. Also in attendance were Deputy C o m m i s s i o n e r Muhammad Tasleem Akhtar Rao, members of the National and Provincial Assemblies, and key representatives from the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC).

Minister Khalil Das Kohistani expressed

heartfelt greetings to the Sikh community on the auspicious occasion, extending his wishes on behalf of the Hindu community. He emphasised the universal message of peace, love and humanity taught by Baba Guru Nanak.

Federal Minister Sardar Muhammad Yousaf reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to religious freedom, noting that Sikh pilgrims leave the country with love and respect in their hearts. He lauded the local administration for ensuring smooth arrangements for the event.

Highlighting a historic milestone, Punjab Minister for Minorities Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora announced that 6,800 visas had been issued to Sikh pilgrims from abroad starting April 10—marking an unprecedented turnout. He expressed gratitude to the prime minister, Punjab chief minister, chief secretary, and home secretary for their unwavering support.

Ramesh Singh Arora also declared that efforts are underway to restore

and reopen inactive gurdwaras across Pakistan. He underlined Pakistan's inclusive spirit, contrasting it with the challenges faced by minorities in neighboring India. He commended the efforts of the local administration, especially the deputy commissioner and district police officer Nankana Sahib, for their exemplary work in hosting the event.

The ceremony concluded with a powerful message of interfaith harmony and a collective pledge to uphold the teachings of Baba Guru Nanak. Ceremonial robes (Saropas) were presented to several visiting dignitaries and religious leaders, including SGPC Jatha Leader Young Bahadur Singh, DGPC Jatha Leader Daljit Singh, Jagjeet Singh Pullar, Saranjeet Singh, Jaheender Kaur, Ravinder Singh, Sardar Mahesh Singh, Sardar Bishan Singh, Bhagat Singh, and Tara Singh.

Special prayers were offered for peace, prosperity, and harmony in Pakistan and around the world.



LAHORE: Workers engaged in repair work at Defence Bridge to improve pedestrian convenience in the provincial capital. —APP Photo

## CM's 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' housing program hits major milestones

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' housing program continues to make significant strides, turning the vision of affordable housing into a reality for thousands of families across the province.

In a media statement issued here on Monday, the CM said that the program is setting a new benchmark for rapid housing development, with 1,806 houses completed in a notably short span of time. The successful recovery of loans amounting to Rs. 924 million further attests to the program's transparency and sound financial structure, she added.

Currently, she told, over 22,600 housing units are in their final stages of completion. More than 25,500 families have benefited from loans worth over Rs. 27.43 billion, with second installments already disbursed to more than 12,000 beneficiaries. Additionally, the government has approved the issuance of 2,000 more housing loans under the scheme.

The 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' program provides construction loans for one to five marla houses in urban areas and for one to ten marla plots in rural areas. Applicants can conveniently apply online from their homes via acag.punjab.gov.pk.

The CM stated, "Guided

by the vision of Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' initiative is bringing hope and happiness to thousands of families. Every new home built brings immense joy that is beyond words. My team and I are fully committed to completing this ambitious target within the stipulated timeline."

Reflecting on past promises made by others, she added, "Unlike the hollow claims of the past, the PML-N leadership has delivered real results. I am deeply grateful to Allah Almighty for granting me the opportunity to fulfill yet another promise made to the people of Punjab."

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Monday convicted three individuals, including the main accused, in the drama writer Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar honey-trap case.

The court sentenced Amna Urooj, Mamnoon Haider, and Zeeshan to seven years in prison each after the charges of extortion were proven. The court ruled that the charge of kidnapping could not be proven, therefore, no punishment was awarded on that count. However, the court acquitted the remaining accused in the case. ATC Judge Arshad Javed announced the reserved verdict. The court had reserved its verdict upon the completion of trial proceedings last week.

The prosecution presented 17 witnesses against the accused during the trial. The alleged attempted kidnapping of Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar came to light in early July 2024, leading to the arrest of 11 suspects by police.

The Sundar Police registered a case of robbery and abduction against the accused, including Amna Urooj, based on a complaint filed by Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar.

**Rs19.2m fines, 1,461 held over profiteering**

LAHORE (APP): The district administration stepped up its campaign against profiteering and hoarding to ensure market stability and protect consumers.

Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza told the media on Monday that a total of 279,223 violations were recorded during January 1 to March 31 and a fine of Rs 19.209 million was imposed on profiteers.

Additionally, 485 FIRs were registered, 1,461 individuals arrested, and 198 shops were sealed for non-compliance.

The district administration also released price report, indicating stable prices for several essential items, including rice, various pulses. DC Musa Raza reaffirmed the administration's commitment to curbing inflation and protecting consumers. "We will not allow any one to exploit citizens through profiteering or hoarding," he stated.

## Punjab police, women's ombudsperson launch joint drive

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab police, in collaboration with the Provincial Ombudsperson for Women, has launched a joint initiative regarding awareness campaigns and specialized training programmes.

The partnership aims to foster a culture of respect, accountability, and empowerment within the police force, marking a major step towards institutional reform and gender equality in the workplace.

Under this initiative, the IG Punjab office has appointed two focal persons to ensure effective coordination with the provincial ombudsperson. DSP Investigation Branch Arsalan Saif and Inspector Legal Samina Mubarak have been designated as focal persons from the office of the Additional Inspector General of Punjab Police, Lahore.

In the first phase of the joint strategy, 100 male and female officers from the Punjab Police's Anti-Harassment Committee have received training.



CLLB completes 5 years

# Governor urges youth empowerment, collective action for progress



PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Monday emphasized the need for collective action to bring progress to the province, saying that “we must not wait for a messiah, but work together to transform the condition of our province.” He said this while addressing the fifth anniversary ceremony of the Center of Learning Law and Business (CLLB) in Peshawar as chief guest.

The event was attended by a large number of students, faculty members, lawyers, and the head of the institution, Dilawar Khan.

In his speech, Governor Kundi highlighted the immense potential of the province, calling it a cradle of talent.

He praised the contributions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s lawyers and judges in establishing a strong reputation in the legal field.

He stressed the importance of youth participation across all sectors and said that effective guidance and mentorship are essential for national development.

He also encouraged dialogue among the younger generation, saying it was crucial to help them understand national and regional issues.

“We cannot change our neighbors,” the Governor remarked, “but we must learn to coexist through mutual understanding.” Referring to Afghanistan’s situation, he said that global powers often invade the country but retreat in defeat, leaving behind weapons that are later used in terrorist attacks within Pakistan.

Governor Kundi voiced concerns about the lack of rightful returns to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa despite its significant contribution of oil, gas, and electricity to the country. He called for serious discussions on the Provincial Finance Commission and urged youth involvement in these dialogues.

The Governor also advocated for women’s empowerment and reiterated that the doors of the Governor House are open to the youth.

“These students are the future lawyers, judges, and bureaucrats,” he said, while commending Dilawar Khan for his leadership and extending best wishes to the CLLB.

The event concluded with an optimistic message for the youth, calling them the key drivers of the province’s and the nation’s future.



PESHAWAR: A view of routine traffic jam in front of Peshawar High Court which need attention of the authorities concerned.

# Gone before goodbye: Silent extinction in the age of global warming

**Noshaba Naseem**

In the quiet corners of forests, oceans, and skies, lives are vanishing - silently, without farewell. Global warming, rising seas, burning forests, and changing seasons have become ruthless forces, pushing species to the edge.

Animals and plants that once thrived are now struggling to breathe, feed, migrate, or bloom.

Their homes are melting, drying, or being swallowed by flames and floods. Extinction is no longer loud or sudden - it is slow, quiet, and tragic, like a breath held too long.

What breaks the heart most is that many species disappear before we even know they existed. Unknown flowers wilt in the heat, unheard birds fall from thinning skies, and unseen creatures vanish beneath poisoned soil.

The earth loses its color, its voice, its song - and we, the ones who caused the storm, may never get the chance to say goodbye.

*Silent extinction, whispers in the breeze, Life fades away with the dying trees. Warmed by flames we chose to ignore, Nature weeps-can we restore?*



## CM competing with Maryam's through ads: Ikhtair Wali

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR (APP): Prime Minister’s Coordinator for Information and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Affairs Ikhtair Wali Khan on Sunday said that Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wanted to compete with the performance of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif through launching of an advertisements campaign to improve his sagging image.

He claimed that the Chief Minister KP has released about Rs300 million fund from the Provincial Govt exchequer for his personal projection through advertisements campaign in media.

In a statement here, the Prime Minister aide said that PTI would not be allowed to use KP’s taxpayers money for personal projection through continued advertisements campaign in media outlets.

Ikhtair Wali Khan further claimed that honest and upright officers are still existed in KP, claiming that former Secretary Information was sidelined on refusal by the Tahir e Insaf.

Ikhtair Wali Khan said that Rs7.50 per unit reduction in the prices of electricity was a big relief provided by the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to the entire nation.

He said that Prime Minister’s electricity relief package reflected that PMLN Quaid Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif wanted to provide maximum relief to masses.

Ikhtair Wali said that PMLN Govt has put the country on road to economic progress and prosperity and saved the country from an imminent economic default.

Besides significant reduction in prices of electricity and oil, he said price hike has also been slashed while policy rate downed to 12pc.

# Ji slams proposed mining bill in KP

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leaders voiced strong opposition on Monday to the provincial government’s proposed Mines and Minerals Bill 2025, calling it a “clear betrayal” of the province’s people and a risky step toward undermining local ownership of natural resources.

Addressing a press conference at Markaz-e-Islami Peshawar, Abdul Wasi, Ameer JI KP central, and Inayatullah Khan, former senior provincial minister and JI Ameer KP North criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government for adopting what they described as a double standard regarding the province’s resources.

“The government is attempting to legislate control over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s resources without taking stakeholders into confidence,” said Abdul Wasi.

“This is unacceptable and reflects the province’s continued exploitation despite its contributions and sacrifices.”

The party leaders warned that the proposed bill, if passed, would deprive residents of the terrorism-affected province of their constitutional rights.

They particularly objected to provisions in the draft that delay the bill’s implementation in the newly merged tribal districts until 2030, a move they say undermines the integration of those regions into the province.

Inayatullah Khan said the bill contradicts the government’s own narrative of tribal merger and integration.

“On one hand, the government claims the tribal areas have been fully merged into the province. On the other, it postpones the application of this bill in those same areas until 2030.

That is a legal contradiction and an affront to the people of the tribal belt,” he stated.

The party also accused both the federal and provincial governments of denying Khyber Pakhtunkhwa its rightful share in revenue, particularly in hydropower royalties.

“While the federal government has long withheld our net electricity profits, the provincial government is now pushing forward with controversial legislation to take control of our minerals too,” said Sabir Hussain Awan, the party’s provincial General Secretary.

Other Jamaat-e-Islami leaders present at the conference, including Vice Amir Mian Sohaibuddin Kakakhel and Media Director Ahmad Furqan Khalil, called for the immediate withdrawal of the bill and urged broader consultation with all stakeholders to ensure that natural resources benefit the local population.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries, Abdul Karim Tordher inspected the under-construction head office of KPEZMDC.

# Tordher inspects construction of KPEZMDC head office

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries, Abdul Karim Tordher on Monday, visited the under-construction head office of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KPEZMDC) at Hayatabad Phase 7 in Peshawar.

The visit marked an important milestone as the multi-story building moves towards completion, representing the government’s focus on strengthening infrastructure in the province.

Accompanied by KPEZMDC’s CEO Adil Salahuddin and senior management team, Mr. Tordher inspected the entire building and reviewed its key features.

The new head office consists of a ground floor and five additional stories, along with a double basement. Designed to support the company’s expanding operations, the facility includes modern meeting spaces and essential amenities to enhance administrative efficiency.

The building incorporates solar power for energy. Similarly, a dedicated ramp for differently-abled individuals has also been provided to ensure accessibility.

Furthermore, the top two floors are planned to be leased out, promoting private sector engagement and optimal use of space.

Commending the progress of the project, Abdul Karim Tordher stated that KPEZMDC’s new head office reflects the government’s commitment to providing modern infrastructure that supports industrial development.

He said that the management has done a commendable job in bringing this project close to completion while integrating energy-efficient solutions and facilities that will strengthen service delivery.

He added that this building will further enhance KPEZMDC’s role in driving economic growth across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It is merit to note that the building is in its final stages of completion and is expected to be inaugurated soon. Once operational, it will serve as the central hub for KPEZMDC’s activities, improving investor facilitation and contributing to the growth of industrial zones across the province.

KPEZMDC continues its mission to accelerate industrial development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with this new head office symbolizing a significant step forward.

# Legal fraternity to oppose proposed KP Mines & Minerals Act

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The legal fraternity to oppose proposed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Amendment Act 2025, which aims to amend the existing laws governing the province’s mineral resources.

A requisition has been submitted by Jan Muhammad advocate to convene an emergency general body meeting of the High Court Bar Association, signed by hundreds of lawyers, on Monday.

The amendment bill would strip the provincial government of its control over mineral resources, transferring authority to the federal government. The lawyers argued that proposed bill is unconstitutional, as it disregards the province’s rights and ignores the local population’s interests.

The bill’s introduction during a US delegation’s visit raises suspicions about the government’s true intentions.

All opposition parties in the province are opposing the bill, while the ruling party is divided on the issue, the lawyers stated.

The province has the right to its own mineral resources, excluding oil and gas.

The proposed Act would divide Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into three parts, further complicating the management of its mineral resources.

The bill’s provisions could lead to the exploitation of the province’s mineral resources without adequate benefits for the local population.

The lawyers will determine their future course of action in response to the proposed amendment act, aiming to protect the province’s interests and ensure that its mineral resources are managed in a way that benefits the local population.

# Allegations against Asad Qaiser are baseless: Ghulam Bilal

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ghulam Bilal Javid has strongly condemned the recent negative propaganda against the party, calling it false and misleading. Referring to the allegations made against former Speaker of the National Assembly Asad Qaiser regarding a resolution on Palestine in the National Assembly, he categorically rejected them and clarified that Asad Qaiser is currently out of the country and did not attend any assembly session nor issued any such statement.

He stated that the quotes and opinions attributed to Asad Qaiser are entirely fabricated, baseless, and part of a malicious campaign aimed at defaming the PTI leadership.

Ghulam Bilal Javid affirmed that support for Palestine is a fundamental principle of PTI’s ideology, and Chairman Imran Khan has consistently raised his voice in favor of the oppressed Palestinian people. PTI has always represented the sentiments of the Muslim Ummah at every platform and will continue to do so.

He described the opposition’s smear campaign as mere political point-scoring with no connection to reality. He urged responsible discourse based on facts rather than misleading the nation.

Ghulam Bilal Javid further clarified that there is no groupism or forward bloc within PTI. Leaders such as Atif Khan, Shahram Tarakai, Taimur Jhagra, Asad Qaiser, and Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur are all on the same page and working in complete harmony.

He emphasized that all decisions made by Chairman Imran Khan are respected by party leaders and workers alike, and there is no dissent regarding his leadership. Minor internal differences are natural in any political party, but presenting them as division is far from the truth.

In conclusion, Ghulam Bilal Javid stated that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is a well-organized, ideological, and united political force, and God willing, the upcoming elections will not only be transparent but PTI will also emerge victorious.



PESHAWAR: Farhad Ali has taken charge as Assistant Attorney General for Pakistan at Peshawar High Court Peshawar.





## In brief

TMA commits for beautification  
F.P. Report

BANNU: No hindrance will be tolerated in the restoration of the beauty of the city of Bannu, the restoration of parks of historical importance and the provision of municipal services. No pressure should be accepted in the grand operation against encroachments and the recovery of arrears from the markets in a record period. Payment of salaries to hundreds of employees on time and provision of pensions are among our top priorities. Employees and officers should perform their duties honestly, Tehsil Municipal Officer Muhammad Yousuf Khan expressed these views while talking to the media on the occasion of his visit to the city. On this occasion, Tehsil Municipal Administration Staff Officer Nazirullah Awan was awarded a certificate of appreciation for the successful operations against encroachments from the markets in a record period and the provision of best facilities to traders. During this, PSO Manzoor Khan, Chief Land Inspector Malik Tariq Khan, Guardian Officer Wali Ayaz Khan and other officers were also present. Tehsil Municipal Officer Muhammad Yousuf Khan said that a regular monitoring system has been introduced to ensure the provision of maximum municipal services to the people in urban areas, which not only will public grievances be redressed in a timely manner, but the public will also be provided with better local government facilities at their doorsteps.

SRC holds rally  
F.P. Report

SHAHADKOT: Sunni Rabta Council (SRC) Sindh held protest against Israeli brutality committing on Palestinian Muslims in which a large number of people participated and expressed their hatred for Israel. The effigy of Israel's PM, was burnt and harsh slogans against Israel were also raised. The rally passed through different roads of the city and reached Shaheed Fazil Raho Chowk. Addressing the rally, leaders Hafiz Osama Hanari, Maulana Abdul Qadir Farooqui, Muhammad Azam Tragger, Amir Muawiyah Wahucho and others said that the owners of Palestine are only the Palestinian people, their resistance is the real Jihad. Although the rights of animals are protected all over the world, but Palestinian Muslims are being made food for bombs and bullets in Gaza, for which no one is ready to raise a voice while the usurper Israel is bringing down mountains of oppression on the Palestinian people. The Muslims of Gaza should be helped, but if you have diplomatic compulsions, then we should be brought to the border because we also want to be martyrs like the oppressed, but the silence of the Muslim countries is surprising.

Punjabi Culture Day celebrated  
F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Punjabi Culture Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm across Toba Tek Singh, with Literacy and Non-Formal Education Schools actively participating. Cultural events were held in literacy schools where students donned traditional Punjabi attire and presented tableaux, skits, folk songs and poetry, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of Punjab. Students enthusiastically engaged in activities promoting the Punjabi language, literature, and folk traditions.

## Govt fails to ensure law &amp; order in KP, says PTI-P chief

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians (PTI-P) Central Chairman Mahmood Khan has criticized both the federal and provincial governments, stating that they



have failed in delivery of public services. Addressing a met the press at the Swat Press Club, he expressed his concerns about the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Former CM described the current state of law and order in the province as "very bad," with 70 to 80 percent of areas having become "no-go zones." He lamented that even areas that were previously stable are now experiencing a

decline in security.

The former Chief Minister questioned why the federal government is interfering in the province's mineral resources, despite the 18th Amendment granting provinces authority over their natural resources. He also highlighted the issue of electricity royalty,

stating that the province is not receiving its due share. PTI-P chairman criticized the current Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur, and members of the assembly, accusing them of lacking sincerity in developing the province. He claimed that development projects initiated during his tenure have been halted or terminated, and corruption has reached unprecedented levels.

He advocated for a comprehensive plan to address the issue of Afghan refugees, suggesting that those residing illegally should be deported. However, he emphasized that refugees who are contributing to the province's economy through business should be taxed to generate revenue. He also underscored the importance of provincial autonomy, stating that provinces should have a say in national decisions affecting them.

Regarding opposition politics, Khan mentioned that the PTI, led by Mahmood Khan Achakzai, poses a significant challenge to Maulana Fazlur Rehman's leadership in the province. He pointed out that Rs 18 billion allocated for development projects during his tenure have been returned, and various projects, including universities, roads, and colleges, have been closed. He attributed the silence of Swat assembly members to their incompetence. The PTI-P chairman dismissed the government's claims of development, stating that if the government were stable, prices of petrol and electricity would have decreased, providing relief to the people.

