

Gas leak explosion kills two
F.P. Report

KARACHI: Two people were killed and four others injured in a powerful explosion at an ice factory near Farooqi Graveyard close to Murtaza Chowrangi in the Landhi area of Karachi. Six people were initially injured in the blast and rushed to a nearby hospital, where two succumbed to their injuries. The remaining four are currently under treatment and reported to be in critical condition.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of the Army Staff, General Asim Munir attending Overseas Pakistanis Convention.

PM announces massive incentives for overseas Pakistanis

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday unveiled a comprehensive welfare package for overseas Pakistanis, aimed at resolving long-standing legal challenges and offering a range of incentives, including education and employment job quotas, civil awards, and skill development opportunities.

The prime minister, addressing the first two-day Overseas Pakistanis Convention held here, paid tribute to the Pakistani expatriates for their unmatched contribution in the nation-building. Attended by over 1,200 Pakistani expatriates from across the globe, the convention highlighted the contributions of more than 10 million overseas Pakistanis whom the prime minister hailed as "the pride of the nation."

The prime minister announced that the special court for overseas Pakistanis had already been established in Islamabad and would be extended to all provinces for swift resolution of legal cases filed by expatriates. "To support this, the government is introducing e-recording and e-filing facilities for overseas Pakistanis to provide evidence through video link from abroad without traveling to Pakistan... I have directed NADRA to complete the project within 60 days," he said and assured for legal amendment to curb fictitious litigation.

Prime Minister Shehbaz announced quotas in educational institutions including 5% quota in all chartered universities (out of 10,000 seats) for the children of overseas Pakistanis, 5% in federal capital's degree-awarding institutes, and 15% in medical colleges. "Overseas Pakistanis will now be considered filers by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), enabling relief in banking and business transaction taxes. Moreover, NAVTTC will offer 5,000 skill devel-

opment courses to children of expatriates," he said.

Moreover, the prime minister said that the federal government had granted a five-year age relaxation for male overseas job applicants and a seven-year relaxation for overseas women to apply for government jobs. Besides, special facilitation offices have been set up by the Boards of Revenue in Punjab and Balochistan, with efforts underway to replicate the initiative in KP, Sindh, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

Prime Minister Shehbaz praised Punjab's digital reforms, including online sale deed registration, and announced that the system would be piloted at the Pakistani High Commission in London and later in other missions worldwide. He lauded the overseas community for their unwavering support to Pakistan's economy, particularly noting the record \$4.1 billion in remittances sent in March alone. "We estimate that by the end of this fiscal year, the remittances will surpass \$38 billion, exceeding the country's total exports," he noted.

He also announced the revival of the Green Channel at airports within a week, originally initiated by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, to simplify procedures for overseas Pakistanis. He announced that every year on August 14, outstanding overseas Pakistanis will be conferred civil awards based on remittance contributions, as tracked by the State Bank. The diplomatic missions and the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) will submit their nominations for the purpose, he added.

PM Shehbaz paid tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces, particularly COAS General Syed Asim Munir, whom he called "a man of words and unmatched capability." "The defence of Pakistan is impregnable under his leadership," he asserted, warning that any threat to the nation would be "crushed by the valiant armed forces."

He highlighted the unmatched sacrifices of 80,000 Pakistanis - including civilians and security personnel - in the fight against terrorism. "Turning the tide against this onslaught was only possible due to divine blessings, nation's prayers, and the unwavering courage of our forces," he said. Addressing the resurgence of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the prime minister emphasized the need to recognize the sacrifices of soldiers who sacrifice their lives to protect millions.

He condemned the "venomous narratives" on social media targeting the military, urging the nation to counter such propaganda through logic and patriotism. PM Shehbaz reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the just causes of Kashmir and Gaza, denouncing the "brutal ceasefire violations" and the martyrdom of 50,000 Muslims in Gaza.