The leaders categorically rejected the act, demanding its immediate repeal and refusal to implement it. They emphasized that the province's resources belong to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and any attempt to transfer control to the federal government will be resisted. The leaders, accompanied by labor unions, contractors, leaseholders, and owners, staged a massive protest in Alpura main Chowk before proceeding to the press club. Protesters carried banners with various slogans, rejecting the controversial act and the inclusion of mining areas in forest lands.

The Shangla Bar Council announced plans to challenge the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mine and Minerals Act 2025 and the inclusion of residential and mining areas in forest lands in court. They asserted that the people of Shangla and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will not allow anyone to seize their resources and will fight a legal battle to assert their constitutional rights.

The leaders highlighted the historical injustices faced by Shangla, where the local population has not benefited from their resources, including hydropower and minerals. They emphasized that the people of Shangla demand their rightful share and royalties from these resources.

The united stance of leaders from various backgrounds and organizations in Shangla sends a strong message against the KP Mines and Minerals Act 2025 and the government's policies perceived as anti-people.

Station House Officer (SHO), Sher Afzal, confirmed that authorities have yet to receive any credible information regarding Mehsud's whereabouts. No group has claimed responsibility for the abduction so far. The alarming news was first shared with the media by Inamullah's younger brother, Anees Mehsud, who revealed that the family has not heard from him since the previous night. "We fear he has been targeted for his journalistic work. He has always reported boldly on sensitive issues," Anees said. Journalists' associations across the region have condemned the incident, calling it yet another grim reminder of the threats faced by media workers, especially those reporting from conflict-prone tribal districts. Aurangzeb Mehsud, President of the Tribal Union of Journalists, expressed grave concern over Inamullah's safety. "This is not just an attack on one individual; it's an assault on press freedom itself," he stated.

Police officers Hameed Shah and Ashraf Dotani, who were abducted in the Wana area of Lower South Waziristan, have been recovered. Both were kidnapped by militants last night during an attack on their home. Following the incident, local tribes formed a Chegha Party (traditional tribal response force), which killed two of the abductors in retaliation.

Members of Mines Owners Association holding a protest rally against proposed KP Mines and Minerals Act. — F.P. photo

HAFIAZABAD: Chief Minister's Coordinator for Population Welfare, Saira Afzal Tarar, along with Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq, conducted an extensive visit to several newly upgraded Maryam Nawaz Health Clinics in the Hafizabad district. The visit aimed to assess the quality of healthcare services being provided to patients, including the availability of free medicines, specialist doctors, nursing care, and paramedical staff.

The delegation was accompanied by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Health Dr. Zaheer Ahmad Khokhar, District Manager of Punjab Health Facilities Management Company (PHFMC) Dr. Faig Ali Tarar, Dr. Hamza Tarar, and Director of the Integrated Reproductive, Maternal, New born & Child Health (IRMNCH) programme.

During the visit, Saira Afzal Tarar praised Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's initiative of revamping rural healthcare facilities

and transforming them into state-of-the-art clinics. She stated that the upgrade of rural hospitals into Maryam Nawaz Health Clinics is a significant step toward providing quality healthcare services to residents of remote areas.

"Specialist doctors have been appointed in all the clinics across the district," she said. "The availability of free medicines and essential medical equipment has also been ensured so that the rural population can access modern healthcare close to home."

DC Abdul Razzaq and Saira Afzal Tarar visited key departments within the clinics, including general OPD, maternal and child healthcare, immunization units, and pharmacy services. They reviewed the infrastructure, staffing, cleanliness, and overall functioning of the facilities.

In a significant development, they announced that a dedicated helpline will soon be established in the office of the CEO Health at the district level. This helpline will enable the public to register complaints, particularly regarding

the unavailability of medicines and any other service-related issues in rural health centers.

The inspection tour covered several villages including Bhagha Bhattian, Muradian, Dheranke Lalke, and Sindhwan Tarar. At each site, the officials interacted with patients and their families to gather feedback about the quality of treatment, staff behavior, and the availability of medicines. Most of the patients expressed satisfaction and welcomed the improved healthcare services.

Saira Afzal Tarar and the Deputy Commissioner commended Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for her proactive and people-centric approach in the health sector. They described the transformation of rural hospitals as "state-of-the-art" and reiterated the government's commitment to expanding quality healthcare across Punjab. The visit concluded with a reaffirmation of the provincial government's resolve to continuously monitor, evaluate, and further enhance healthcare services in rural and underprivileged areas.



TORKHAM: Trucks loaded with repatriated Afghan families' valuables standing to move across the border. — F.P. photo

KP Mines & Minerals Act opposed  
F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Leaders from various political parties, mining organizations, and members of the Shangla Bar Council gathered at the Shangla Press Club in Alpura to express their strong opposition to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Act 2025. They vowed to fight to the end to protect the province's mineral resources, emphasizing that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will not allow anyone to seize their resources.

The leaders categorically rejected the act, demanding its immediate repeal and refusal to implement it. They emphasized that the province's resources belong to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and any attempt to transfer control to the federal government will be resisted.

The leaders, accompanied by labor unions, contractors, leaseholders, and owners, staged a massive protest in Alpura main Chowk before proceeding to the press club. Protesters carried banners with various slogans, rejecting the controversial act and the inclusion of mining areas in forest lands.

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The united stance of leaders from various backgrounds and organizations in Shangla sends a strong message against the KP Mines and Minerals Act 2025 and the government's policies perceived as anti-people.

## Health professionals complete training

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Prominent physician Dr Sherin Khan Yousafzai, former DHO Lower Dir Dr Irshad Rughani, and several other health professionals have successfully completed the four-month BPS-19 promotional training at the Provincial Health Services Academy (PHSA), Peshawar.

Speaking to local journalists, Dr Sherin and Dr Rughani emphasized the need to raise children in accordance with Islamic principles. "Instilling honesty, sincerity, prayer, and respect from an early age is key to building a morally strong society," they said.

Dr Sherin urged parents to balance worldly education with proper religious guidance to raise responsible and practicing Muslim citizens. Other participants in the training included Dr Shakeel Ahmad, Dr Saira Jabeen Shah, Dr Rabia Waheed, Dr Abdul Waheed, Dr Shafqat Ullah, Dr Fakhr-e-Alam, Dr Muhammad Israrul Haq, Dr Saleem Khan, Dr Irshad Ali, Dr Muhammad Sajad, Dr Adnan Khan, Dr Majid Khan, Dr Sher Ali Khan, Dr Syed Rahmat Ali, Dr Khalid Khan, Dr Bakhshat Beland, and others.

Dr Sherin and Dr Rughani emphasized the need to raise children in accordance with Islamic principles. "Instilling honesty, sincerity, prayer, and respect from an early age is key to building a morally strong society," they said.

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## Grand Mushaira held at Kohat



F.P. Report

KOHAT: A Grand Mushaira was arranged by the Qasim Ali Khan Adbi Tolana (QAKAT) Dara Adam Khel (DAK), Kohat which besides the renowned poets of Kohat and Peshawar, was also participated by the local literary figures in large number.

The ceremony was presided over by Professor Almar Khan Afridi while president of Abasin Adbi Tola Kohat Feroz Khan Sadiq, Syed Masoom Shah Masoom and Amair Biqarar attended the event as special guests. Renowned compere Murad Ali Murad was the Stage Secretary.

The guest poet Amir Biqarar, Muhammad Umar Khog, Ayub Afridi and Syed Masoom Shah Masoom emphasized the need to make efforts to publish the poetry of Majzoo Jahanzeb Malyar in book form while Feroz Khan Sadiq emphasized the literary activities of Qasim Ali Khan Literary Tolana in written form. Local Elder

Malik Yaqoob Khan assured all kinds of financial support to the QAKAT Darra Adam Khel. President of the event, Prof. Almar Afridi agreed to continue literary activities in the area under the Qasim Ali Khan Adbi Tolana, an old and historical literary organization.

Prof. Almar Afridi, Feroze Khan Sadiq, Syed Masoom Shah Masoom, Ayub Afridi, Malik Umar Khog Afridi, Amair Begar, Salim Nadan, Abdul Jalil Mazloum, Gul Umar, Shamshir Baba, Tajmal Hussain, Yusuf Parshan, Murad Ali Murad, Jahanzeb Malyar, Rahim Shah Faqir, Principal Malik Jan, Ehsanullah Mohsin, Fayyazuddin Shamsi, Ashfaq Qasid and others also presented their poetry which was highly applauded.

At the end, special prayers were offered for the recently deceased poet late Professor Mohabbat Khan Khattak, wife of Les Muhammad Khan Asir, sister-in-law of Wazir Badshah Janan and others.

Chairman DDAC

directs timely completion of construction work:

District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Shafi Jan MPA has along-with the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali visited Liaquat Memorial Women and Children Hospital Kohat on Monday where they made a detailed inspection of the ongoing construction works and reviewed the pace and quality of the work.

MPA Shafi Jan directed the authorities concerned to complete the construction work at the earliest so that the people can get quality medical facilities in time. He stressed that the completion of the hospital is of utmost importance for the women and children of the area. This will prove to be a large and quality medical facility at the local level.

Chairman DDAC Kohat assured that there will be no shortage of funds in the construction work and the required funds have already been arranged for its timely completion.

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## Xi courts Southeast Asia as Trump tariffs bite

BEIJING (AFP): Chinese President Xi Jinping will kick off a five-day, three-nation Southeast Asia tour as Beijing seeks to tighten regional trade ties and offset the impact of huge tariffs unleashed by his US counterpart Donald Trump.

Xi will visit Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia in his first overseas trip of the year, China's foreign ministry said. He will meet his three Southeast Asian counterparts on a tour that "bears major importance" for the broader region, ministry spokesman Lin Jian said. Beijing is trying to present itself as a stable alternative to an erratic Trump, who announced -- and then mostly reversed -- sweeping tariffs this month that sent global markets into a tailspin.

Trump's tariffs "inflict serious harm on developing countries", Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao told World Trade Organization chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in a call. The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was the biggest recipient of Chinese exports last year, data from China's customs authority shows, importing \$586.5 billion in Chinese goods.

Vietnam was the biggest ASEAN buyer with a bill of \$161.9 billion, followed by Malaysia, which imported \$101.5 billion in Chinese goods in 2024. The manufacturing powerhouse rushed to seek a delay on the 46 percent tariff Trump initially imposed before the US leader granted most countries a 90-day pause. Trump, however, also hiked a blanket China tariff to 145 percent. Despite temporary reprieves -- which now include an exemption for consumer electronics -- Trump's tariffs "instilled major anxiety" in devel-

oping Asian nations, said Huong Le Thu, deputy director of the International Crisis Group's Asia Program. "The tariffs, if really implemented beyond China, will leave economies no choice but drifting away further from the US," she said.

Xi will be in Vietnam, his first trip there since December 2023. Vietnam has long pursued a "bamboo diplomacy" approach, striving to stay on good terms with both China and the United States. It shares US concerns about Beijing's increasing assertiveness in the contested South China Sea but it also has close economic ties with China. Xi will then visit Malaysia.

Malaysian Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said Xi's visit was "part of the government's efforts... to see better trade relations with various countries including China". Xi will then travel to Cambodia, one of China's staunchest allies in Southeast Asia and where Beijing has extended its influence in recent years. "The Cambodian-Chinese ties have not changed... and we will continue to make it robust," Prime Minister Hun Manet said at the recent inauguration of a Chinese-funded road.

He said Xi's visit would confirm their close relationship and called China "a key partner" in the development of Cambodian infrastructure. Firming up ties with Southeast Asian neighbours could also help offset the impact from a closed United States, the largest single recipient of Chinese goods last year. Beijing "wants to use this time to show it's the opposite to the coercive and self-interested US," the ICG's Le Thu said. "China has been a dominant and resident power centre in the region, and there will only be stronger pull," she said.

## HK's pro-democracy party moves to disband

HONG KONG (AP): When Yeung Sum co-founded the city's largest pro-democracy party more than 30 years ago, he knew building a democratic Hong Kong would be a "difficult dream." Still, it was not impossible. Today, his Democratic Party is moving toward dissolution, a symbolic marker of the diminishing Western-style civil liberties and high degree of autonomy that the ruling Communist Party in Beijing promised to keep intact in the former British colony for at least 50 years when it returned to China in 1997.

Pro-democracy protests that paralyzed Hong Kong in 2019 led to a crackdown that has all but silenced dissent through restricted elections, media censorship and a China-imposed national security law that saw some of Yeung's party members jailed. Dozens of civil society groups closed down. Former chairperson Yeung said in an interview with The Associated Press that Chinese officials told him the party needed to disband. He urged his members to support the motion to give the leadership mandate to handle the process. "I'm not very happy about it," said Yeung. "But I can see if we refuse the call to disband, we may pay a very huge price for it."

Others received similar messages. Party veteran Fred Li said Chinese officials implied the party wouldn't survive through this year's legislative election when he asked about the possibility of its members running. Another

founding member, Sin Chung-kai, said some Hong Kong-based members were warned in early February of consequences if the party continued to exist. The Democratic Party was formed in 1994 through a merger of two pro-democracy groups. According to its manifesto, it supports Hong Kong's return to China. In its early years, it won the most seats in the legislative council. Before Beijing changed electoral rules in 2021 to ensure only "patriots" can run, the party was a major pro-democracy voice in the legislature even after it no longer held the largest number of seats. Back then, Yeung said, the pro-democracy camp generally won about 60% of the popular vote.

Yeung was encouraged to see that the experiment in democracy, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and a merit-based administration could work in the city.

"The entire social system has been demonstrated to be quite, quite, quite promising over the years," he recalled. In 2010, the party came under fire after it supported the government's political reform package in negotiations with Chinese officials that allowed millions of voters to directly elect five lawmakers from their district councils. Some members who hoped for broader democratic reform quit in protest and the party lost two seats in the 2012 legislative election. It also drew backlash from advocates within the pro-democracy camp.

Looking back, former chairperson Emily Lau, who was involved in the talks with Beijing, insists many people supported the outcome because it was a step forward. She said they asked Beijing to continue to have dialogue with others to find a way for universal suffrage, but it never did. "Maybe the only thing I would have done a bit differently is not to go into the (Beijing's) liaison office (in Hong Kong). I guess we underestimated how many Hong Kong people hated them," she said. As new pro-democracy groups were on the rise, the party's influence dwindled. That became more obvious after the emergence of younger politicians, including pro-Hong Kong independence activists, following the 2014 massive protests calling for universal suffrage. Still, five years later, when the 2019 protests swept Hong Kong, the party's activism won widespread support once again.

China's crackdown including the 2020 sweeping security law changed the political landscape. Some former lawmakers, including party ex-chairmen Albert Ho and Wu Chi-wai, are now in prison in prominent national security cases.

The Democratic Party has become absent in elections due to the new legal framework for polls. Some observers believe Beijing may no longer consider the party worth cultivating ties with, especially after it did not run in the 2021 legislative election after the electoral overhaul.

## Bukele heads to Washington

WASHINGTON (AFP): US President Donald Trump will host his El Salvador counterpart Nayib Bukele at the White House, highlighting the central American leader's role as a top ally in Washington's crackdown on undocumented immigration. Bukele has agreed to accept migrants deported from the United States, locking up more than 250 in a notorious Salvadoran prison.

The vast majority are Venezuelans, accused by Trump's administration of being members of the Tren de Aragua gang, though rights organizations have decried what they called "forced disappearances and arbitrary detention." Relatives of some deportees deny their loved ones are gang members. Political scientist Napoleon Campos said the meeting between Bukele and Trump had become oversimplified to "the issue of a heavy-handed security approach." "There are other topics that could be discussed, such as investments and trade, but it all comes down to talking about a prison," he said.

Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that the US and El Salvador are "working closely together to eradicate terrorist organizations, and build a future of Prosperity." He added that future of the deported migrants in Salvadoran custody "is up to President B and his Government. They will never threaten or menace our Citizens again!" White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said Trump and Bukele "will discuss El Salvador's partnership on using their supermax prison for Tren de Aragua and MS-13 gang members and how El Salvador's cooperation with the United States has become a model for others to work with this administration." Trump's Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem even visited the 40,000-inmate CECOT prison last month, posing in front of a cell overflowing with seemingly dead-eyed and heavily tattooed men.

Aside from political benefits for both Bukele and Trump in sending deportees to El Salvador, there is a potential security and economic boon for Bukele. His government received \$6 million for taking deportees, which Bukele described as "a very low fee for them, but a high one for us." Despite the partnership, El Salvador was among the dozens of US trade partners that the Trump administration slapped with 10 percent tariffs. The United States is the main destination for Salvadoran exports. Of the nearly \$6.5 billion in goods exported from El Salvador in 2024, \$2.1 billion went to the United States, including clothing, sugar and coffee, according to the central bank. "Trade needs to take off, to be fluid," economist Cesar Villalona told AFP, predicting a fall in exports under the new tariff.

For this reason, the president of the Salvadoran Industrial Association, Jorge Arriazua, hopes Bukele's visit to the White House will provide "a little more clarity" about the tariff's implementation. The United States is home to 2.5 million Salvadorans who are a mainstay of their native country's economy.

## Zelensky urges Trump to visit Ukraine to see war devastation

KYIV (AFP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged US counterpart Donald Trump to visit his country to better understand the devastation wrought by Russia's invasion. "Please, before any kind of decisions, any kind of forms of negotiations, come to see people, civilians, warriors, hospitals, churches, children destroyed or dead," he said in a CBS "60 Minutes" interview broadcast. With a visit to Ukraine, Trump "will understand what (Russian leader Vladimir) Putin did." "You will understand with whom you have a deal," Zelensky added.

Zelensky's invitation follows the heated row at the White House in late February between the Ukrainian president, Trump and US Vice President JD Vance, which played out in front of press. Vance at the time accused Ukraine of hosting foreign leaders on "propaganda tours" to win support. Zelensky repeated his denial of that allegation, and told CBS that if Trump chose to visit Ukraine, "we will not prepare anything. It will not be theater." "You can go exactly where you want, in any city which (has) been under attacks." Trump is pushing for a quick end to the more than three-year war, with the United States holding direct talks with Russia despite its unrelenting attacks on Ukraine.

Washington has also held talks with Ukrainian officials on a potential truce, while European nations are discussing a military deployment to reinforce any Ukraine ceasefire. Kyiv has previously agreed to a US-proposed unconditional ceasefire but Moscow has turned it down. "Putin can't be trusted. I told that to President Trump many times. So when you ask why the ceasefire isn't working -- this is why," Zelensky said. "Putin never wanted an end to the war. Putin never wanted us to be independent. Putin wants to destroy us completely -- our sovereignty and our people."

Zelensky spoke to CBS in his hometown Kryvyi Rig, where a Russian strike earlier this month killed 18 people, including nine children. The Ukrainian leader said he had "100 percent hatred" for Putin, asking "how else can you see a person who came here and murdered our people, murdered children?"



However he added that the animosity "doesn't mean we shouldn't work to end the war as soon as possible."

As negotiations continue over ending the war, Zelensky said that a just peace would be "to not lose our sovereignty or our independence," and pledged to eventually reclaim any territory currently held by Russia. "We, no matter what, will take back what is ours because we never lost it -- the Russians took it from us." Meanwhile, Ukraine is seeking solutions to repair the damage caused by a Russian drone attack to the confinement vessel at the stricken Chernobyl nuclear power plant, a government minister said. Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Svitlana Hrynychuk was speaking outside the decommissioned station during the inauguration of a 0.8-megawatt solar power facility ahead of two conferences due to discuss Chernobyl and other issues related to nuclear power operations.

She said Ukraine was working together with experts to determine the best way to restore the proper functioning of the containment vessel, or arch, after the February 14 drone strike. "Unfortunately, after the attack, the arch partially lost its functionality. And now, I think, already in May, we will have the results of the analysis that we are currently conducting ...." Hrynychuk said. Taking part in the analysis, she said, was the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, scientific institutions and companies involved in installing the arc in 2019 to cover the

leaking "sarcophagus" underneath, hurriedly put in place in the weeks following the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. "In a few weeks we will have the first results of this analysis," she said. "We are actively working on this ... We, of course, need to restore the "arch" so that there are no leaks under any circumstances, because ensuring nuclear and radiation safety is the main task."

Officials at the plant said the drone attack punched a large hole in the new containment structure's outer cover and exploded inside. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova at the time called the incident at Chernobyl "a provocation". The containment vessel was intended to cover the vast, and deteriorating, steel and concrete structure erected after the plant's fourth reactor exploded, sending radioactivity over much of Europe in the world's biggest nuclear accident. The plant lies within the 30-km (18-mile) exclusion zone set up after the accident, with abandoned high-rise apartment buildings and an amusement park still standing nearby.

Hrynychuk said the solar power facility was important to maintain the power supply to the disused station and was also a start to plans to promote renewable energy in the area. "We have been saying for many years that the exclusion zone needs to be transformed into a zone of renewal," she said. "And this territory, like no other in Ukraine, is suitable for developing renewable energy projects."

## 'Instant results not possible after Trump demands Ukraine progress'

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Kremlin said contacts with US President Donald Trump's team were moving ahead very well but that it was too early to expect instant results due to the level of damage done to relations under Trump's predecessor Joe Biden.

Trump, who says he wants to be remembered as a peacemaker, has repeatedly said he wants to end the "bloodbath" of the three-year war in Ukraine - which his administration now casts as a proxy conflict between the United States and Russia, echoing Moscow's stance. After his special envoy Steve Witkoff held talks with President Vladimir Putin, Trump said discussions aimed at ending the war may be going OK, but "there's a point at which you just have to either put up or shut up".

"Everything is going very well," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian state television's most prominent Kremlin reporter, Pavel Zarubin, when asked about the differing views of the state of relations between Moscow and Washington. Contacts were underway at several levels, Peskov said, including via the foreign ministry, intelligence agencies and Putin's investment envoy Kirill Dmitriev.

"But, of course, it is impossible to expect any instant results," Peskov said, citing what he called the damage done to bilateral relations under Biden. Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine triggered the worst confrontation between Moscow and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis - which is consid-

ered to be the time when the two Cold War superpowers came closest to intentional nuclear war. As Witkoff held talks with Putin in the former Russian imperial capital St. Petersburg about the search for a peace deal for Ukraine, Trump told Russia to "get moving".

Putin was shown on state TV greeting Witkoff, who held his hand to his heart in greeting, at the start of the talks and state news agencies later said they lasted over four hours. Asked if a Putin-Trump meeting was getting nearer, the Kremlin's Peskov said the two powers were "walking along this path together very patiently" but that trying to restore relations took serious and painstaking work. His words suggested that such a meeting "requires more work, requires more time". European leaders and Ukraine describe the 2022 invasion as an imperial-style land grab by Putin, and European leaders have repeatedly demanded that Russia be defeated on the battlefield, although Moscow forces control nearly one-fifth of Ukraine. Putin casts the war in Ukraine as part of a battle with a declining West, which he says humiliated Russia after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 by enlarging the NATO military alliance and encroaching on what he considers Moscow's sphere of influence, including Ukraine. Meanwhile, Keith Kellogg, US President Donald Trump's special envoy to Ukraine, suggested British and French troops could adopt zones of control in the country, in an interview with The Times newspaper published.

Kellogg suggested they could have areas of responsibility west of the Dniro river, as part of a "reassurance force", with a demilitarised zone separating them from Russian-occupied areas in the east. "You could almost make it look like what happened with Berlin after World War II, when you had a Russian zone, a French zone, and a British zone, a US zone," he said, later clarifying on X that the United States would not be providing troops. "You're west of the (Dniro), which is a major obstacle," Kellogg said, adding that the force would therefore "not be provocative at all" to Russia. He suggested that a demilitarised zone could be implemented along the existing lines of control in eastern Ukraine, The Times said.

A retired lieutenant general and former acting national security advisor during Trump's first term, Kellogg, 80, said Ukraine was big enough to accommodate several armies seeking to enforce a ceasefire. To make sure that British, French, Ukrainian and other allied forces do not exchange fire with Russian troops, Kellogg said a buffer zone would be needed. "You look at a map and you create, for lack of a better term, a demilitarised zone (DMZ)," he said. "You have a... DMZ that you can monitor, and you've got this... no-fire zone," said Kellogg. But he added: "Now, are there going to be violations? Probably, because there always are. But your ability to monitor that is easy." Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

## Trump officials push immigrant gang message

WASHINGTON (Reuters): As US President Donald Trump's administration cracks down on immigration, its officials have repeatedly publicly identified detainees as gang leaders or even terrorists, without attempting to back those inflammatory claims up in court.

After an FBI SWAT team on March 27 raided the home of a 24-year-old Salvadoran man living illegally in Virginia, Attorney General Pam Bondi, standing alongside FBI Director Kash Patel in a morning press conference, alleged the man was one of the top three US leaders of the violent MS-13 street gang and called him a terrorist. Less than two weeks later, the Justice Department moved to drop the only charge it had brought against him -- illegal possession of a firearm by an alien -- and Bondi said he would face deportation instead.

In another arrest two weeks earlier, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers pulled over a Salvadoran man in Maryland and handcuffed him while his 5-year-old son, who is autistic and non-verbal, sat in the backseat, according to a legal complaint. ICE called the man's wife and told her she had 10 minutes to pick up her son before they contacted child protective services, she said in a court filing. After the Trump administration erroneously deported

the man - Kilmar Abrego Garcia - to El Salvador, the White House claimed he was involved in human trafficking. But the allegation has not appeared in court records related to his deportation.

Abrego Garcia was deported alongside 238 Venezuelan men alleged to be members of the Tren de Aragua gang who are now held in a high-security Salvadoran prison. A US immigration official conceded in court filings that many of the deportees had no criminal record but maintained they were still dangerous. When asked why the Trump administration would not provide details of the allegations against the Venezuelan deportees, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said she trusted the US government assessment and that the men should remain imprisoned "for the rest of their lives."

Prosecutors normally avoid making public allegations of serious criminal conduct -- like leading a gang, being a terrorist or engaging in human trafficking -- without presenting evidence in court to back up those charges, because they can jeopardize criminal cases, legal experts said. They also undermine a core plank of the US legal system that people have an opportunity to contest claims brought by the government. "In a court of law, when someone is

accused of membership in such a violent and predatory organization, it comes in the form of an indictment, a complaint, a criminal proceeding, that then has robust process so we can assess the facts," US District Judge Paula Xinis said during an April 4 court hearing, ordering Abrego Garcia, returned to the US. The US Supreme Court largely upheld that ruling. In a response to Reuters, US Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin claimed that Venezuelans deported to El Salvador without US criminal records "are actually terrorists, human rights abusers, gangsters and more" but did not present evidence of the accusations.

"We are putting the American people first by removing illegal aliens who pose a threat to our communities," McLaughlin said. A separate Trump administration official said the White House could not share "sensitive information about our intelligence and intelligence-gathering operations" but had confidence in government determinations. The Justice Department did not respond to a request for comment.

Trump, a Republican, took office in January promising a sweeping immigration crackdown. He frequently linked illegal immigration and crime although studies show immigrants do not commit crime at a high-

er rate than native-born Americans. Trump has stepped up enforcement against transnational gangs, designating Tren de Aragua, MS-13 and six Mexican cartels as terrorist groups, citing murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking and other crimes. "There's a narrative that the government wants to be able to convey, and it's one that helped get the president elected, which is that there are a lot of dangerous people who have come into our country illegally," said Rebecca Roiphe, a professor at New York Law School. "This is a legal strategy being used to serve a political agenda." Legal experts said out-of-court statements could prompt defense attorneys to seek dismissal of charges or transfer to another court on the grounds that a potential jury has been tainted.

Justice Department policy normally limits public statements about pending cases to information in publicly available documents such as indictments or complaints and bars commentary about a defendant's character. In the Virginia case, the Trump administration's decision to deport 24-year-old Henry Josue Villatoro Santos could mean that US authorities will never have to prove Bondi's allegation that he is one of the top leaders of MS-13 in the United States. A criminal complaint filed the day of Villatoro Santos' arrest made

no mention of his alleged leadership in MS-13, saying only that "indicia of MS-13 association" had been found in his bedroom as well as four guns and ammunition.

A lawyer for Villatoro Santos has asked a judge to delay ruling on the request to drop the charges, referencing Bondi's comments and warning of a risk he will be sent to El Salvador without a right to contest his removal. A hearing is scheduled. The Justice Department traditionally seeks to keep high-level criminals in its custody and prosecute them in the United States rather than trust foreign governments to deliver justice. "The old DOJ stayed quiet in the court of public opinion, careful not to jeopardize its investigations or the civil liberties of the accused," said Anthony Coley, who served as the department's chief spokesperson during Democratic President Joe Biden's administration. "The Trump team does the opposite - actively shaping public opinion and chasing headlines."

Xinis, the judge in the Maryland deportation case, chastised the Justice Department for relying on a "vague, uncorroborated allegation" to connect Abrego Garcia to MS-13. The government in that case, a civil lawsuit, has relied on a 2019 local police report, which used information from a confidential informant to allege he was a member of MS-13. An immi-

gration judge separately found the report credible. Abrego Garcia has denied any ties to MS-13. Federal authorities during the Trump administration have arrested people with detailed evidence of alleged links to MS-13. The FBI on April 1 arrested a fugitive and an alleged leader in a local MS-13 gang who had been charged in 2021 in a conspiracy linked to 11 murders in Nevada and California.

US authorities in March took into custody Francisco Javier Roman-Bardales, charged in 2023 in an indictment accusing him of helping to direct MS-13's activities in the United States and internationally. Roman-Bardales has pleaded not guilty. As the Trump administration tried to arrest and deport some alleged gang members without presenting evidence, it also dropped a major federal case against an MS-13 leader. Federal prosecutors had accused Cesar Lopez-Larios of allegedly directing acts of violence, murder, kidnapping, extortion and drug trafficking. But they moved to drop the charges on March 11, saying El Salvador would first proceed with its own case. "The United States has determined that sensitive and important foreign policy considerations outweigh the government's interest in pursuing the prosecution," a top prosecutor wrote to the judge overseeing the case.



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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

## Learning lessons of Lebanon civil war

FIFTY years ago today, Lebanon and its people were plunged into the abyss of civil war. Partly as a reaction to the horror of more than 150,000 deaths in 15 years of bitter armed conflict, there has been a tendency to somewhat romanticise the country's pre-war history – yet Lebanon's sectarian tensions and social inequalities left the state brittle and prone to collapse.

The war brought a special period in Lebanon's history to a shuddering halt. Its position as a vibrant cultural and intellectual bridge between East and West became another victim of the conflict. Before the war, cosmopolitan Beirut was a luxury tourism destination, a hub for Arab commerce and home to a flourishing and stable banking sector. The conflict that erupted on April 13, 1975 was manipulated by an array of countries including Israel, Syria and Iran. The early 1980s saw the rise of Hezbollah after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, leaving successive Lebanese governments struggling to cope with an Iranian-backed state within a state.

However, despite this dark history – or, in some ways, because of it – Lebanon has much to teach the world about resilience. In spite of facing some very long odds and amid repeated predictions that the state would not survive, Lebanon is still standing. It is a country that has worked hard to manage its diversity, and has not given up on the goal of creating a civic society and multi-confessional republic that all Lebanese can call home. That various Lebanese governments have often fallen short of these ideals does not invalidate them.

Lebanon has been through more than its fair share of hardships: occupation; sectarian violence; repeated governmental collapse; financial crises; corruption; the destabilising assassination of former prime minister Rafic Hariri in 2005; the 2020 Beirut port blast and last year's Israeli invasion to name but a few. Although the civil war ended in 1990, there has been little accountability or justice for the many families who lost loved ones in the fighting.

It is worth considering however, that in early 2025, Lebanon is in a better position to build a brighter future that it has been for several years. A new President, Prime Minister and government are in place, there is international support for the state's institutions, and a weakened Hezbollah has lost much of its ability to act as a spoiler. Added to these are the energy and spirit of the Lebanese people, who are among the most educated, entrepreneurial and dynamic in the Middle East.

If the country wants to harness this energy and stem the brain drain of young talent, there is much work to be done. Lebanon's sovereignty must be re-established by building up institutions such as its armed forces and removing occupying Israeli troops in the south. The Lebanese authorities must also work to curtail corruption, provide essential services, maintain law and order, and ensure opportunity for all.

Friends of Lebanon must step up and ensure its government has the tools to maintain a real path of reform. The ultimate goal should include restoring the Lebanese people's confidence in their institutions and leaders, and reinstating the country's place as a regional and international hub, therefore ensuring that the kind of deadly divisions seen 50 years ago are never allowed to return.

## Is reviving extinct animals way forward?

THIS week's claim by scientists in the US to have successfully "de-extincted" a species of wolf not seen for 12,000 years has rightly generated much excitement. According to Dallas-based Colossal Biosciences, ancient DNA taken from a 13,000-year-old tooth and a 72,000-year-old skull was manipulated with cloning and gene-editing technology to create three pups of the *Aenocyon dirus* species – the dire wolves of Game of Thrones fame.

Except, did they? By using the genes of a grey wolf – the dire wolf's closest living relative – the two males and one female pup are essentially a grey wolf-dire wolf hybrid, similar in appearance to the larger, extinct species. Nevertheless, while scientists tussle over whether this is a true resurrection or not, one thing the pups' arrival has certainly revived are the kind of questions about conservation, ethics and genetic research first raised following the 1996 birth of Dolly the sheep, the world's first cloned mammal.

Supporters of such research have many strong points to make. Reviving key species can increase biodiversity, restore ecological balance and, by studying living specimens' physiology and behaviour, even allow us to discover why they went extinct in the first place. The knowledge gleaned while scrutinising and manipulating such animals' DNA could produce cures for genetic diseases and generally advance our understanding of evolutionary biology.

That so many people have been understandably captivated by the wolf pups reveals another benefit of this kind of research – the ability to inspire more public interest in conservation, providing a timely reminder of the need to protect all species as human activity threatens more wildlife and habitats than ever before. But has the human impact on the planet already undermined the effectiveness of such "de-extinction" programmes?

Many long-gone species died out because of habitat change; if their original habitats are gone or significantly altered, what consequences will this have for revenant animals' well-being? In addition, the small number of revived animals almost guarantees a lack of genetic diversity that could lead to health problems. "De-extinction", as with other forms of advanced cloning, is an expensive process that could have unpredictable consequences for 21st-century ecosystems. Even the headline-grabbing excitement of reviving long-lost animals has its downside, threatening to distract from the hard work of many NGOs and individuals to conserve the species and habitats that exist today.

What is clear is that recreating lost species is no magic wand for arresting the alarming rate of environmental damage that is taking place right now. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, 47,000 species are threatened with extinction today – that is 28 per cent of all assessed species. Is niche genetic science the best way to arrest such decline? And given the absence of a comprehensive set of international regulations to govern animal cloning, what rules are in place to guide this powerful technology? This is an important debate, one that has many profound moral and practical implications. It is a conversation that must remain informed and rational in the years ahead, long after the publicity surrounding the births of Romulus, Remus and their sister Khaleesi has faded.

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## With Trump calling the tune, will Netanyahu face the music?

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent visit to Washington was no ordinary trip. The consensus among Israeli analysts, barring a few remaining loyalists, is that Netanyahu was not invited but, rather, summoned by US President Donald Trump.

All the evidence supports this assertion. Netanyahu rarely travels to the US without extensive Israeli media fanfare, leveraging his touted relationships with various US administrations as a "hasbara" opportunity to reinforce his image as Israel's strongman.

This time, there was no room for such campaigns. Netanyahu was informed of Trump's summons while on an official trip to Hungary. There, the Israeli leader was received by Hungarian President Viktor Orban with exaggerated diplomatic accolades, signaling defiance against international condemnation of Netanyahu as an accused war criminal wanted by the International Criminal Court, and portraying him as anything but an isolated leader of an increasingly pariah state.

The capstone of Netanyahu's short-lived Hungarian victory lap was Orban's announcement of Hungary's withdrawal from the ICC, a move with profoundly unsettling implications.

It would have been convenient for Netanyahu to use his Washington visit to deflect from his failed war in Gaza and internal strife in Israel. However, as the Arabic saying goes, "the wind often blows contrary to the ship's desires."

The notion that Netanyahu was summoned, not invited, is cor-

roborated by Israeli media reports that he attempted to postpone the visit under various pretexts. He failed, ultimately flying to Washington on the date determined by the White House. Initially, reports circulated that no press conference would be held, denying Netanyahu the platform to tout Washington's unwavering support for his military actions and to expound on the "special relationship" between the two countries.

A press conference was held, though it was largely dominated by Trump's contradictory messages and typical rhetoric. Netanyahu spoke briefly, attempting to project the same confident body language observed during his previous Washington visit, when he sat with an erect posture and spread out his legs, as if in command. But this time, his body language betrayed him; his eyes shifted nervously, and he appeared stiff and surprised, particularly when Trump announced that the US and Iran would begin direct talks in Oman soon.

Trump also mentioned the need to end the war in Gaza, but the Iran announcement clearly shocked Netanyahu. He desperately tried to align his discourse with Trump's, referencing Libya's disarmament under Muammar Qaddafi. But that was never part of Israel's official regional plan. Israel had consistently advocated for US military intervention against Iran, despite the certainty that such a war would destabilize the entire region, potentially drawing the US into a conflict far more protracted and devastating than the 2003

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

invasion of Iraq.

Further evidence of Washington's diverging views from Israel's regional ambitions – centered on perpetual war, territorial expansion, and geopolitical dominance – lies in the fact that key political and intellectual figures within the Trump administration recognize the futility of such conflicts. In leaked exchanges on the encrypted messaging platform Signal, Vice President JD Vance protested that escalating the war in Yemen benefits Europe, not the US, a continent with which the US is increasingly decoupling, if not engaging in a trade war.

The Yemen war, like a potential conflict with Iran, is widely perceived as being waged on Israel's behalf. Figures such as Tucker Carlson, a prominent commentator, articulated the growing frustration among right-wing intellectuals in the US, tweeting that "anyone advocating for conflict with Iran is not an ally of the United States, but an enemy."

Trump's willingness to openly challenge Netanyahu's policies remains unclear. His conflicting statements, such as calling for an end to the Gaza war, while simultaneously advocating for the expulsion of Palestinians, add to the ambiguity. However, recent reports suggest a determined US intention to end the war in Gaza as part of a broader strategy, linking Gaza to Yemen, Lebanon, and Iran.