He criticized the previous government for breaching the IMF agreement, which harmed Pakistan's reputation, and lauded the efforts by current and former coalition governments for stabilizing the economy. The prime minister pledged to personally oversee the investments of overseas Pakistanis in Pakistan. "I will be your CEO. My cabinet and our business community will ensure that your investments are protected and facilitated," he assured.

Chairman OPF Syed Qamar Raza said that PM Shehbaz positively responded to 14 key demands of overseas Pakistanis and formed a high-powered committee under Deputy PM Ishaq Dar. He emphasized the important role of the diaspora, spread across 160 countries, and confirmed that a mega Overseas Convention will be held annually every April. Raza also acknowledged the support of COAS General Asim Munir in organizing this year's convention, which successfully convened over 1,200 overseas participants on short notice.

Khamenei cautious on nuclear talks with US

TEHRAN (Reuters): Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday he was neither "overly optimistic nor pessimistic" about talks with the US on Iran's nuclear programme, in an apparent move by Tehran to play down growing public expectations of a deal.

Failure to reach a deal with President Donald Trump to end Iran's decades-long dispute with the West could profoundly hurt the Islamic Republic, Iranian politicians and insiders have said, even if Washington is subsequently portrayed by Tehran as the guilty party. After last weekend's talks between Tehran and Washington in Oman, which both sides described as positive, Iranian expectations of economic relief have soared, according to Iranians

reached by telephone and by messages posted by Iranians on social media.

The two sides have agreed to hold more talks on April 19 in Oman. Iran's battered rial currency has gained some 20% against the dollar in the past few days, with many Iranians hoping a deal to end Iran's economic isolation may be within reach. "We are neither overly optimistic nor pessimistic regarding them. After all, it is a process which was decided and its first steps have been well implemented," Khamenei said in a meeting with lawmakers, according to state media.

Tehran has approached the talks warily, doubting the likelihood of an agreement and suspicious of Trump, who abandoned Tehran's 2015 nuclear pact with six powers during his first term in 2018 and has

repeatedly threatened to bomb Iran if there is no deal. "From here on, it (the talks) must be followed through carefully, with red lines clearly defined for both the other side and for us. The negotiations may lead to results, or they may not," said Khamenei.

"Avoid linking the country's fate to these talks." Since relations with Washington collapsed after Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution that ousted the US-backed Shah, enmity toward the United States has always been a rallying point for Iran's clerical rulers. But inflation, unemployment and lack of investment as a result of crippling sanctions, reimposed after Trump ditched the 2015 nuclear pact, persuaded Khamenei to support talks with the Trump administration.

11 dead as migrant vessel sinks off Libyan coast: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A vessel carrying foreign nationals sank near the Harawa coast of Sirte in eastern Libya, the Foreign Office (FO) said on Monday, confirming that four Pakistani nationals were among the 11 bodies recovered.

"Our mission in Tripoli has reported that a vessel carrying foreign nationals has sunk near the Harawa coast, Sirte city (Eastern Libya)," the FO said in a statement. "A Pakistan embassy team's visit to Sirte has confirmed the

recovery of 11 bodies of migrants. Of these, four have been identified as Pakistani nationals based on their national documents. Two bodies remain unidentified."

The identified Pakistani victims include Zahid Mehmood from Gujranwala and Sameer Ali, Syed Ali Hussain, and Asif Ali — all from Mandi Bahaudin.

"The Embassy in Tripoli is actively working to gather more information about the affected Pakistani nationals and is in contact with the local

authorities," the statement added. "The Crisis Management Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been activated to monitor the situation."

The latest incident adds to the list of migrant boat tragedies resulting in the loss of precious lives, with dozens of Pakistanis drowning in multiple incidents in recent months. In January, more than 40 Pakistanis were killed after a boat carrying irregular migrants from the African nation of Mauritania to Spain capsized.

Three cops martyred in Mastung blast

F.P. Report

MASTUNG: An explosion near Dasht Road in Mastung resulted in the deaths of three Balochistan Constabulary personnel and injuries to 20 others on Tuesday.