This aligns with Washington's need to stabilize the region as it prepares for a new phase of competition with China,

requiring comprehensive economic, political, and military readiness.

Should Trump prove capable of doing what others could not, will Netanyahu finally submit to American pressure?

In 2015, Netanyahu demonstrated Israel's unparalleled influence on US foreign and domestic policy when he addressed both chambers of Congress. Despite a few insignificant protests, Republican and Democratic policymakers applauded enthusiastically as Netanyahu criticized then-President Barack Obama, who did not attend and appeared isolated by his own political class.

However, if Netanyahu believes he can replicate that moment, he is mistaken. Those years are long gone. Trump, a populist leader, is not beholden to finding political balances in Congress. Now in his second and final term, he could, in theory, abandon the US's ingrained reliance on Israel's approval and its aggressive lobby in Washington.

Moreover, Netanyahu's political standing is diminished. He is perceived as a failed political leader and military strategist, unable to secure decisive victories or extract political concessions from his adversaries. He is a leader without a clear plan, grappling with a legitimacy crisis unlike any faced by his predecessors.

Ultimately, the outcome hinges on Trump's willingness to confront Netanyahu. If he does, and sustains the pressure, the Israeli leader could find himself in an unenviable position, marking a rare instance in modern history where the US dictates its terms, and Israel listens. Time will tell.

## 90,000 Arab students in US under Trump scanner

A Louisiana immigration judge ruled last Friday in a high-profile case that Columbia University student Mahmoud Khalil could be deported for pro-Palestinian activism. He is not only a legal permanent resident but also the husband of a US citizen. His case should serve as a warning to international students that freedom of speech, guaranteed in the first amendment to the US Constitution, is relative and rationed. Khalil's case is not the only one to generate headlines and protest. Turkish doctoral student Rumeysa Ozturk at Tufts University was grabbed by immigration agents while in the street near Boston and transferred to Louisiana where she is awaiting deportation hearings. She criticised in a student newspaper the university's response to the Gaza war.

Iran-born Canadian national Dr. Helyeh Doughty, deputy director of Yale University's Law and Political Economy Project and associate research scholar at Yale Law School, has been fired after being accused of associating with anti-Israel groups. Cornell University PhD candidate Modoud Taal, a dual citizen of Britain and Gambia, who took part in pro-Palestine protests, fled the US before immigration agents could detain him. While US universities and colleges are the most popular in the world among international students, those applying to and attending these institutions of higher learning should understand that the Trump administration seeks to muzzle anyone who expresses support for Palestine as this is deemed a threat to US national security.

Among the 1.1 million international students currently studying on the US are 90,000 Arab students from 21 countries whose thoughts, speech and activities are under investigation by the Trump administration. Although the number of students affected is small, the circle of intimidation is wide and widening.

On January 30th, Donald Trump signed an executive order to "combat the explosion of anti-Semitism on our campuses and streets" following Israel's war on Gaza mounted after the October 7th, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel. An estimated 1,000 foreign students at more than 80 universities have been deported or detained ahead of deportation. These students have had their studies and academic research disrupted. India's Economic Times listed dozens of universities where visas have been revoked. Harvard University has lost three students and two recent graduates. At California's Stanford University four current students and two recent graduates have been affected. In the University of California system – which consists of five branches – 35 students and recent alumni have been targeted.

Four students have had their visas cancelled at the University of Michigan and one student has left the US. Seven students at Ohio State University, one at Emerson College, and two graduate students at Tufts University were impacted. At Columbia University four students have had their visas cancelled, including Khalil. One student was affected at Oregon University, 50 at Arizona State, three at the University of Pennsylvania, 40 at Northeastern University, three at Duke University, four at Central Michigan University, six at Colorado State University, three at Kent State University, five at Minnesota University, two at North Carolina University, a "small

number" at the University of Cincinnati and the University of Kentucky, and four at the University of Nevada. Multiple students lost visas at the University of Massachusetts and Boston University, and Berklee College of Music. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio justified this campaign by claiming those targeted were involved in activities that "run counter" to US national interests. Detainees have been abducted, handcuffed, and moved to a detention facility in Louisiana where they do not reside.

While the number of unprecedented deportations has received considerable attention in the media, the actual figure is tiny when the total number of international students is taken into account. However, every arrest and deportation amount to a serious infringement on the liberty and rights of students at a time their futures are being decided.

To make matters worse, universities have suffered and been threatened with cuts in federal funding since Trump began his second term in office. The chief cause for action against foreign students is cited as anti-Semitism on campus, an accusation promoted by pro-Israeli groups to stifle criticism of Israel and pro-Palestinian activism.

The domestic cause is university efforts to provide scholarships to students from disadvantaged US ethnic communities.

Columbia lost access to \$400 million. Johns Hopkins has been deprived of nearly \$4 billion in annual aid (40 per cent of its revenue), forcing the university to reduce research and layoff 2,200 staff. Cornell, Yale, Duke and Emory are also among those penalised.

This is a very short-sighted funding policy as international students contributed \$44 billion to the US economy and supported 378,000 jobs during the last academic year, according to the Association of American Universities (AAU). It said this was the "highest amount ever calculated." The data showed that "for every three international students, one US job is created/supported. States with the largest economic benefit from "international students were California, New York, Massachusetts, Texas, and Illinois.

The Open Doors 2024 Report published on International Educational Exchange said "more than half (56%) of international students across academic levels pursued [scientific] fields of study," with one in four (25%) studying maths and computer science and nearly one in five (19%) studying engineering."

These students play a significant role in research and entrepreneurship. "US economic competitiveness increasingly depends on international talent, and it is crucial that American immigration policies continue to enable international students to come to our universities," the AAU said.

Trump's campaign against international students and US universities can only impoverish the entire US education system which has been under challenge for decades. International students bring a new global and cultural dimension to university life wherever they study.

My interest in the Arab world was kindled when I attended a summer seminar for high school students at the University of Michigan where I met graduate students from Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, and Kuwait. At that time, I did not even know where these countries were located thanks to a deprived public-school education. Those encounters propelled me to investigate and dwell in this region which has given me a rich life.

## In the home of the Oracle, the future is anyone's guess

TRUMP, tariffs, and trust dominated the 10th Delphi Economic Forum in Greece which concluded on Friday.

Since taking office last January, US President Donald Trump has left world leaders, economists, and political analysts struggling to predict the future. After all, the case was – and very much still is – that when America sneezes, the world catches a cold. One only has to imagine how friends and foes alike are rushing to think tanks, analysts, and lobbyists to try to decipher the announcements and executive orders coming out of Washington on a daily basis.

It is, therefore, perhaps fitting that a large number of the global elite gathered at a mountain town believed by ancient Greeks to be the home of the Oracle. Legend has it that Delphi was an ancient religious sanctuary dedicated to the mythical Greek figure Apollo. Developed in the eighth century B.C., the sanctuary was home to the Oracle of Delphi, known throughout the ancient world for predicting the future.

Opening the Delphi Economic Forum, Greek President Konstantinos Tasoulas did not mince his words, saying that his country "supports transatlantic ties, while it contributes to efforts for its

strategic autonomy, and the de-escalation of the trade war that is harmful to everyone, always advocating for a unified European policy."

As he noted, "in an era in which global upheavals and radical changes are already apparent in both geopolitics and geoeconomics, with a pre-war-style imposition of intense protectionism that is disrupting and worsening the post-war global free economic system, our country is called upon to walk on familiar and tried-and-tested paths."

Many questions were raised about Ukraine, whether it would be abandoned, and in the absence of the Russian narrative, most people were left wondering what comes next. Well, the answer might emerge soon from Saudi Arabia if the peace talks succeed.

In fact, Saudi Arabia was the only other topic that competed with Trump, and not just in the context of Ukraine. When it comes to stabilizing energy prices and ending the war in Gaza, all hopes are on the solutions that may come out of Riyadh.

This is thanks to the Kingdom's foreign policy, which has pursued a fine balancing act, staying close to the US and the West, while at the same time strengthening its relations with China and

Russia, and trying to minimize or eradicate conflicts and disputes with countries such as Iran. Let us also not forget that Riyadh enjoys an excellent relationship with Trump due to the trust and respect built during his first administration.

When you combine such a web of relationships with the religious clout and economic might that the Kingdom enjoys, one can only begin to imagine the sphere of influence it has which was and is being used to help resolve regional and international conflicts. However, there is an added element, too, for Saudi-Greek bilateral ties, which have grown tremendously in the past eight years.

Early this year, the relationship was strengthened by the visit of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to Saudi Arabia. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman received him in AIUla and he also visited the historic UNESCO World Heritage Site at Hegra. They discussed relations between the two countries as well as ways to increase cooperation in various fields. The crown prince and Mitsotakis also chaired the Saudi-Greek Strategic Partnership Council, which oversees areas of current and future cooperation.

Among Saudis, including yours truly, Greece is not only known for its history and heritage as a tourist destination, but we will never forget that when US President Joe Biden withdrew the Patriot aircraft missiles in the middle of the war on the Houthis, it was Greece that decided to send the Patriot missile system to Saudi Arabia on loan. This gesture was highly applauded and appreciated in the Kingdom and provided a unique bond in the relationship between Athens and Riyadh.

As a firm believer in this relationship and what it could mean in terms of benefits for both countries, the region, and for Europe, the uncertainty the world is going through means Athens should push full speed ahead, especially to enhance its economic standing. That would also give the country an edge that could potentially end the need for a general strike, which is what happened on day one of the conference, stopping many delegates from attending. Kudos to the organizers for making it a success regardless.

With the world divided, Saudi Arabia is playing the role of pacifier. The idea is to quench the fires of division and provide a healing touch to humanity. All things considered, you don't need the Oracle to tell you that all roads lead to Riyadh.

Faisal J. Abbas



# Trump’s showdown with China deepens, with huge stakes for the economy

**P R E S I D E N T Donald Trump is heading into another volatile week of his trade wars facing an urgent need to de-escalate the clash he ignited with China before it inflicts deep damage on the US economy.**

Chinese President Xi Jinping is so far declining US pressure to call his American counterpart to seek a “deal” after the United States imposed 145% tariffs on its super-power rival, setting off a long-feared direct confrontation.

This leaves Trump repeatedly assuring Americans that his “great relationship” with the Chinese leader will head off a crisis but unable to initiate talks in a standoff that risks tanking stock markets again and imposing real hardships on Americans.

Despite the uncertainty, Trump is putting on a show of relishing multiple fights he set off, and he lapped up a standing ovation as he took a seat cage-side at a UFC mixed martial arts event in Florida on Saturday night. The president, who styles himself as an ultimate political fighter, told reporters his reception was “somewhat legendary” and showed that “we’re doing a good job.”

But the president’s conflict with China is a real-world showdown with far higher stakes.

The impasse is so serious because the US and Chinese economies are intricately entwined. The US relies on China for consumer electronics; rare earth minerals used in the manufacture of electric vehicles and for military applications and robotics; pharmaceuticals used in lifesaving medicines; and more basic staples of daily life, including clothing and shoes. US exports of produce like soybeans and sorghum to China are vital to the livelihoods of American farmers, but the tariffs imposed by both sides are so prohibitive that trade may effectively grind to a halt.

Both sides could suffer terribly in a full-blown trade war, and US consumers could be hit by shortages and surging prices. But some experts believe that China, owing to its authoritarian system of government, would be willing to impose more pain on its populace to avoid losing what could be a defining struggle with the US.

China imposed reciprocal 34% tariffs on all imports from the United States from April 10, including export controls on seven types of rare-earth minerals, such as samarium, gadolinium and terbium.

Trump’s capacity to play the long game was called into question when he suddenly paused reciprocal tariffs on dozens of

nations last week for 90 days after bond market sell-offs began to hint at a developing financial crisis. That climbdown will have been carefully watched in Beijing. And in seeking to ease one sticky situation, Trump exacerbated another — lashing out at China with his 145% tariffs in an apparent effort to save face.

As the chaos worsens, the White House added more confusion Friday night, exempting imports of Chinese-made smartphones and computers from the top tariff rate in an apparent acknowledgment that sky-high levies on those items could ham-

mer the tech industry and US consumers. But on Sunday, the administration insisted that such products would still be subject to new tariffs at a lower level in the coming weeks, raising further questions about its apparently unplanned and knee-jerk stances, which have repeatedly scared markets. “NOBODY is getting ‘off the hook’ for the unfair Trade Balances, and Non Monetary Tariff Barriers, that other Countries have used against us, especially not China which, by far, treats us the worst!” Trump wrote Sunday on Truth Social. “There was no Tariff ‘exception’ announced on Friday. These products are subject to the existing 20% Fentanyl Tariffs, and they are just moving to a different Tariff ‘bucket.’ The Fake News knows this, but refuses to report it,” he went on.

As it has several times, the administration is insisting that its sudden moves and inconsistent messaging were part of the plan all along. “This is just another great example of how President Trump had a detailed plan from the beginning that’s being executed exactly as directed,” White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller said on Fox News’ “Sunday Morning Futures.” He explained the administration’s thinking that such items are vital to US national security and thus required different treatment for “reshoring” factories that make them.

The administration insists its strategy is working, arguing that scores of countries included in the now-paused reciprocal tariffs have rushed to offer stunning deals to Trump to escape American pressure. The White House is now applying similar logic to China, betting that the might of the US economy will force Xi to offer concessions on long-held grievances that include concerns over market access, intellectual property theft and a vast trade imbalance that Trump insists is proof Beijing is ripping off Washington. “It’s kind of almost a two-world system. There’s

Stephen Collinson

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Still, the administration has dismissed warnings that China can hurt the US as badly as Washington can hurt it. “They’re playing with a pair of twos,” Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said last week on CNBC. He argued that since the US exports only a fifth of the total value of goods Beijing sends to the US, its economy would come off worse in a tit-for-tat trade war. That reasoning and Trump’s confidence that his typical brinkmanship and raising of the stakes to intolerable levels, which he honed as a real estate mogul in New York, will

be tested in the days to come.

If Trump does manage to reframe the US trading relationship with China, he will claim a significant achievement in a new era of Washington relations with Beijing. For years, presidents of both parties reasoned that by liberalizing China’s previously controlled economy, the US could usher its rival into the global rule-based trading system and promote political reforms inside the country. But that calculus began to change at the end of the Obama administration, and Xi’s nationalistic rule sharpened the economic and geopolitical showdown

Trump has argued with some justification that expanded trade with China has built a superpower foe that US leaders in both parties now regard as the premier threat to US national security and global power. At the same time, however, cheap clothes and consumer goods such as iPhones have massively improved the material circumstances of millions of Americans, even as globalization has hollowed out US manufacturing heartlands and left a trail of social blight. Despite the rising tensions and more nervousness to come on the stock markets this week, Trump’s aides on Sunday defended the president’s approach, which risks tipping into recession an economy that was humming along when he took office less than three months ago. “This is unfolding exactly like we thought it would in a dominant scenario,” White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” He added: “We’ve got 90 deals in 90 days possibly pending here.” That kind of success rate in negotiating trade deals, which normally take years to clinch, would be remarkable — one reason why many analysts don’t take the administration’s bombast about offers from foreign nations at face value. The possibility remains that countries such as Japan, India and South Korea, as well as the European Union, will offer Trump splashy concessions he can claim as a big

win while they do not fundamentally change bilateral trading relationships.

That would mean one of Trump’s core justifications for the tariff war — remaking American manufacturing — would not be achieved. Cosmetic wins for Trump would also fail to justify the trillions of dollars his actions have wiped off global stock markets and the losses he’s inflicted on millions of Americans’ retirement accounts.

There are growing signs that the president’s chaotic economic management is depressing his political standing in a way that will be particularly sensitive for Republican lawmakers

in the year before the midterm elections. A new CBS poll Sunday showed that the president’s approval ratings over his handling of the economy and inflation have dipped. Some 44% of respondents approve and 56% disapprove of his performance on the economy, while only 40% approve and 60% disapprove on his handling of inflation. And 75% expect at least short-term price spikes due to tariffs, while 48% expect long-term increases.

These are shaky numbers considering that the real impact of tariffs is yet to be felt by consumers in terms of rising prices. And Trump’s bet is particularly hazardous given that his promise to lower the costs of food and housing was at the center of his win over Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris last November. Despite the tense times, one of Trump’s loudest boosters in the Cabinet, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, remains bombastic. “Donald Trump has the ball. I want him to have it. He’s the right person with it,” Lutnick said on ABC News’ “This Week.” “He knows how to play this game. He knows how to deal with President Xi. This is the right person for the right role, and I am confident this is going to work out with China.”

Yet the mystique of Trump as a master deal-maker, which has been more central to the president’s political appeal than anything else, has never faced a tougher test. — CNN

## France can and must do more than recognising Palestinian statehood

**O N Wednesday, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that France is preparing to recognise Palestinian statehood within a few months. If it proceeds, Paris would become the 12th European Union member to officially accept the existence of the Palestinian state. Last year, Slovenia, Ireland and Spain did so, bringing the total number of EU states recognising Palestine to 11 out of 27.**

The French recognition would be a significant step in the right direction, especially if it affirms Palestine’s 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital, respecting international law provisions and the international consensus. This could move other European countries to do the same, including Luxembourg and Portugal and could put significant pressure on others, notably the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Belgium.

However, France is at risk of turning its recognition of Palestine into another empty gesture to save face amid growing opposition among Europeans to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the genocide in Gaza. Under Macron, France has been far from meeting its legal and political obligations towards Palestine, turning a blind eye to Israel’s horrific crimes and violations. In this context, the French announcement can be seen as a diplomatic move that is too little, too late.

Until recently, Western powers largely conditioned the recognition of Palestine on the outcome of peace negotiations, which in reality meant giving Israel a veto right over Palestinian statehood. This is because Israel does not want negotiations to produce a solution — whether a two-state one along the 1967 borders or a one-state one in which Palestinians and Israelis have equal rights.

Israeli law opposes recognition of Palestine and the fulfilment of the Palestinian right to self-determination, but Western powers have continued to act as if this was not the case. Israel was given this leverage over Palestine despite the fact that its own statehood was based on United Nations Resolution 181, which called for the creation of two states, and its membership in the UN was conditioned on the implementation of Resolutions 181 and 194 — the latter pertaining to the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Successive Israeli governments have systematically violated both resolutions as well as many others without facing any consequences from their Western allies.

Now that the Israeli government has finally made clear that its plan is ethnic cleansing and

Xavier Abu Eid

annexation of all of Palestine, some Western countries seem to be reconsidering their stance and are opting to recognise Palestinian statehood.

While recognition is important, it cannot be the only step a country such as France should take to implement the Palestinian right to self-determination. France is a former colonial power in the Middle East, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a leading member of the EU, one of Israel’s most important trading partners and an important donor for Palestine.

As such, it has the moral and legal obligation to do more than that. Recognition on its own is not going to stop the ongoing ethnic cleansing and annexation. These processes continue unabated because countries like France fail to act and hold Israel accountable.

For example, France was one of the first European countries to grant de facto immunity to

Under Macron, France has been far from meeting its legal and political obligations towards Palestine, turning a blind eye to Israel’s horrific crimes and violations. In this context, the French announcement can be seen as a diplomatic move that is too little, too late. Until recently, Western powers largely conditioned the recognition of Palestine on the outcome of peace negotiations, which in reality meant giving Israel a veto right over Palestinian statehood. This is because Israel does not want negotiations to produce a solution — whether a two-state one along the 1967 borders or a one-state one in which Palestinians and Israelis have equal rights. Israeli law opposes recognition of Palestine and the fulfilment of the Palestinian right to self-determination, but Western powers have continued to act as if this was not the case. Israel was given this leverage over Palestine despite the fact that its own statehood was based on United Nations Resolution 181, which called for the creation of two states, and its membership in the UN was conditioned on the implementation of Resolutions 181 and 194 — the latter pertaining to the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against him in November. Paris has opened its airspace on several occasions for Netanyahu to fly over on his way to the United States in violation of its obligations under the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC. Despite growing calls for an arms embargo on Israel, France has continued to sell weapons to the Israeli army during the ongoing genocide. French citizens face no repercussions for engaging in settler-colonialism in the occupied West Bank or serving in the Israeli occupation forces, which have been repeatedly accused of committing horrific war crimes.

Likewise, France continues to tolerate the fundraising for illegal Israeli settlements while several French companies have contributed to the ongoing annexation process of occupied Palestinian territory. France has been granted a special role in Jerusalem with regards to protecting the status quo benefits of Christian denominations. However, it has hardly

taken any concrete measures to stop ongoing Israeli attempts to impose illegal taxes on churches and take over church property.

If France is truly interested in being a broker of peace in the Middle East, it needs to do more than just recognising Palestinian statehood. It must act in accordance with its obligations under the UN Charter and the Rome Statute. It must put real pressure on Israel to end its occupation and colonisation of Palestinian land and take action against French citizens and companies involved in them. It must reverse its decision to grant immunity to Israeli officials wanted by the ICC.

At the EU level, France must join Spain and Ireland in demanding a review of the EU-Israel Association Agreement in light of Israel’s flagrant violation of Article 2, which stipulates that relations should be based on respect for human rights.

It goes without saying that the Israeli government opposes any recognition of Palestine and will

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make use of its available tools to prevent it. It could apply pressure by mobilising domestic opposition, coordinating with close Israeli allies, such as the United States, and taking action against diplomats based in Jerusalem — among other tactics. This will force France to face its moment of truth: Is it willing to stand up for its principles, or will it succumb to Israeli blackmail? Will it lead the way in Europe on respecting international obligations, or will it let its recognition of Palestine remain an empty gesture? At a time when US President Donald Trump’s administration endorses ethnic cleansing as an official policy and the EU is at its lowest political point with regards to Palestine, France has the opportunity to make a difference. It can join other EU members, like Spain and Ireland, which along with the Global South are pushing for a rules-based international order where Palestine is no longer the exception to the norm. It can live up to its own motto of “liberté, égalité, fraternité” by supporting the Palestinian people’s pursuit of liberty, equality and fraternity.

## The global economy is in turmoil. Now is the time to build a new order

**W E live in difficult times, and it is challenging to remain optimistic about the future. Climate change threatens human wellbeing and planetary health, and the window to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all is rapidly closing.**

Neo-fascism is spreading across continents. Militarism is on the rise. Genocide in Palestine continues to be livestreamed while war rages on from Sudan to Ukraine and Myanmar. Workers suffer under a worldwide assault on their political rights and freedoms.

In short, we live in a world imperialist economy that continually reproduces inequality, poverty and war and is driven by the capitalist logic of ever-expanding accumulation that is pushing us towards planetary breakdown. We need alternative visions, and fast.

With this in mind, the Havana Group of the Progressive International launched its Program of Action on the Construction of a New International Economic Order towards the end of 2024. The launch was

timed to mark the 50th anniversary of its namesake. The Program of Action, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974, sought to establish principles for equality between nations and peoples, but it was undone by the oil and Global South debt crises, combined with United States-led resistance to its implementation.

Arguably, the 2024 Program of Action stands a better chance. Many Global South countries have significantly increased their economic and political power over the past 50 years while the North is shaken by US President Donald Trump’s economic policies in pursuit of his “America first”.

US unilateralism may well undo the Global North’s decades-long coordinated action to maintain its dominant position.

In this context, the updated 2024 programme proposes policies that can break the developmental divide between the Global North and South and deliver a “sustainable future” of “shared prosperity across the world”. To achieve these goals, the programme identifies five major areas for collective action by governments in the South: climate, industry, finance, technology and governance. Within each area, several objectives are set out, followed by implementable measures for how to get there.

The 31 proposed measures contain a mix of the old and the new, from long-established efforts to improve the terms of trade, to new initiatives, such as resource recycling clubs to address waste and the coordinated development of a public digital infra-

structure. The most notable new addition, and of no surprise, is climate. Here, the programme identifies five major areas for collective action by governments in the South: climate, industry, finance, technology and governance. Within each area, several objectives are set out, followed by implementable measures for how to get there.

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Ben Radley

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essence of the anti-imperialist strategy of delinking lies in the South, breaking from the demands imposed by the North and reorienting towards the priorities, needs and interests of its peoples. Amin noted that the core elements of a delinking agenda would entail industrialisation for the mass production of domestic goods, reviving peasant agriculture

and reasserting sovereign control over productive activity and economic policy. All these aspects are in Progressive International’s Program

of Action. Central to each of the programme’s 31 proposals is the need for coordinated action across the South to establish a range of clubs, agencies, networks, frameworks and commissions. In this, the programme is calling for a revival of “unity in diversity”, one of the central principles of the Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955 and

attended by 29 Asian and African states to promote a common agenda against colonialism and neocolonialism.

It is easy to dismiss all this as naive optimism, given various faultlines between regions and nations of the South. Equally, it is difficult to see past its centrality to breaking the North-South divide and building a more equitable and just future.

There is also the question of whether we can rely on governing political elites to lead us into this new world.

The programme suggests we can. Yet the increasing capture of the state and the ruling classes by the logics and demands of capital accumulation and the development of global capitalism can pose a major challenge.

Often, governing elites function as both promoters and beneficiaries of this trend. Governments in the Global South are not only — or not necessarily — mere victims of the ills of Northern capital.

In many instances, they actively participate in and materially benefit from the reproduction of the existing global capi-

talist order. The task ahead lies not in awaiting salvation from the enlightened ruling classes but in building at home the economic and political power of what Guyanese historian and revolutionary Walter Rodney termed the “working people”. Self-organised peasants and workers have historically played leading roles in anti-capitalist politics and liberation struggles against colonial and imperial subjugation.

Today, six in 10 workers globally are in informal employment, increasing to nine in 10 workers in the world’s poorest countries. To reflect this reality, labour organising must go beyond formal wage employment to include informal and self-employed labour as well as reproductive labour.

Any collective flourishing within a new international economic order will once again depend on the determining role played by labour and popular forces, broadly understood. Without this, the excesses of global capital and the violence, impoverishment and inequality these reproduce will never be constrained.





## MoU signed between SCCI and BVMW — to promote economic cooperation



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and German institute BVMW to strengthen mutual cooperation and economic and trade relations.

A press release issued here on Monday stated that SCCI president Fazal Moqeem Khan is currently on a Germany tour wherein he has participated in an

international conference on Small and Medium Businesses organized by BVMW.

At the sideline of the conference, the MoU was signed by SCCI president Fazal Moqeem Khan and BVMW member, executive board, Head of Government Affairs and Foreign Trade Mr Andreas Jahn, the release said.

Zahidullah Shinwari, ex-president of the chamber, officials and representatives of the BVMW were present on the occasion.

According to agreement, both sides would collaborate to enhance investment and promote trade and bilateral cooperation whereas they would also devise a joint framework to improve trade volume, besides promote institutional collaboration/cooperation, conduct of capacity building training for members in the field of investment.

Similarly, the both institutions would exchange information on investment policy, rules, procedures, incentives, opportunities and other relevant knowledge, exchange of business delegations, encourage research activities, identification of possible/available investment facilities, joint projects, exchange of technical experts, under the agreement.

Besides, the agreement would enable us to share regular information on economic, trade and investment.

Fazal Moqeem, expressing his views on the occasion termed the agreement as a milestone to strengthen Pak-German mutual cooperation, trade and economic relations.

There is huge potential to further cement economic collaboration between Pakistan and Germany, the SCCI chief remarked.

Moqeem said vast opportunities existed to invest in the potential sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The SCCI president invited German Companies to invest in oil, gas, hydro power generation, mine, mineral, gems stone and other important sectors to improve the mutual economic and trade ties.

Zahidullah Shinwari also spoke on the occasion and highlighted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa potential sectors for foreign investment.

He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a lucrative destination for foreign investors and stressed that German companies should take full advantage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa potentials through joint ventures.

BVMW officials and representatives also hailed the agreement with SCCI and enlightened the meeting about possible sectors and areas for launch of joint ventures and mutual trade and economic collaboration.



ISLAMABAD: Managing Director/CEO OGDCL Ahmed Hayat Lak meeting with Chairman Zafar Masud at Head Office.

## Rupee sheds 14 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Monday depreciated by 14 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.60 against the previous day's closing of Rs280.46.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.65 and Rs282.15, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 79 paise to close at Rs319.75 against the last day's closing of Rs318.96, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.96, whereas an increase of Rs3.69 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs369.66 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs366.54.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 04 and 05 paise to close at Rs76.39 and Rs74.76, respectively.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where two ships, Lovestakken and KK Marlin carrying Chemicals and Gasoline berthed at Engro Vopak Terminal and FOTCO oil Terminal respectively Sunday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Orchid Kefalonia and Sinar Toraja carrying Canola oil and LPG also arrived at outer anchorage during last 24 hours.

A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Siya Ram and KK Marlin were expected to sail.

Cargo volume of 116,368 tonnes, comprising 116,368 tonnes imports cargo and nil export cargo was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are six ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Asia Inspire and IVS Went-Worth & three more ships, Victoria Glory, Eleni-T and MSC Roberta carrying Palm oil, Coal, Mogas and Container were expected to take berths at LCT, PIBT, FOTCO and QICT are respectively, while four more container ships, MSC Positano, MSC Yamuna-VI and SM Kaveri are due to expected arrive at outer anchorage today (Tuesday).

## Gold prices decreased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs1,800 and was traded at Rs338,800 on Monday as compared to its sale at Rs340,600 on previous trading day.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs1,543 to Rs290,466 from Rs292,009 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also came down to Rs266,261 from Rs267,684, respectively.

The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,234 and Rs2,772 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$18 to \$3,218 from \$3,236 whereas that of silver remained unchanged at \$31.30.

## Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2025: Chairman OGDCL discusses plans

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Zafar Masud, on Monday visited the company's head office in Islamabad, where he met with Managing Director/CEO Ahmed Hayat Lak

and the OGDCL team to congratulate them on the successful organization of the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2025 (PMIF25).

During the meeting, Chairman Zafar Masud lauded the efforts of the OGDCL team for organizing a world-class event that successfully showcased Pakistan's mineral potential

to the world. He said that PMIF25 had firmly positioned Pakistan as an emerging global hub for minerals and natural resources.

While appreciating the success of PMIF25, the Chairman discussed preparations for the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2026 (PMIF26). He emphasized the need to build on the momentum generated by PMIF25 and ensure that the next edition of the forum is even more impactful and inclusive. He called for early planning, international outreach, and innovative strategies to make PMIF26 a bigger success. While reviewing the initial planning for next

year's forum, he stressed that PMIF26 should be even more ambitious in scope and execution. The Chairman also discussed proposals for the date and venue of PMIF26.

Organized by OGDCL with the support of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and the Government of Pakistan, PMIF25 marked a significant step toward unlocking Pakistan's vast mineral wealth.

The forum attracted over 5,000 attendees and featured participation from more than 300 international and national delegates, including government officials, mining experts, investors, and academics.

## PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 1,536 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish on Monday, gaining 1,536.70 points, a positive change of 1.34 percent, closing at 116,390.04 points as compared to 114,853.33 points on the last trading day.

A total of 484,547,019 shares were traded during the day as compared to 458,589,593 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs27,430 billion against Rs31.628 billion on the last

trading day. As many as 455 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 247 of them recorded gains and 145 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 63 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Nenergyco PK with 55,091,076 shares at Rs 8.64 per share, Pak Int. Bulk with 45,232,730 shares at Rs 10.86 per share and Sui South Gas with 31,842,819 shares at Rs 41.71 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 132.95 per share closing at Rs 1,462.40 whereas runner-up was Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs 102.48 rise in its share price to close at Rs 7,173.33.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 88.96 per share price, closing at Rs 3,233.01, whereas the runner-up Indus Motor Company Limited with Rs 19.52 decline in its per share price to Rs 1,999.51.

## Dawlance become Reliable Appliance Partner of KK



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Dawlance has officially become the Reliable Appliance Partner of Karachi Kings for PSL X. The MoU signing ceremony

was graced by prominent dignitaries, including Dawlance Pakistan's Chief Marketing Officer, Syed Hasan Jameel, Karachi Kings owner Salman Iqbal, team captain David Warner,

vice-captain Hasan Ali, and the entire squad. This strategic partnership signals a dynamic new era of teamwork, innovation, and mutual growth for Dawlance and Karachi Kings.

## Stocks rise on electronics tariffs exemption

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Stocks rose on Monday as trade war fears were tempered by Donald Trump's announcement of tariff exemptions for electronics, although the dollar weakened and safe-haven gold hit a fresh record amid fears the relief would be short-lived.

After the wild gyrations witnessed last week, markets got off to a relatively stable start following Friday's news that the White House would exempt smartphones, semiconductors, computers and other devices from painful "reciprocal" levies.

The announcement provided a much-needed injection of optimism for investors who had been sent scurrying for the hills in the wake of the US president's tariff flip-flops and tit-for-tat measures by China.

All three main indexes on Wall Street finished solidly higher, helped by comments from a top Federal Reserve official that the central bank was prepared to step in to support financial markets.

Asia followed suit, with tech firms helping push Hong Kong more than two percent higher, while

Tokyo, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Wellington and Manila were all well up.

London, Paris and Frankfurt rallied at the open, while US futures were all sharply higher.

"After a period of chaotic price action, chinks of light poke through the forest canopy providing a much-needed guide to the entities that price risk and liquidity for a living, which in turn, may see liquidity conditions improve and a relative calm return to markets," said Chris Weston at Pepperstone.

## Minister visits Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited Head Office



### F.P. Report

LAHORE: Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited

(SNGPL) Managing Director Amer Tufail welcomed the dignitaries and presented a comprehensive

briefing on the company's affairs.

Minister Ali Parvez Malik held discussions with

the company's management on key challenges facing SNGPL and the petroleum sector, and issued necessary directives. He emphasized that ensuring efficient gas supply to the public is the government's top priority.

The minister stressed the need for innovation in the system to improve the gas supply chain and address deficiencies in the distribution network.

Various strategies to overcome challenges in the supply chain were also discussed.

The minister instructed the management to perform their duties with complete dedication, integrity, and transparency.

The Petroleum Division assured full cooperation in resolving critical issues.

## Thee-day Pak-China Love Festival to be organized from 25th to 27th

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan China Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) collaborated with Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Lahore, Punjab Food Authority government of Punjab, Information and Culture Department government of Punjab to organize the Pak-China Love Festival, a three day cultural and trade festival, at Lahore Global Village from April 25 to 27, 2025.

The main agenda of this event is to highlight the vibrant colors of culture, business, and entertainment, bringing together people from different backgrounds to celebrate and strengthen the strong bonds

between Pakistan and China.

The President PCJCCI said here Monday that this festival will present the similarities and uniqueness of Chinese and Pakistani Food and will enhance love and unity among the people of Pakistan and China.

This festival is more than just an event; it is a reflection of the deep-rooted friendship between Pakistan and China. Through cultural exchange, mutual appreciation, and collaboration, this festival aims to strengthen bilateral relations and enhance people-to-people connections.

Rao Pervaiz Akhtar, Additional Director General, Punjab Food

Authority (PFA) said that the festival promises a feast for the senses with an exciting array of food stalls featuring authentic Pakistani and Chinese cuisine. Visitors will have the chance to savor traditional flavors, indulge in signature dishes, and experience the culinary artistry of both nations.

Brig. (Retd) Mansoor Saeed Sheikh, Senior Vice President PCJCCI, shared his views by saying that through cultural exchange, mutual appreciation, and collaboration, this festival aims to strengthen bilateral relations and enhance people-to-people connections. Additionally, it will serve as a platform to

boost trade relations between Pakistan and China, opening new opportunities for businesses and investors from both nations.

Zafar Iqbal, Vice President PCJCCI, said that beyond food, the Pak-China Cultural Festival will host a mesmerizing Concert & Qawwali Night, bringing together talented artists from both countries to promote cross-cultural appreciation through music. Attendees can immerse themselves in the soul-stirring melodies of Qawwali and the dynamic beats of contemporary music, celebrating the harmony and shared artistic legacy of Pakistan and China.

## IBA Karachi hosts informative and insightful session



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: IBA Karachi hosted an informative and insightful session titled, "Impact of IBA for Smoothly Handling Commercial Disputes through ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution)" at the IBA Main Campus. The session aimed to raise awareness about the growing rele-

vance of ADR mechanisms in resolving commercial disputes in Pakistan.

The event featured Hon'ble Justice Jawad Hassan as the esteemed guest speaker. In his address, he emphasized the significance of ADR processes of arbitration, mediation, and reconciliation as efficient, cost-effective, and time-saving alternatives to conventional

litigation. He stated, "The first ADR Center in Pakistan was established by IBA Karachi, the finest business school in the country," and commended Dr. S Akbar Zaidi, Executive Director IBA, and Mr. Kamran Bilgrami, Director, IBA-CEE, for their pivotal role in institutionalizing ADR education and practice. He also highlighted the high costs

associated with traditional legal proceedings and emphasized the importance of mandatory mediation in enabling businesses and individuals to resolve disputes more efficiently, affordably, and with greater ease.

The session reflects IBA's ongoing efforts to enhance legal literacy and promote alternative legal frameworks among its students, faculty, and broader stakeholder community, strengthening its commitment to informed business practices and good governance.

The session was attended by esteemed IBA faculty members, including Dr. Abdullah Zafar Sheikh, Dean, IBA School of Business Studies (IBA-SBS); Dr. Hilal Anwar Butt, Chairperson, Department of Finance, IBA-SBS; Dr. Syed Sharjeel Ahmed Hasnie, Chairperson, Department of Accounting & Law, IBA-SBS, and Irfan Qamar, Director HR, IBA.





In brief

Page makes history with second 147

LONDON (Agencies): Jackson Page has become the first player to make a maximum 147 break twice in one match as he took a step closer to qualifying for the World Snooker Championship. The 23-year-old Welshman had made his first 147 on Sunday, during the eighth frame of his third-round qualifying match against England's Allan Taylor. Resuming the match on Monday, leading 8-1 and needing only two frames to complete victory, Page racked up another maximum to clinch a 10-2 win. Page's achievement has secured him the £147,000 Triple Crown bonus and a place in the final round of qualifiers. He will meet either Joe O'Connor or Iulian Boiko in the fourth qualifying round, dubbed Judgement Day.