The incident occurred when an explosive device, hidden in a motorcycle, detonated near a police truck. Deputy Superintendent of Police, Younas Magasi, informed the media that the officers were en route to a security detail for the Balochistan National Party-Mengal's protest sit-in at Lakpass. The explosion abruptly halted their mission, causing significant casualties among the personnel onboard.

Dr Aamir Iqbal Raisani, Chief Executive Officer of Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Raisani Memorial Hospital, declared an emergency at the facility. The hospital received three deceased and 21 injured individuals. Dr Raisani noted that three of the injured were transferred to Quetta for advanced medical care following initial treatment in Mastung.

The deceased were identified as Among the dead included Muhammad Amin, resident of Sibi,

Muhammad Waseem, resident of Panjgur and Abdul Hameed Bugti, resident of Dera Bugti while among the injured included Mumtaz Ahmed, resident of Kharan, Zahoor Ahmed, resident of Awaran, Nisar Ahmed, resident of Kharan, Abdul Gayas, resident of Kharan, Sanaullah, Resident of Lasbela, Sudair Ahmed, Resident of Panjgur, Abdul Samad, resident of Turbat, Mumtaz Aslam, resident of Turbat, Dilwas, resident of Turbat, Muhammad Hayat, resident of Kohlu, Adnan Muhammad, resident of Gwadar, Qadeer Ahmed, resident of Awaran, Allah Dad, resident of Awaran, Ali Muhammad, resident of Washuk, Adil Ali, resident of Turbat, Muhammad Saleem, resident of Sibi, Qurban, resident of Gwadar, Abdul Malik, resident of Lasbela, Riaz Ahmed, resident of Washuk and Muhammad Anwar, resident of Mastung.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has directed authorities to ensure the best possible medical treatment for the injured personnel in Mastung blast. He also instructed Provincial Health Minister Bakt Khan Kakar to personally oversee the treatment process of the injured police personnel.

12 passengers die in Karak mishap

F.P. Report

KARAK: In a tragic road accident on Karak Indus Highway near Lucky Ghundaki, a loaded trailer rammed into a passenger coach, killing at least 12 people and injuring 16 others.

Police informed on Tuesday the accident happened near the old SNGPL facility where a trailer crashed into the oncoming van, travelling from Miranshah to Peshawar, with such force that it ran over it, trapping several passengers inside. Soon after the crash, a large number of local residents, along with police and Rescue 1122 teams, reached the scene to begin rescue operations.

Emergency responders managed to pull out the victims trapped under the container and transported both the deceased and injured to a nearby hospital. Rescue teams confirmed that 12 bodies have been transported to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital so far. The injured are currently receiving medical treatment, and the condition of some remains critical.

So far, 13 of the deceased have been identified, while three of the injured are reported to be in critical condition. Police were making efforts to assist the victims and investigate the cause of the accident. The tragic accident has raised concerns over road safety on the Indus Highway, a route often criticized for heavy traffic and frequent accidents.

Govt keeps petroleum prices unchanged

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday announced that instead of passing on the relief of reduced oil prices in international market to the consumers, the government would use the saved money for the reconstruction of the N-25 Highway and completion of Phase-II of the Kachhi Canal project in Balochistan.

The prime minister made the announcement while chairing the federal cabinet meeting here, where he declared the transformation of the N-25, known infamously as the "deadly road", into a motorway-standard highway. He said that the decision reflected the national commitment to Balochistan's development and an end to years of neglect.

"From a political and social perspective, it's time we addressed the disparity. While motorways run through many parts of the country, Balochistan has waited far too long. We will now change the fate of the N-25, from being a highway of tragedy to a highway of prosperity," said the prime minister. He underlined that the N-25, connecting Karachi to Chaman via Quetta, Kalat, and Khuzdar, had claimed more than 2,000 lives in recent years due to its poor condition and single-lane structure.

PM Shehbaz announced that the Rs300 billion reconstruction project would now move forward under federal government's supervision, with third-party validation to ensure high standards. "We will build this as a top-class road, and I, along with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, will personally supervise the progress," the prime minister stated.

The highway was first approved in FY2022-23, but progress stalled due to funding gaps. The revival of the project is now being supported by a reallocation of resources made possible by falling global petroleum prices. Rather than passing on the full relief to consumers, the government opted to invest in strategic infrastructure, the prime minister said.

He also told the cabinet members that Phase-II of the Kachhi Canal-a Rs70 bil-

lion irrigation project-would also be completed using the same pool of funds. "If completed, this project will irrigate vast area of Balochistan's arid land. It can transform agriculture, improve livelihoods, and address food security. The only condition is hard work," he said.

Prime Minister Shehbaz emphasized the judicious allocation of resources keeping in view the needs of all federating units. He highlighted the Rs70 billion solarization of tubewells in Balochistan-a joint initiative of the federal and provincial governments-as a shining example of this collaboration, with the federal government covering 70% of the cost.

He added that the Hyderabad-Sukkur M-6 Motorway and M-9 Motorway from Sukkur to Karachi would also be built under the federal government's transparent implementation process, extending high-quality roads across underserved areas. During the cabinet meeting, PM Shehbaz also condemned the tragic killing of eight innocent Pakistanis in Iran's Sistan province. He reiterated Pakistan's expectation that the Iranian authorities would swiftly bring the perpetrators to justice.

The prime minister also prayed for the full and speedy recovery of President Asif Ali Zardari who was currently under treatment after he was diagnosed with coronavirus. The federal cabinet also took several key decisions, including approval of amendments to the Petroleum Levy Ordinance (1961) to boost national revenues, endorsement of the Sustainable Investment Sukuk Framework for issuing domestic securities supporting environmental and renewable energy projects, greenlight for a bill to establish the National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority, promoting agricultural reform and food security.

On the occasion, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, attending as a special guest, lauded the Prime Minister's decision to prioritize long-ignored projects in Balochistan. "The N-25 was indeed a bloody road, but today you have shown compassion by diverting national resources to address the pain and deprivation of the people of Balochistan," Bugti added.

Fitch upgrades Pakistan's rating to 'B-' from 'CCC+'

ISLAMABAD (Reuters): Global ratings agency Fitch upgraded Pakistan's foreign currency credit rating to 'B-' from 'CCC+' on Tuesday, citing increased confidence in the country's progress in narrowing its budget deficits.

The upgrade also reflects confidence that the country would implement structural reforms, supporting its International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme performance and funding availability, Fitch said.

The agency said though ongoing global trade tensions could create external pressure, its low dependence on exports and market financing should mitigate risks. The economy had been teetering on the brink of default ever since inflation rose to a record high in May 2023 and reserves started shrinking, but has seen some respite thanks in part to a \$7 billion bailout programme from the IMF.

"The upgrade reflects Fitch's increased confidence that Pakistan will sustain its recent progress on narrowing budget deficits and implementing structural reforms, supporting its IMF programme performance and funding availability. We also expect tight economic policy settings to continue to support recovery of international

reserves and contain external funding needs, although implementation risks remain and financing needs are still large. Global trade tensions and market volatility could create external pressures, but risks are mitigated by lower oil prices and Pakistan's low dependence on exports and market financing," Fitch said in a statement.

The global rating agency further said, "Policy Credibility Gradually Rebuilt: Pakistan and the IMF reached a staff-level agreement in March on the first review of the country's USD7 billion Extended Fund Facility and a new USD1.3 billion Resilience and Sustainability Facility, both set to last until 3Q27. Pakistan performed well on quantitative performance criteria, particularly on reserve accumulation and the primary surplus, although tax revenue growth fell short of its indicative target. Provincial governments have also legislated increases in agricultural income tax, a key structural benchmark. This follows Pakistan's strong performance on its previous, more temporary arrangement, which expired in April 2024."