Hockey, table tennis competitions held

PESHAWAR (APP): As part of the ongoing "DeraLaat 2025" celebrations, a series of hockey and table tennis matches were held in Dera Ismail Khan, drawing enthusiastic participation and community support. The first hockey match took place between Dera Hockey Club and Bilal Shaheed Hockey Club, with Dera Hockey Club emerging victorious by scoring two goals. The event was graced by City Mayor Umar Amin Khan Gandapur as the chief guest. Also in attendance were Regional Sports Officer Raziullah Betani, Director of Operations Sports Nematullah Marwat, Deputy Director of Operations Jamshed Baloch and other notable guests. Both teams displayed remarkable sportsmanship, with Dera Hockey Club securing their win in the second half. The chief guest commended the teams for their excellent performance and encouraged them to continue their dedication to the sport. Meanwhile, table tennis competitions were held at the Ahmad Nawaz Mulazai Table Tennis Academy. The matches were contested across three categories: Junior, Senior, and Mixed. Hafiz Waqas claimed overall victory across the categories. The event was organized under the leadership of Ahmad Nawaz Mulazai, General Secretary of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Table Tennis Association. Distinguished guests included Director of Operations Nematullah Marwat, Sports Directors Azam Baloch and Adnan Sohail and Deputy Director Jamshed Baloch. Notable figures Jamshed Pehlwan and Muhammad Rizwan were also present to witness the high-spirited matches. The events highlighted the region's commitment to promoting sports and engaging youth through healthy competition and community involvement.

USA, Japan qualify for BJK Cup finals

PARIS (AFP): The USA and Japan became the final teams to book their place at the Billie Jean King Cup Finals with 2-1 victories over Slovakia and Canada respectively on Sunday. USA took an unassailable 2-0 lead against Slovakia in Group C after the two singles rubbers in Bratislava, before the hosts claimed the doubles on a retirement. Earlier in Tokyo, victory in the deciding doubles rubber put Japan top of Group A and meant they and the USA will be heading to Shenzhen in September to join hosts China, defending champions Italy and fellow qualifying group winners Ukraine, Spain, Great Britain and Kazakhstan.



RAWALPINDI: Islamabad United's Sahibzada Farhan celebrates after scoring a century (100 runs) during the Pakistan Super League Twenty20 cricket match.

PSL 10: Islamabad United crush Peshawar Zalmi by 102 runs

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): Islamabad United delivered a stunning all-round performance to thrash Peshawar Zalmi by 102 runs in a one-sided Pakistan Super League (PSL) clash. This marked Islamabad's second win of the season, while Peshawar suffered their second consecutive defeat. Batting first, Islamabad United set a mammoth target, piling up 243 runs for the loss of 5 wickets. The star of the innings was Sahibzada Farhan, who played a breathtaking knock of 106 runs off just 52 balls, anchoring the innings with power and precision. In reply, Peshawar

Zalmi faltered under pressure and were bowled out for just 141 runs, falling short by a massive margin of 102 runs. Eight of Zalmi's batters failed to reach double figures as the top and middle order collapsed under Islamabad's disciplined bowling attack. Only Mohammad Haris showed resistance, scoring a fighting 87 runs, but his lone effort was not enough to challenge Islamabad's massive total. From the bowling side, Imad Wasim starred with the ball, taking 3 wickets, while Shadab Khan and Ben Dwarshuis picked up 2 wickets each, effectively dismantling Zalmi's batting lineup.

Babar Azam admits team shortcomings Speaking after the match, Zalmi captain Babar Azam acknowledged the team's poor performance and the need to regroup quickly. "We were not able to implement our plans. When the target is big, sometimes pressure comes in. But there are still many matches left, and we will try to improve our performance," he said. Babar remained optimistic about making a comeback in the upcoming fixtures, promising that the team will address its shortcomings and bounce back stronger.

Usman Tariq reported for suspect bowling action

LAHORE (INP): Quetta Gladiators spinner Usman Tariq has been reported for a suspect bowling action during a recent Pakistan Super League (PSL) match against Lahore Qalandars. Umpires Ahsan Raza and Chris Brown flagged concerns about Tariq's bowling technique during the fixture, submitting an official report to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Despite this development, the PCB has clarified that Tariq remains eligible to continue bowling in upcoming matches. However, the board issued a warning that if his action is reported again, he will be suspended from bowling until he receives clearance from the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Biomechanics Laboratory. This process follows standard protocol for players reported for potentially illegal bowling actions in professional cricket competitions. The PCB's approach allows players to address technical concerns while maintaining their competitive participation, provided no second report is filed. Cricket regulations require bowlers to maintain legal bowling actions that comply with specific biomechanical standards. The ICC testing procedure evaluates whether a bowler's arm straightening exceeds the permitted 15-degree tolerance during delivery. The Quetta Gladiators management has not yet issued a statement regarding their spinner's reported action or any remedial work planned.

Shoaib recalls crowd clashes, urge players to stay calm

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's former fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, famously known as the "Rawalpindi Express," has shared his experience of dealing with aggressive crowds on the field. Speaking as a panellist during the ongoing PSL 10 season, Shoaib Akhtar revealed that he was banned four times for engaging in altercations with the crowd. "It happens; you lose your temper, but it shouldn't," he admitted. Responding to a question from the host about how to handle an aggressive crowd while fielding near the boundary, Akhtar suggested a light-hearted approach: "Put cotton in your ears," he said. Highlighting the importance of composure, Shoaib Akhtar remarked that cricket is just a game, and players must ignore harsh comments from the crowd during matches. He also recalled facing a hostile crowd in Kolkata during the first round of the ATP event in Munich on Monday. The Rawalpindi Express advised players to refrain from confronting the spectators, noting that the crowd comes to watch and celebrate the players, ultimately making them stars. He further encouraged cricketers to channel negative energy into positive performance. Speaking as a panellist during ongoing PSL matches, Shoaib Akhtar said he was banned for four times after fighting with the crowd. "This happens, you lose your temper, but this shouldn't be."

Sidra Amin, bowlers help Pakistan bag third consecutive victory

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan defeated West Indies by 65 runs in their third game of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2025 here at the Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore on Monday night. Player of the match Sidra Amin played a grinding 94-ball 54-run knock, which included four boundaries while Fatima Sana bagged three wickets including the prized scalp of opposite skipper Hayley Matthews as Pakistan went atop the six-team table. Spinners - Rameen Shamim (2-26), Nushra Sundhu (2-31) and Sadia Iqbal (1-31) snapped five wickets collectively to help Pakistan defend the 191-run total. In pursuit of the target, West Indies were bowled out for 126 in 39.2 overs as no batter crossed the 20-run mark except Aaliyah Alleyne

(22, 52b, 2x4s) and Shabika Gajani (21, 40b, 1x4). After winning the toss and electing to bat first, Pakistan lost Gull Feroza early, but Muneeba Ali and Sidra knitted together a 47-run partnership, before Muneeba (33, 60b, 4x4s) was trapped leg-before wicket to Afy Fletcher. Sidra top-scored for the hosts as she registered her tenth ODI half-century. Sidra Nawaz (23, 28b, 1x4) and Aliya Riaz (20, 35b, 1x4) made valuable contributions as Pakistan managed 191 all out in 49.5 overs. For the West Indies, captain Hayley Matthews, Afy Fletcher and Karishma Ramharack picked up two wickets apiece. Scores in brief: 8th match: Pakistan beat West Indies by 65 runs at Gaddafi Stadium Lahore. Toss: Pakistan won the

toss and chose to bat first. Pakistan 191 all out, 49.5 overs (Sidra Amin 54, Muneeba 23, Aliya Riaz 20; Hayley Matthews 2-30, Afy Fletcher 2-39, Karishma Ramharack 2-55). West Indies 126 all out, 39.2 overs (Aaliyah Alleyne 22, Shabika Gajani 21; Fatima Sana 3-16, Rameen Shamim 2-26, Nushra Sundhu 2-31). Player of the match: Fatima Sana (Pakistan). Pakistan fixtures in ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2025: vs Ireland - 9 April - Pakistan won by 38 runs vs Scotland - 11 April - Pakistan won by six wickets vs West Indies - 14 April - Pakistan won by 65 runs vs Thailand - 17 April - 2:00pm PKT vs Bangladesh - 19 April - 9:30am PKT.



ICC to formally support Afghan women cricketers

DUBAI (INP): The ICC has said it will form a "dedicated task force" to support Afghanistan women cricketers who have been displaced by the Taliban regime ruling the country. The initiative, which is in partnership with the BCCI, ECB and CA, will include "a dedicated fund to provide direct monetary assistance, ensuring these cricketers have the resources they need to continue pursuing the game they love," the ICC said in a statement on Sunday. "This will be complemented by a robust high-performance programme offering advanced coaching, world-class facilities, and tailored mentorship to help them reach their full potential." Jay Shah, the ICC chairman, said: "At the International Cricket Council, we are deeply committed to fostering inclusivity and ensuring every cricketer has the

opportunity to shine, regardless of their circumstances. In collaboration with our valued partners, we are proud to launch this task force and support fund, complemented by a comprehensive high-performance programme, to ensure displaced Afghan women cricketers can continue their journey in the sport. This initiative reflects our steadfast dedication to cricket's global growth and its power to inspire unity, resilience, and hope." Since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021, women have been forced to adhere to an increasingly restrictive range of laws barring them from most areas of public life, including sports. Shortly before that, the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) had agreed to contract 25 women players, most of whom now live in exile in Australia. In July last year, former

members of the Afghanistan women's national team, no longer recognised as such by the country's Taliban rulers, wrote to the ICC asking to be recognised as a refugee team. In January this year, Afghanistan women played a T20 game against a Cricket Without Borders team in Melbourne. While there has been pressure on the ICC to act against Afghanistan from the governments of some Full Member countries, it has not taken any action against the men's team. In March, Human Rights Watch, which describes itself as an independent, international, non-governmental organisation, called on the ICC to suspend Afghanistan's membership and ban the Taliban-run national from competing in international cricket. The request came via an email addressed to Shah, dated February 3 and made public on March 7.

Zverev shakes off recent funk to beat Muller in Munich



MUNICH (AFP): World number three Alexander Zverev got his clay court season back on track with a 6-4, 6-1 over Frenchman Alexandre Muller in the first round of the ATP event in Munich on Monday. The German lost his opener at last week's Monte Carlo Masters to Italian Matteo Berrettini, missing the chance to bump Jannik Sinner from the world's No 1 position. Instead, that defeat and the Carlos Alcaraz's victory in the final on Sunday saw Zverev dropping down a place in the rankings and dented his preparations for next month's French Open. On Monday, Zverev broke his opponent in the first game. Muller broke

back at 3-3 before Zverev recovered to win the set in 47 minutes. The number one seed found his rhythm in the second, breaking his opponent three times. The 27-year-old completed victory in one hour and 20 minutes. Zverev has played six tournaments since losing the Australian Open final in three sets to Sinner in January, but has not made it past the quarter-finals at any. "I'm very happy with the match," Zverev told Sky Germany. "I want to play my best tennis again - and this was a very good step in the right direction." Since winning back-to-back titles in Munich in 2017 and 2018, Zverev has not made it past the final

eight. He will face either countryman Daniel Altmaier or Taiwan's Tseng Chun-hsin in the quarter-finals. Earlier on Monday, world number 15 Ben Shelton made a stuttering start to the tournament, coming from a set down to beat world number 410 Borna Gojo 4-6, 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7-3). Shelton, seeded second in Munich, fought off three match points, winning both of his sets via tiebreak in two hours and 24 minutes. Defending champion Jan-Lennard Struff, who beat American Taylor Fritz in the final last season, opens his campaign against Argentinian Francisco Cerundolo on Tuesday.

McIlroy in no mood to talk on the way to Masters win

AUGUSTA (Agencies): The Augusta National atmosphere was electric as Rory McIlroy stopped-and-started his way to a longed-for Masters triumph on Sunday, but inside the ropes the Northern Ireland star was strictly business, playing partner Bryson DeChambeau said. "He wouldn't talk to me," DeChambeau said. "He was just like - just being focused, I guess. It's not me, though." DeChambeau started the day two strokes behind McIlroy, but quickly found himself tied atop the leaderboard when McIlroy double-bogeyed the opening hole. DeChambeau then birdied the par-five second to take the lead, only to fall behind again at the third as he dropped a shot and McIlroy made his first birdie of the day. Another two-shot swing on the fourth saw McIlroy push his lead to three and DeChambeau, the reigning US Open champion, wouldn't find a way to close the gap. A double-bogey at the 11th essentially ended his challenge. DeChambeau carding a three-over 75 to finish tied for tied for fifth, four shots behind



McIlroy and Justin Rose - who fell to McIlroy at the first hole of a sudden-death playoff. "Just more of the same with my irons," DeChambeau said, adding that they just weren't "dialed-in." He did have time amid his own struggles to spare some sympathy for McIlroy when his second shot at the 13th bounced into the water for a costly double-bogey. "I wanted to cry for him," DeChambeau said. "I mean, as a professional, you just know to hit it in the middle of the green, and I can't believe he went for it, or must have just flared it. "There were times where it looked like he

had full control, and at times where it's like, what's going on?" DeChambeau said. "Kind of looked like one of my rounds, actually." McIlroy, who was making his 11th attempt to complete a career Grand Slam at the Masters, said he was so nervous before the round that he had to force himself to eat. And he didn't try to calm himself with conversation with the player who took advantage of his late collapse at Pinehurst last year to win a second US Open title. "No idea," DeChambeau said when asked how McIlroy was feeling on he course. "Didn't talk to me once all day."





## In brief

### 10 students from Diamer join Cadet College

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark initiative, Chairman WAPDA, Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd), has opened the doors of WAPDA Cadet College Tarbela (WCCT) to the talented youth of Diamer, Gilgit-Baltistan and not only accorded approval for reserving 10 seats annually for students from the region but also pledged to fully sponsor their five-year education – a commitment amounting to nearly Rs. 30 million. Following a transparent selection process involving written tests and interviews, 10 bright young boys from Diamer have joined WCCT, said a press release. This life-changing opportunity includes free tuition, boarding, lodging, uniforms, academic kits, medical care, and a comprehensive academic and leadership development program. By removing financial barriers, this initiative ensures that merit and ambition are justly rewarded, paving the way for a brighter future. This initiative is more than just a scholarship – it represents a bold step toward regional empowerment and inclusive national progress. By investing in education and nurturing talent from even the most remote areas of the country, WAPDA is playing a pivotal role in shaping the leaders of tomorrow. The program, set to be renewed annually, stands as a beacon of hope and opportunity for the families of Diamer, fostering a lasting spirit of development and inclusion.

### Saddar bazaars declared no-go zone for encroachment

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board is conducting an operation against encroachments in Saddar, with CEO Syed Ali Irfan Rizvi directly overseeing the efforts. The board has declared key commercial areas, including Haider Road, Adamjee Road, Kashmir Road, Chota Bazaar, and Canning Road, as no-go zones for encroachments. According to the details, during the operation, 17 trucks of material were confiscated from Saddar Bazaar. The spokesman RCB said that the CEO has instructed that any attempt at encroachment will be met with immediate action, and no leniency will be shown. The operation aims to keep markets clean, spacious, and convenient for the public. He said that the traders have been advised to cooperate with the anti-encroachment teams to completely eliminate encroachments. On the other side, citizens have welcomed the initiative, praising the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board for improving traffic flow, beautifying the cantonment area, and facilitating traders and buyers. The board plans to continue this effort on a permanent basis, said the spokesman.

### Clash at fast food chain

RAWALPINDI (APP): A clash occurred when a group of 10-12 armed individuals entered a fast-food chain branch in the Cantt area and engaged in verbal abuse and altercations with staff and customers of the food point, located in Saddar. The police spokesman said that a case has been registered on the complaint of the branch manager. He said that the police have identified the suspects and vowed to arrest the culprits, warning that such lawlessness and public harassment will not be tolerated. Additional police personnel have been deployed around international food chains in the area to prevent occurrence of further incidents.

# Ayaz Sadiq reaffirms Parliament's support for overseas Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Monday reaffirmed Parliament's collective resolve to address the challenges faced by overseas Pakistanis, stressing that both the government and opposition remain united on the matter.

Speaking at the inaugural Overseas Pakistanis Convention, he said that every member of the National Assembly, regardless of political party, fully supports the cause of the overseas community.

"Our fellow Pakistanis living abroad are the true ambassadors of our country," he said. "Your support and partnership are crucial for building a better future for everyone." He described overseas Pakistanis as the backbone of the nation, playing a key role in connecting Pakistan with the world.

"Your actions and words shape how the world sees our country," he added. The Speaker appreciated the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation for launching a new initiative to address the challenges faced by expatriates. He



urged overseas Pakistanis to share their concerns so the government could respond with effective solutions.

"Whether it's through business, education, or promoting Pakistan's image abroad, your contributions are significant," he said. Recalling his recent meetings with global dignitaries—including the Speaker of Saudi Arabia and elected officials from the United

States—he noted that many praised the achievements of Pakistanis living overseas.

"When international leaders speak highly of our citizens abroad, it makes us proud. It reflects the hard work and integrity of our people," he said. "The purpose of this convention is to listen to your voices. The National Assembly belongs to you as much as it does to us," he said. "Although

dual nationals are currently not allowed to contest elections, this issue needs fresh discussion in the parliament." He stressed the importance of recognizing those who send large amounts of money back home. "You send more remittances than the country earns through exports. If we honor top exporters, why not top remitters?" he asked.

He supported the idea of giv-

ing top remitters the honorary status of "roaming ambassadors." Ayaz Sadiq also emphasized the importance of using formal remittance channels and ending the use of informal systems like hundi. "Money sent through legal means strengthens the economy, increases tax collection, and brings transparency. Those using official channels should not face unnecessary scrutiny or extra taxes," he said.

He acknowledged the difficulties overseas that Pakistanis face at embassies, particularly in countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Italy. "People who send money home should be treated with the same respect at embassies as ministers and MNAs. Why can't we offer them that dignity?" he asked.

Calling for reforms, he urged the government to make it easier for returning expatriates to reintegrate into society. He suggested simplifying processes such as police verification, introducing a low-cost fee system, and offering fast-track certification.

He also highlighted the seri-

ous problem of land grabbing, which affects many overseas Pakistanis. "There must be strict punishment for those who illegally seize their land—from the local patwari to police officers and even senior officials."

These people invest their life savings with the dream of coming home. Losing their land is a national shame," he said.

He stressed the need to shift toward digital and paperless services, especially for documents like ID cards and embassy procedures. "If our children abroad can work remotely, why should overseas Pakistanis have to stand in lines at embassies?" he asked.

He also pointed out the potential of medical tourism, saying, "Our doctors abroad are doing great. Why not encourage them to work in Pakistan, too? It would be affordable and efficient."

Concluding his speech, he called for unity and action. "Let's move forward—together and with purpose—for those who support Pakistan from afar with their hearts, minds, and hard-earned money."

## Ministry ensures merit-based selection of Moavineen-e-Hujjaj

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said on Monday that the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony selects Moavineen-e-Hujjaj strictly on merit. During the National Assembly's question hour, he said the ministry follows a transparent and rigorous process to appoint staff for Hajj duties. A selection committee, led by a senior officer of Grade-20 or above, evaluates candidates based on well-defined merit-based criteria to ensure competence and fairness.

He informed the House that these assistants are deployed at key locations including Makkah, Madinah, Jeddah, and Saudi airports, where they help pilgrims and support the smooth delivery of Hajj services. To further improve transparency and address past concerns, the ministry has partnered with the National Testing Service (NTS) to conduct the recruitment test for Moavineen-e-Hujjaj. The minister said that NTS, along with other testing services like ATS, is a well-established and trusted institution that regularly conducts recruitment exams for government bodies.