"We forecast the general government budget deficit to narrow to 6% of GDP in

the fiscal year ending June 2025 (FY25) and around 5% in the medium term, from nearly 7% in FY24. Our FY25 forecast is conservative. We expect the primary surplus to more than double to over 2% of GDP in FY25. Shortfalls in tax revenue, in part due to lower-than-expected inflation and imports, will be offset by lower spending and wider provincial surpluses. The lagged effects of high domestic interest rates in recent years still weigh on fiscal performance, but also drove the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) extraordinary dividend of 2% of GDP to the government in FY25," said the Fitch statement.

"We expect CPI inflation to average 5% yoy in FY25, from over 20% in FY23-FY24, on fading base effects from several rounds of energy price reforms, before picking up again to 8% in FY26, in line with urban core inflation over the past few months.

The SBP held its policy rate steady at 12% in March, noting pressures on the current account (CA) and persistent core inflation, after 1,000bp of rate cuts between May 2024 and January 2025. We expect GDP growth to edge up to 3% in FY25," it added.

Ex-nazim, civil judge, advocate killed in KP

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: Two tragic shooting incidents occurred in different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, claiming the lives of notable figures from the police and judiciary.

According to details, unidentified gunmen opened fire on malak asad car in Kohat pindi road, killing Malik Asad, the brother of the late renowned police officer and former CCPO Shaheed Malik Saad. One of his companions was also

injured in the attack and was immediately shifted to the hospital for treatment.

In another incident near the motorway in Nowshera, a civil judge from Mardan, Hayat, along with his friend Advocate Khalid, was shot dead. Following the incident, Nowshera police registered an FIR and launched a search operation to apprehend the culprits.

A senior officer of the Nowshera police stated that all available resources are being utilized to track down the killers. Meanwhile, Kohat's Regional Police

Officer (RPO), Abbas Majid Marwat, vowed that those responsible for Malik Asad's murder would soon be brought to justice.

He further emphasized that strict action is being taken against those disturbing public peace and that the crackdown on criminal elements has been intensified. These incidents have caused widespread fear and anxiety among the residents, who have urged the government to swiftly arrest the perpetrators and ensure justice is served.



CM Maryam reaffirms commitment to enhance Pak-US relations

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif held a significant meeting here on Tuesday with a delegation from the United States Congress, reaffirming the mutual commitment to enhancing Pakistan-US relations, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, and democratic cooperation.

The delegation included Congressmen Tom Suozzi and Jonathan Jackson, along with Acting US Ambassador Natalie Baker, US Consul General Kristin Hawkins, and Political Officer Nikhil Hawkin, said a handout issued here.

During the meeting, both sides discussed a range of issues of mutual interest and agreed on tak-

ing concrete steps to strengthen bilateral ties.

The US Congressmen expressed their commitment to fostering broad-based cooperation with Punjab, particularly in investment and economic development. Detailed discussions were held on expanding partnerships in trade, democratic institution-building, and people-to-people exchanges.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif welcomed the delegation and invited US investors to explore opportunities in Punjab's agro-industry, information technology, energy, health, and education sectors. She also appreciated the proposal to increase parliamentary-level exchanges, terming it a

vital step towards strengthening democratic and institutional ties.

"A new chapter of Pak-US cooperation in information technology has begun, and we deeply value our relationship with the United States," the CM remarked. "There is vast potential for expanding this partnership, and Punjab is ready to take it to new heights," she added.

She highlighted that the Punjab government is actively encouraging foreign investment, and facilities for investors are being streamlined through the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) under a 'One Window' platform, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and ease of doing business.

Farewell held for Justice Ali Baqar Najafi

LAHORE (APP): A formal send-off ceremony was held on Tuesday at the Lahore High Court (LHC) in honor of Justice Ali Baqar Najafi on his elevation to the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The dignified event took place at the LHC principal seat and was attended by several esteemed judges. LHC Chief Justice Ms. Aalia Neelum graced the ceremony as the chief guest. Also present were Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh, Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza, Justice Syed Shahbaz Ali Rizvi, and other judges of the High Court.

During the ceremony, Justice Najafi was lauded for his exemplary judicial services, his contributions to the delivery of justice, and his unwavering commitment to high judicial standards.