"In previous years, there were concerns about the selection process of Hajj support staff. To make it more merit-based and transparent, the Ministry has

chosen NTS for recruitment," he said. This step, he added, is part of the Ministry's broader strategy to institutionalize transparency, build credibility, and ensure a fair selection system for those sent to assist Pakistani pilgrims in Saudi Arabia. He clarified that this measure is not limited to the current government but is part of ongoing efforts to improve Hajj operations and maintain public trust in national processes.

Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said the number of assistants is calculated according to the percentage of pilgrims allocated to Pakistan each year. "This year too, the number of Moavineen has been decided in proportion to the Hajj quota," he added.

He explained that three main categories of personnel are sent to Saudi Arabia for Hajj operations. Moavineen-e-Hujjaj are not permanent employees of the ministry but are nominated by different government departments through the National Information Technology Board (NITB).

They provide logistical and administrative support to pilgrims. Seasonal Duty Staff, he said, are regular employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs with extensive experience in Hajj management. They supervise the implementation of Hajj arrangements and are often reappointed due to their performance and expertise.

## Commissioner orders foolproof security measures in housing societies

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engineer Aamir Khattak on Monday directed the officials of the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) to ensure that no Afghan citizens, criminals or terrorists become part of security teams in housing societies.

Presiding over a meeting to review the security system in private housing schemes, he emphasized that detailed scrutiny was obligatory and strict legal action would be taken in case of failure to its implementation.

DG RDA Kinza Murtaza briefed about the growing

incidents of land occupation in the housing societies and said that RDA would inform the law enforcement agencies if a housing society's private security guards were found to be involved in illegal activities.

She urged all citizens, property developers, and owners of the housing societies to ensure compliance with the rules and seek the necessary approval to avoid any legal proceedings.

CPO Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani assured the meeting that no security lapse would be tolerated and directed all housing schemes to submit a

detailed report of their security arrangements.

Representatives of the housing societies guaranteed full cooperation and expressed their commitment to improving the quality of security.

Representatives of 59 Housing Societies, including Bahria Town, University Town, Mumtaz City, Taj Residency, Gandharan City, Kohistan Enclave Taxila, Multi-Professional Cooperative Housing Scheme, Capital Valley, Silver City, and Top City, as well as officials of concerned government departments, attended the meeting.

## Punjab Arts Council hosts vibrant Culture Day events

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council organized colorful events in connection with Culture Day where a large number of youth, students and others enjoyed a series of cultural shows. Folk music, painting competitions, musical events, and regional dances were among the events.

Parliamentary Secretary Information and Culture Department, Shazia Rizwan was the chief guest on this occasion who was accorded a warm welcome on her arrival at PAC. Upon arrival at the Arts Council, this day gives us the opportunity to pay tribute to our centuries-old culture, folk music, traditional attire, and rural heritage while introducing the younger generation to it.

Highlighting the contribution of PAC in promoting regional culture, the director said PAC has arranged various exhibitions and special

performances by folk artists to bring the public closer to their cultural roots.

"We are committed to preserving the cultural glory of Punjab and showcasing it on both national and international platforms", he added. On the occasion of Culture Day, a painting competition was also held at PAC in which Rubina Khalid, Shanze Noreen and Hina Zaman took first, second, and third positions and were awarded with cash prizes of Rs.10,000, Rs. 7,000.0, and Rs. 5,000.0 respectively along with certificates of appreciation.

Moreover, a Punjabi poetry recital was organized in connection with Culture Day, presided over by Anjum Saleemi in which famous poets mesmerized the audience with their captivating performances and received immense appreciation from the audience.

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## "Malaysia emerging as a key destination for Pakistani youth": Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): High Commissioner of Pakistan to Malaysia Syed Ahsan Raza Shah on Monday said Malaysia is emerging as a key destination for Pakistani youth.

Speaking at the first annual Overseas Pakistanis Convention 2025 here at Jinnah Convention Centre (JCC), he termed the convention, a landmark event that is being held with regards to overseas Pakistani diaspora.

Shah emphasized the significant presence of Pakistanis in Malaysia, noting that the country hosts one of the largest Pakistani communities in Southeast Asia. He highlighted that many Pakistanis have migrated a century ago from northern regions of Pakistan such as Buner, Hazara, and Haripur, seeking opportunities in Malaysia's growing economy.

He also mentioned the recent visit of the Malaysian Air Chief, whose father hails from Haripur, reflecting the deep-rooted connections between the two nations. Shah further said that Malaysia have become a favourable destination for our youth due to advanced economy and brighter future.

The High Commissioner acknowledged the increasing number of Pakistani students in Malaysia, with over 400 currently enrolled in various universities.

About counsellor and community services in 2024, he said the Pakistani High Commission in Malaysia issued 31,983 passports, 1188 emergency travel documents, 2841 Nadra services and 9800 visas, indicating active engagement with the community.

The High Commissioner expressed gratitude to the Government of Pakistan and the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) for organizing this landmark convention. He also proposed designating April 14 or any other day as "Pardesi Day" to honor the contributions of overseas Pakistanis annually.

## National Polio campaign strategy reviewed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, chaired a high-level meeting on Monday to review the recent progress towards polio eradication in the country and formulate a comprehensive strategy for upcoming national polio campaign at the National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC).

The Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq, Provincial health ministers, coordinators of the national and provincial emergency operation centers and other senior officials attended the meeting. This was the first formal inter-provincial meeting, after the minister Kamal assumed office, in which the government's renewed commitment to polio eradication was fully expressed.

The meeting was informed that only six polio cases have been reported so far in 2025, a significant decrease from 74 cases reported in 2024. The meeting appreciated this achievement, but stressed the urgent need to close the protection gap in persistent high-risk areas.

Syed Mustafa Kamal said, "Health is our national priority and polio eradication is our moral responsibility. We must further consolidate our recent

achievements, especially in areas where the virus is silently spreading. We must redouble our efforts and focus on these areas."

Paying tribute to the services of frontline workers and security personnel, he said, "This program has become an exemplary model of integrated public health, in which the synergy of EPI and the polio eradication program has played a significant role."

He added that the presence of the virus in Karachi, Quetta Block and southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is of utmost concern, and the next campaign should aim to reach these areas and administer vaccines to the remaining children. The next national polio campaign will begin on April 21, with the aim of vaccinating 45 million children under the age of five. The campaign will involve 400,000 frontline workers, including 225,000 women.

Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Control Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq said, "We have entered a decisive phase. The significant reduction in the number of cases is the result of our strategy and the continuous hard work of our teams." She said, "However, the virus is still present in areas where access is a challenge. The April campaign is a major

opportunity for us."

She added that the "2-4-6 strategy", which consists of two national, four sub-national and six case response campaigns annually, is proving effective in containing the spread of the virus. The large-scale campaigns conducted at the end of 2024 provided better immunity to children."

She said, "Today, fewer cases, effective AFP surveillance and improved environmental samples are emerging, but there is no room for negligence or negligence in any case."

In the meeting, the provincial health ministers assured their full support for polio eradication and emphasized on effective measures and increasing community-level partnerships, especially in the areas of the virus's core.

In addition, emphasis was also placed on strengthening the accountability system at the field level, aligning routine vaccination with polio campaigns and adopting effective communication strategies at the local level to reduce the number of children left behind and refused. The polio eradication journey in Pakistan has entered a decisive phase, and today's meeting reaffirmed that a polio-free Pakistan is possible through political commitment and concerted efforts.

## Pakistani diaspora plays key role in economic growth: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to Italy Ali Javed has said that overseas Pakistanis are playing an important role in the country's development.

Pakistanis living in Italy have sent more than one billion dollars in foreign exchange to Pakistan, which is a major contribution to the country's economy.

He expressed these views while addressing the First Annual Overseas Pakistanis' Convention here on Monday. He said that practical steps are being taken for the educational development of Pakistani students in Italy. So far, more than 2,500 Pakistani students have been issued PhD visas, which is a significant achievement in the education sector.

Ali Javed said that

Pakistani students living in Italy are not only pursuing higher education but are also highlighting the positive image of Pakistan. The Pakistani Embassy is providing full support for the issuance of educational visas and guiding students.

Pakistan's Ambassador Ali Javed said that the embassy is regularly organizing "Open Courts" to resolve the problems of overseas Pakistanis. The aim of these open courts is to directly hear the complaints of Pakistanis living in Italy and provide immediate solutions.

He said that the embassy was taking all possible steps to strengthen public communication and the welfare of the community.

He added that the Punjab government is using mod-

ern technology for police verification, which is a welcome step, and other provinces should also adopt this model so that overseas Pakistanis can get facilities.

The ambassador said that Italy has the largest Pakistani community in Europe after the UK, and with the efforts of the embassy, the Italian government has doubled the number of visas for Pakistanis, which is a major diplomatic achievement.

He stressed the need to eliminate the negative perception regarding dual citizenship, saying that it is a convenience for Pakistanis, not a problem. Finally, he urged the Pakistani media to highlight the positive image of the country before the world so that Pakistan's image can be improved globally.

## Crackdown in Bahria Town: 9 sheesha cafes shut, 64 held

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a coordinated move, the district administration and police teams conducted surprise raids late Monday night, shutting down nine sheesha cafes operating illegally in Bahria Town's Civic Center. The operation, aimed at curbing unauthorized indoor hookah services, resulted in the arrest of 60 men and 4 women allegedly linked to the businesses.

FIRs have been registered against all the arrested accused, and further investigation is in progress. According to the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, 110 hookah devices, along with flavoured

tobacco products, were confiscated during the raids. The crackdown follows growing concerns over violations of public health regulations and indoor smoking bans. Officials emphasized that the cafes were operating without permits and failed to comply with safety standards. The spokesman said that the operation began shortly after midnight, with teams entering multiple establishments suspected of offering sheesha services discreetly. Patrons and staff present during the raids were detained for questioning.

District officials highlighted that the action aligns with broader efforts

to enforce anti-smoking laws, particularly in indoor spaces. "These facilities posed risks to public health and ignored legal guidelines," stated a spokesman. "We will continue targeting non-compliant businesses."

Health experts warn that sheesha use, often perceived as safer than cigarettes, carries significant risks, including exposure to higher levels of toxic chemicals. Authorities confirmed that further inspections are planned across the district to identify similar operations. Residents have been urged to report illegal shisha services via dedicated hotlines.



### Work on road kicks off

NEILI (Pajhwok): Reconstruction and graveling work on the 45km Neili-Qanoq route of the Kabul-Daikundi highway has been launched on Monday. Governor's spokesman Ghazanfar Kazimi said that reconstruction and graveling of 45km road between Neili and Qanoq of the Kabul-Daikundi highway had begun. The project was started from the Band Barlan market of Shahristan district to the center by Public Works Department, Kazimi added.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Shawwal 16, 1446 — Tuesday, April 15, 2025

### One killed in explosion

BALKH (Amu TV): An explosion near a mosque in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif killed one woman and wounded three others on Monday, according to local sources. The blast occurred around 8:20 a.m. (Kabul time) near the Seh Dokan mosque, located in the city's District 2, residents said. The mosque is affiliated with the Hazara Shiite community and is situated in a predominantly Hazara neighborhood.

## 450 children treated by Afghan Red Crescent

KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghan Red Crescent Society said it has referred more than 450 children with heart defects to various hospitals for treatment in the past three months.

Mudasir Hamraz, the spokesperson for the Afghan Red Crescent Society, said that currently 62 children are being treated in different hospitals across the country.

Hamraz stated: "In the past three months, 457 children have been referred to domestic hospitals for treatment. If we look at the overall period of three to four years, around 5,000 children with heart defects have been referred to domestic hospitals by the Red Crescent for treatment

and surgery."

Meanwhile, families of children with heart defects are asking the Afghan Red Crescent Society to expedite the process of providing treatment for their children.

Ibrahim, a one-year-old child with a heart defect, is scheduled for surgery tomorrow. His relatives say that Ibrahim's father is a teacher at a school in Maidan Shahr and does not have the financial means to treat his son.

Ziaullah, Ibrahim's uncle, said: "When he was born, we did the check-up. We registered him four months ago, and now it has been four days since he was admitted for surgery."

Habibullah, the father of another child with a heart

defect, told TOLONews: "Our request of the Red Crescent is to provide quicker treatment for sick children so they can recover from this illness."

One of the doctors at a hospital in Kabul says that 30 to 40 patients are referred to them every month, and three or four patients undergo surgery daily.

Dr. Mohammad Zareef Faiz told TOLONews: "Each month, around 30 to 40 patients are referred to us according to the Red Crescent's request and budget. All of their expenses are covered by the Red Crescent."

According to the Afghan Red Crescent Society, the cost of treating each child ranges from \$700 to \$2,300.

### Imported fruit prices soar in Herat

HERAT (TOLONews): Fresh fruit importers in Herat say that due to the increase in customs duties, the market for fresh fruit sales has become sluggish.

Compared to last year, the prices of imported fresh fruits have doubled this year. Several importers say that the rise in fresh fruit prices this year is due to high customs duties.

Faridoon, a fresh fruit importer, says: "Customs duties are high, and fruit prices are rising. If customs duties are reduced, the price of fresh fruits will also decrease."

Mohammad, another fresh fruit importer, adds: "The reason for the increase in the price of imported fruits is the rise in customs duties. The customs duties are extremely high and burdensome and no one can afford to import fruit."

The fresh fruit season has not yet arrived in the country, and nearly all of the fruit is being imported from abroad.

The Herat Fruit Sellers Association said that the high customs duties are detrimental to the people, and this duty should only be imposed when the country's fruit season begins.

Abdul Ahad Rahmani, the head of the Herat Fruit Sellers Association, says: "Tangerine and apples are imported from Iran. Other vegetables and fresh fruits come to Afghanistan through the UAE from various countries. Fruits come from different parts of the world, and even Herat receives fruits from Chile, USA, and European countries."

Meanwhile, some fruit sellers say they are facing severe economic hardships and cannot afford to buy fresh fruit due to the high costs.

Bilal, a fruit seller, comments: "Last year, one kilogram of fresh tangerine cost 30 afghani, but this year the price is between 100 and 130 afghani. The economic situation of the people is such that they cannot come and buy fruit."

The price of imported fruits rises at a time when, every year, during the fruit season in the country, the prices of fruits significantly drop.

According to farmers, due to the lack of exports and low prices, they incur losses instead of profits every year.

### Families struggle with basic needs

KABUL (TOLONews): In Kabul, a number of internally displaced families complain about the lack of shelter, schools, work, and healthcare services.

These families live in areas where they have been displaced due to war, insecurity, or drought.

The lack of electricity, clean water, schools, mosques, and hospitals are considered some of their main issues.

Ajab Gul, an internally displaced person from Kandahar, says: "In a place like this, even animals cannot survive; but we are forced to live here because we have nowhere else to go. When it rains, we face many problems. We were displaced from our own areas, and the government is not helping us."

Around these homes, children are seen playing barefoot in the dirt and stones.

Many children are deprived of education due to the distance from schools, while others are unable to attend due to economic hardships.

They are asking Islamic Emirate and humanitarian organizations for help.

Mohammad Wali, also displaced from Kandahar, said that: "The walls of our homes are not concrete and when it rains, they collapse. We are asking the government to provide shelter for us."

Officials have previously stated that they are working to solve the problems of internally displaced persons and help them return to their own areas and homes in their provinces.

## Kabul, Tashkent to expand agriculture cooperation

KABUL (Pajhwok): Uzbekistan has expressed its willingness to cooperate with Afghanistan in various areas of the agriculture sector.

Uzbek Agriculture Minister Iborkhim Abdurakhmonov held out the assurance of cooperation at a meeting with his Afghani counterpart Maulvi Attaullah Omari.

In a statement, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock said the meeting took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital.

Earlier in week, a high-level delegation of the caretaker government, led by Omari, arrived in Tashkent for discussions on bilateral cooperation.

At the meeting, Omari underlined the importance of expanding agricultural cooperation and highlighted investment opportunities in this sector and other related areas.

He reaffirmed the interim government's commitment to providing all necessary facilities for foreign investors, including those



from Uzbekistan.

Omari also urged the exchange of agricultural technology and expertise between the two countries, saying Afghanistan urgently needed to boost its agricultural production under current circumstances.

"We must work together to enhance agricultural output not only to meet domestic needs but also to contribute to reducing global

poverty," the minister commented.

For his part, Iborkhim Abdurakhmonov reiterated Tashkent's commitment to greater collaboration with Kabul at various agricultural initiatives.

He noted Uzbekistan had a significant demand for agricultural products and said Afghanistan could play a vital role by supplying cotton, rice, fruits and veg-

etables.

He assured Uzbekistan was ready to provide Afghan farmers with improved seeds and purchase their products after harvest.

According to the ministry, both sides pledged to enhance cooperation at border crossings in the areas of plant quarantine and animal health to facilitate trade in perishable goods.

## 3.5m children in Afghanistan at risk of malnutrition this year: WFP

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan is facing an unprecedented nutrition crisis, with nearly 3.5 million children under the age of five projected to suffer from acute malnutrition in the current year.

This includes approximately 867,300 cases of severe acute malnutrition and 2.6 million cases of moderate acute malnutrition. Additionally, around 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women are expected to experience acute malnutrition during the same period.

The crisis is exacerbated by widespread food insecurity, with 14.8 million Afghans—over one-third of the population—facing

acute food insecurity. The WFP reports that due to funding shortages, it can only provide food assistance to about 6 million people, leaving more than 8 million without essential support.

Key drivers of malnutrition in Afghanistan include inadequate diets, high prevalence of diseases such as diarrhea and respiratory infections, poor access to clean water and sanitation, and limited healthcare services. Climate-related shocks like droughts and floods, along with economic instability and displacement, further compound the situation.

The situation is particularly dire in provinces like

Helmand, Kandahar, Nuristan, and Paktika, which are classified in IPC Acute Malnutrition Phase 4 (Critical). 24 other provinces fall under Phase 3 (Serious), indicating widespread and severe malnutrition across the country.

International aid cuts have significantly impacted relief efforts. The US, previously the largest donor to WFP, has paused foreign assistance, affecting food and medical aid for millions. This reduction in support threatens to worsen the humanitarian crisis, leaving vulnerable populations, especially children and women, at greater risk.

Organizations like

UNICEF highlight that 45% of Afghanistan children under five are stunted, and 10% are wasted, reflecting chronic and acute undernutrition. These conditions have long-term effects on children's physical and cognitive development, perpetuating cycles of poverty and poor health.

Addressing this crisis requires urgent and sustained international support. Humanitarian agencies call for immediate funding to restore and expand nutrition and food assistance programs. Without such interventions, millions of Afghans, particularly children and women, will continue to face life-threatening conditions.

## Amu River still threatens Balkh's Shortepa district villages

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Residents of Shortepa district in northern Balkh province say although reinforcement work has already been done to prevent the Amu River from causing destructions, its waves continue to threaten their lands, homes and lives.

The raging Amu Darya River has destroyed people's homes, highways, mosques, schools and agricultural lands in Shortepa and Kaldar.

About two years ago, the caretaker government approved a budget of two billion afghanis for reinforcement of the Amu River banks and a number of emergency reinforcement projects were launched, but local residents say they have little impact.

Residents of the two districts are calling on the government to carry out basic works and permanently prevent destructions caused by the river.

Jan Murad, a resident of Shortepa district, told Pajhwok Afghan News that although emergency reinforcements had been made in their area, the river's waves were still destroying their lands.

He added a number of people had migrated to other areas and the rest of the population was living in fear due to the destructions caused by the river.

He urged the government to build a retaining wall on the banks of the river and on the border with Uzbekistan and carry out basic works.

Qurban Nazar, another resident of Hazaz Toqi vil-



lage in Shortepa district, said that emergency reinforcement projects were only useful for a few days and were destroyed again over time.

He said their district, especially their village, was facing a serious threat of destruction and fundamental and permanent work should be carried out to strengthen the river's banks.

A number of other residents made similar statements and demanded basic and fundamental reinforcements from the caretaker government.

On the other hand, officials from the Ministry of Water and Energy said urgent reinforcement works would be carried out to raise the banks of the Amu River.

## Paktia residents urge completion of unfinished hospitals

GARDEZ (Pajhwok): Some residents of Sayed Karam and Janikhel districts in southeastern Paktia province have expressed concern over the lack progress in construction of two 30-bed hospital buildings, work on which was initiated during the previous government.

They are urging the authorities to complete the unfinished work on these hospitals.

Officials from the Paktia Directorate of Public Health confirm construction of these hospitals began in 2019 (1398 in the Afghan calendar), but remains unfinished. They assured that efforts were underway to complete the work within this year.

Hassan Khan Kazemi, a resident of Sayed Karam district, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the con-

struction of a hospital building in the district began in 2019, but has yet to be completed.

Kazemi added that while small clinics exist in some areas of the province, they are unable to meet the healthcare needs of all residents. As a result, many people are forced to travel for hours to Gardez city to receive proper medical care.

Kazemi emphasized that most of the construction work on the hospital has already been completed. He called on the Islamic Emirate to finish the remaining work, noting that if the 30-bed hospital in Sayed Karam is completed and becomes operational, it would serve not only Sayed Karam, but also neighboring districts, making healthcare access much easier for local patients.

Mohibullah, a resident of Janikhel district, shared similar concerns, saying that the lack of a hospital in the district forces people to transport their patients to Chamkani district or to Gardez, the provincial capital.

He pointed out that the construction of the hospital in Janikhel began in the previous government, but could not be completed, urging that the work should be completed now.

Khan Wazir, another local resident, highlighted the challenges posed by the lack of a hospital in the district.

He said, "There is a small clinic here, but it lacks sufficient medicine and qualified doctors. The population is large, and people are facing significant difficulties."

Dr. Miraj Gul Adil, head

of the Paktia Public Health Department, assured Pajhwok that completing the construction of the two 30-bed hospital buildings is a top priority.

He added, "We have two high-dependency (HD) hospitals, one in Sayed Karam and the other in Janikhel. The construction of both hospitals is incomplete, with approximately 50 to 60 percent of the work done. These hospitals have been included in our 2025 (1404) plan, and once the necessary budget is allocated, we will complete the remaining work."

Limited access to healthcare services in Afghanistan's remote districts remains a persistent issue, causing significant hardships for local populations who often face challenges in accessing timely and adequate medical care.

## Public Works Ministry delegation to visit Russia



KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Public Works Minister Mullah Mohammad Issa Sani has discussed trade relations with the Russian ambassador in Kabul and a high-ranking delegation is scheduled to visit Russia.

A statement from the Ministry of Public Works said Issa Sani met with Russian ambassador to Kabul Dmitry Zhirnov and his

accompanying delegation.

Both sides emphasized economic and trade relations and agreed that a high-ranking delegation from the Ministry of Public Works will visit Russia.

The Ministry of Public Works did not provide further details about the visit.

The statement said the two sides held comprehensive discussions on the

repair of the Salang Tunnel and the construction of a new tunnel.

They talked about purchasing road and railway construction equipment, machinery, railway track components and other similar materials from Russia, with Zhirnov saying his country ready to cooperate with Afghanistan in this area.

## 76,000MT of goods transported via railways

KABUL (Pajhwok): About 76,076 metric tonnes of goods were transported through railways from four Afghan ports last week, the Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) said on Monday.

On its X handle, MoPW spokesman Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas wrote these transactions took place during April 4 to 10.

It said 61,240 tonnes of goods were transported

through Hairatan Port, 2,681 tonnes via Aqina Port, 10,386 tonnes through Torghundi Port, and 1,799 tonnes via Khawaf-Herat, totaling 76,076 metric tonnes.

The shipments included 13,440 tonnes of transit and export goods, mostly quinoa, potatoes, dried fruits and pomegranate juice.

According to the Ministry of Public Works

(MoPW), as the level of exports and imports through railways increase, it creates job opportunities, surges national revenues and put the country on the path to economic stability, development, and self-sufficiency.

Previously, nearly 129,000 metric tons of goods were transported via railways from Afghanistan's four ports.

## Torkham camp provides healthcare to returnees



KABUL (TOLONews): Officials at the temporary migrant camp in Torkham township report that an average of up to 350 individuals visit the camp's medical unit every day.

They emphasize that a variety of facilities have been arranged for returnees from Pakistan, especially in the area of healthcare services.

Rasool Khan, head of one of the medical centers at the camp, said: "We provide services in various departments daily, including maternity, vaccinations, HIV, and pediatric care."

Some deported migrants have highlighted the psychological challenges they are facing due to mistreatment in Pakistan.

Naeem, a returnee from Pakistan, said: "From the very start of the deportation process, it caused mental health issues for everyone."

Zamary, another returnee, stated: "We are grateful to the authorities for ensuring that our families and belongings have reached our homes in villages and districts. They are cooperating with us."

In addition to healthcare, the returnees also receive services in areas such as

transportation, public awareness, and other essential needs.

Nusratullah Talha, head of the Temporary Migration Resettlement Committee, said: "We are at the service of the returnees. All relevant committees are operational, and facilities have been provided here for them."

According to officials at the Torkham migrant camp, 100 families are transferred daily by the Islamic Emirate to their respective provinces, while hundreds more continue to arrive at the camp from Pakistan.



# Tarar reaffirms Pakistan's support for Palestinians

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar Monday said that the entire Pakistani nation stood united on the issue of Palestine and condemned the brutalities being inflicted upon innocent Palestinians in Gaza.

Participating in the Palestine issue in the National Assembly, he reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinians and reiterated the country's demand for an independent, viable, and contiguous Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. He said that Pakistan has consistently raised its voice on every international platform against the ongoing Israeli atrocities in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories.

He said that Israel was committing war crimes and violating all international laws. Tarar also lauded South Africa for filing a genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), calling it a bold and principled stand. He also highlighted Pakistan's active support for South Africa's case against Israel at the ICJ and mentioned that the Foreign Office has issued a clear policy statement denouncing the genocide in Gaza.

"Pakistan remains steadfast in its support for the oppressed Palestinian people and will continue to raise its voice against injustice on every global forum," he affirmed. The cause of Palestine is not just a matter of foreign policy. It is tied to Pakistan's identity and moral conscience. Our bond with the holy land of Palestine runs in our blood," he said.

The minister reiterated that Pakistan will never recognize Israel, in line with the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. "This House must rise above political rivalries to stand united for Palestine and the oppressed people of Gaza," he stressed. He also highlighted the government's humanitarian efforts, saying that over 200 Palestinian medical students were successfully evacuated from Gaza and brought to Pakistan. "There were threats of airstrikes on medical colleges in Gaza.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif per-

sonally ensured their safe arrival. These students are now enrolled in Pakistani medical institutions and provided full facilities, including hostel accommodation," he said.

The minister commended the Ministry of Health for its role in supporting the Palestinian students and expressed gratitude for the hospitality extended to them.

He praised the efforts of Pakistani civil society and religious organizations, especially Jamaat-e-Islami and Al-Khidmat Foundation, for sending multiple truckloads of humanitarian aid to Gaza. "This is not about politics; this is about humanity," he added. He acknowledged the collaborative work of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Pakistani embassies in Jordan and Egypt, which facilitated the delivery of thousands of tons of relief goods to Gaza, despite logistical hurdles and blocked land routes. "Pakistan is among the few countries that managed to send large-scale aid through land routes via Jordan and Egypt," he added.

Highlighting the symbolic importance of the Pakistani passport, he said, "Our passport is unique-it clearly states it is valid for all countries except Israel. This distinction reflects our principled foreign policy." "We are proud of our green passport" he added. Tarar praised international media outlets, particularly Al Jazeera and Turkey's TRT, for their courageous coverage of Israeli atrocities in Gaza. "Without Al Jazeera, many of us would not have fully understood the horrors faced by the Palestinian people," he said, also paying tribute to journalists who lost their lives covering the conflict.

The minister pledged that efforts would be made to share footage of the day's parliamentary proceedings through international media outlets, particularly Al Jazeera, so the people of Palestine can witness Pakistan's unwavering support. "We want them to know that Pakistan is not silent. The people of this country stand with them. As Minister for Information, I will ensure this message reaches them," he assured.

## Induction ceremony of PNS Yamama arranged

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a ceremony held at Jinnah Naval Base, Ormara, Pakistan Navy marked a significant milestone with the induction of its fourth Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV), PNS YAMAMA, into its fleet today. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

PNS YAMAMA, constructed at DAMEN Shipyard, Romania, is a multipurpose platform equipped with modern stealth features, the latest Command and Control systems, and sophisticated weapons and sensors, enabling it to operate in a multi-threat environment. As the fourth in the series, the induction of this state-of-the-art ship significantly enhances Pakistan Navy's capability to ensure seaward defence, protect Sea Lines of Communication, and maintain order at sea.

The induction ceremony at Jinnah Naval Base Ormara underscores the Pakistan Navy's enhanced reach on the western seaboard, providing flexibility in fleet operations, enhancing maritime security, thus contributing to regional peace and stability, and ensuring the protection of vital maritime infrastructure, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of immense national importance.

While addressing the ceremony, the Chief Guest highlighted the precarious geo-strategic environment in the Indian Ocean and emphasized the need for a potent naval force to counter emerging traditional and non-traditional challenges. He reiterated that the addition of PNS YAMAMA to the PN fleet would significantly enhance Pakistan Navy's capability to safeguard the maritime frontiers of Pakistan and reinforce its commitment to ensuring safety and security in international waters.

He also acknowledged the professional competence of DAMEN Shipyard Galati and the entire project team for delivering a capable platform that symbolizes the deep-rooted cooperation and strong bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

## Weapon collection in Kurram underway

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: The second phase of the peace initiative in Kurram District has seen the complete demolition of all bunkers, paving the way for the next step to collection of weapons.

The district administration officials said on Monday the operation to remove all bunkers in Kurram has been successfully completed. It stated that an indiscriminate action was taken to dismantle the bunkers and ensure that the entire region is cleared.

With the bunkers gone, the process of collecting weapons from local groups has now commenced. The district administration confirmed that all parties involved had already agreed to surrender their arms. The administration credited the successful operation to the cooperation of police and other security agencies, stating that their joint efforts have played a vital role in restoring peace in the region.

## Pak-Morocco armies launch drill

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Opening Ceremony of 3rd Pak - Morocco Joint Bilateral Military Exercise - 2025 was held between the Armies of Pakistan and Morocco in Co-uter Terrorism domain at Special Operations School, Cherat. Special Services Group of Pak Army and Special Forces of Moroccan Army are participating in the Exercise.

Commandant Special Operation School, Cherat graced the ceremony as Chief Guest. The Exercise is aimed at refining professional skills through joint training and harnessing historic military to military relations among the friendly countries. Participating troops are looking forward to benefit from mutual expertise/experience.



KARACHI: Chief of Naval Staff, Naveed Ashraf handing over ship scroll to Commander Pakistan fleet at the induction ceremony of Offshore Patrol Vessel.

# Pak-Afghan relations improving: Siddiqui

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan Siddiqui, Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, said on Monday that Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are steadily improving, with high-level exchanges expected soon to boost bilateral negotiations.

Speaking to journalists after a committee meeting, he revealed that Special Representative for Afghanistan Sadiq Khan briefed members on upcoming high-level exchanges between the two nations in the near future. Siddiqui, expressed opti-

mism that the upcoming high-level visits would reinvigorate bilateral negotiations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

During the briefing, Sadiq Khan highlighted that Pakistan has forcefully raised the issue of the Afghan Taliban's alleged patronage of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). He noted that while the TTP operates through multiple factions, Pakistan's firm stance on the matter is gaining recognition in bilateral discussions. Senator Irfan Siddiqui further clarified that the Pakistani nationals

killed in Iran were residents of Bahawalpur. He stated that the Foreign Office is vigorously pursuing the matter through diplomatic channels.

Currently, efforts are focused on repatriating the victims' remains, with the Foreign Office conducting a thorough investigation into the incident while maintaining close coordination with Iranian authorities. The Iranian government has officially condemned the tragic event. High-level contacts with Iran are likely, and the committee has decided to call another meeting on the Afghanistan issue.

# Siraj urges unity, dialogue amid rising instability

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Former Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and ex-senator Sirajul Haq on Monday voiced deep concern over the worsening law and order situation and economic instability in the country, stating that the ruling elite remains secure while the general public suffers insecurity and hardship.

Speaking at a press conference in Timergara, Haq said the government's failure to restore peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh has paralyzed society and discouraged investment. He emphasized that without security, economic progress is impossible.

He highlighted the vital role of overseas Pakistanis in sustaining the economy,

contributing nearly \$31 billion annually in remittances. However, due to prevailing uncertainty, he said, their confidence is eroding. Haq suggested that with proper support and assurance, overseas remittances could rise to \$55 billion in five years.

Criticizing the recent KP Assembly bill handing control of mineral resources to the federal government, he termed it a betrayal of the province's rights and vowed that Jamaat-e-Islami would resist it. Commenting on the forced deportation of Afghan refugees, Haq called the move counterproductive, warning that such actions could damage Pak-Afghan relations and embolden terrorist elements in the region. He advocated for bilateral cooperation to

ensure regional peace.

He also called for political dialogue among parties to pave the way for free and fair elections. Sirajul Haq expressed sorrow over the demise of former senator and JI leader Professor Khurshid Ahmad, calling it a national loss. He praised the late professor's efforts in securing Rs110 billion in royalty for KP from the federal government.

Earlier, hundreds of Jamaat-e-Islami workers attended a funeral prayer in absentia for Professor Khurshid Ahmad in Timergara. The JI leaders, including Sirajul Haq, former MNA Sahibzada Tariqullah, and JI district chief Maulana Asadullah, addressed the gathering and paid rich tribute to the late scholar and leader.

# Iran to consult Russia on US nuclear talks

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is set to visit Moscow this week to discuss recent nuclear negotiations with the United States held in Oman, the foreign ministry spokesman said on Monday, ahead of a new round of talks planned for Rome.

Araghchi held talks with US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff in Muscat, the highest-level Iranian-US nuclear negotiations since the collapse of a 2015 accord. "Dr. Araghchi will travel to Moscow at the end of the week," said spokesman Esmail Baqaei, adding that the trip was "pre-planned" and would be "an opportunity to discuss the latest developments related to the Muscat talks."

Iran and the United States separately described Saturday's discussions as "constructive." The negotiations came weeks after US

President Donald Trump sent a letter to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei calling for nuclear talks while warning of possible military action if Tehran refused.

Russia, a close ally of Iran, and China have held discussions with Iran in recent weeks over its nuclear program. Moscow welcomed the Iran-US talks as it pushed for a diplomatic solution and warned that military confrontation would be a "global catastrophe." Another round of talks between Iran and the United States is scheduled for Saturday, April 19.

Iran has yet to confirm the location but the Dutch foreign minister and diplomatic sources said that the upcoming discussions would be held in the Italian capital. The official IRNA news agency reported that they would be held in Europe, without elaborat-

ing. Baqaei said the next set of talks would continue to be indirect with Omani mediation, adding that direct talks were "not effective" and "not useful."

He had previously said that the only focus of the upcoming talks would be "the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions," and that Iran "will not have any talks with the American side on any other issue." Late Sunday, IRNA reported that Tehran's regional influence and its missile capabilities were among its "red lines" in the talks.

In 2018, during Trump's first term in office, Washington withdrew from the 2015 agreement and reinstated biting sanctions on Tehran. Iran continued to adhere to the agreement for a year after Trump's withdrawal but later began rolling back its compliance. Iran has consistently denied that it is seeking nuclear weapons.

# India and China discuss resuming flights

NEW DELHI (Reuters): India and China have held one round of talks on resuming direct passenger air services, but no dates have been fixed yet, New Delhi said on Monday, as relations continued to thaw five years after a deadly border clash.

The neighbours agreed in January to work on resolving trade and economic differences, in a move expected to boost their aviation sectors, particularly China's,

which has lagged behind other countries in rebounding from the Covid pandemic.

"The civil aviation ministry and our counterpart in China have had one round of meetings," Civil Aviation Secretary Vumlungmang Vualnam said at a conference organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in New Delhi. There were still some issues to resolve, he added, without going into

detail. Relations soured between India and China in the wake of the 2020 clash between troops along their border in the Himalayas, which killed at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese. India imposed restrictions on Chinese companies investing in the country, banned hundreds of popular apps and cut passenger routes, although direct cargo flights continued.

## Fire in Gadoon leaves of two siblings dead

F.P. Report

SWABI: Two young siblings were burnt to death in Pakkaradi village, a remote mountainous area of Gadoon Amazai, Swabi where a fire broke out in a house on Monday.

The fire reportedly started when a young boy set fire to some dry grass lying in the house's veranda. The flames quickly spread, severely burning the boy and his younger sister. Tragically, there was no one else present in the house at the time of the fire. Both children were rushed to the hospital, but they could not survive the injuries. The victims have been identified as 5-year-old Hassnain and 4-year-old Swaira.

## Russia's strikes in Ukraine kill 4

KYIV: Russian strikes on eastern Ukraine have killed at least four civilians, a day after one of the deadliest attacks in recent months left more than 30 people dead in Sumy in the northeast and drew condemnation.

Local officials in the Kharkiv region reported that artillery and rocket fire on Monday hit the town of Kupiansk, a strategic rail junction captured by Russia's forces in the early days of its February 2022 invasion that was retaken by Ukraine months later. Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, also came under renewed drone attack overnight, underscoring Moscow's concerted efforts to gain ground in the northeast.

Kharkiv Governor Oleh Syniehubov said a 68-year-old man and a 61-year-old woman were killed in Monday's shelling while a rocket strike claimed the lives of a 77-year-old woman and a 52-year-old man. The attacks follow Sunday's twin missile strike on the centre of Sumy, where Christian civilians had gathered to mark Palm Sunday.

Ukrainian officials said at least 34 people were killed and more than 100 injured in the blast. Among the dead were two children. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned the attack as a deliberate targeting of civilians. He urged United States President Donald Trump in an interview on the CBS TV network's 60 Minutes news programme to "please, before any kind of decisions, any kind of forms of negotiations, come to see people, civilians, warriors, hospitals, churches, children destroyed or dead".

Despite the heavy civilian toll, Trump, who has previously faced criticism for his perceived leniency towards Russia and President Vladimir Putin, called the Sumy attack a "mistake" and a "horrible thing". The Kremlin said it struck a military target, saying two Iskander-M tactical missiles hit a meeting of Ukrainian officers in Sumy and blamed Kyiv for using civilians as "human shields" without providing any evidence.

Russia accused Ukraine of endangering civilians by carrying out military operations in urban areas. According to Russia's Ministry of Defence, the target was part of an operational command centre and the attack killed more than 60 Ukrainian soldiers. — Aljazeera