In a symbolic gesture of appreciation, Chief Justice Aalia Neelum, along with her fellow judges, presented a bouquet to Justice Najafi and extended heartfelt wishes for his future role in the apex court.

The ceremony concluded with a warm farewell, acknowledging Justice Najafi's dedication and service to the judiciary.

No corruption; LESCO's new vision: CEO

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Chief Executive Officer Ramzan Butt said on Tuesday that LESCO's new vision is to eliminate corruption. Talking to media here, he termed the menace of electricity theft as theft of the public, that must be discouraged.

He vowed, "LESCO company is like our mother, we have to work for its betterment. I am committed to eliminate corruption and take to task those employees who facilitate the power theft after taking bribe."

To a question, the CEO said that recovery of company's outstanding dues from dead defaulter is very much underway, however, it's mechanism needs to be improved. Ramzan Butt said that all resources are mobilized for ensuring uninterrupted supply of electricity to the consumers.

To another question, he confirmed that the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system is running smoothly at LESCO, while new connections and faulty meters are being issued immediately through the ERP. He mentioned that there was a lot of opposition to the ERP system but the system was implemented.

"I am grateful to the Prime Minister, Federal Minister for Energy, and LESCO Board of Directors for their support in the action against electricity theft. I am also grateful to the Army Chief, Rangers and Punjab Police who provided full support," he said.

Sindh introduces special Pink EV scooter scheme for female riders



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to cancel the registration of defective and unsafe commercial vehicles and will launch a new route next week using Green Line and Orange Line vehicles.

Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has directed the Transport Department to soon launch a special Pink EV Scooter scheme for women. Driving license will be a mandatory requirement for working women and student applicants to access the Pink Scooty.

A major meeting of the Transport and Mass Transit Department was held at the Sindh Secretariat in Karachi, which was chaired by Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon and Provincial Minister for

Information, Transport, and Mass Transit.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, Managing Director of the Sindh Mass Transit Authority Kamal Dayo, Project Director of the People's Bus Service Sohaib Shafiq, and other officials.

The meeting reviewed the progress of various transport projects and government initiatives related to road safety in detail. It also took key decisions regarding the development of a modern commercial vehicle inspection system.

Following the instructions of Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, the meeting also decided to establish Motor Vehicle Inspection (MVI) centers for the inspection of commercial vehicles along the National Highway and

Super Highways.

Speaking during the meeting, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that 10 Motor Vehicle Inspection (MVI) centers are being established across Sindh for the inspection of commercial vehicles. He noted that two MVI centers are already operational in Karachi, and emphasized that work on the remaining centers should be completed as soon as possible. He added that the establishment of Motor Vehicle Inspection (MVI) centers on National Highways and Super Highways will help ensure the fitness of vehicles before they enter the city.

He said that three additional MVI centers are being established in Karachi and five more in other districts of Sindh. "We are taking all possible

measures to make the transport sector modern, safe, and people-friendly," he added. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon announced that 34 new electric buses and 5 double-decker buses are expected to arrive in Karachi in June, along with an additional 100 buses scheduled to arrive later the same month.

On the occasion of the meeting, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon also directed that necessary steps be taken to introduce 500 electric taxis in the initial phase. He said that their aim is to provide affordable, environment-friendly, and reliable transportation facilities to the public. Sindh's transport system is entering a new era, one that embraces modern technology while prioritizing convenience.

PPP finalizes preparations for April 18 Hyderabad rally

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A key meeting held at her residence under the chairmanship of senior Pakistan Peoples Party leader Ms. Faryal Talpur, during which preparations for the jalsa (gathering) scheduled to be held in Hyderabad on April 18 were finalized.

The meeting was also attended by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, PPP central leader Makhdoom Jamil-uz-Zaman, PPP Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, Interior Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar, Provincial Ministers Ali Hassan Zardari and Muhammad Ali Malkani, as well as Special Assistant Qasim Naveed Qamar. Other attendees included Sohail Anwar Sial, Rafiq Ahmed Jamali, Shafqat Shah Sherazi, Riaz Shah Sherazi, Sikandar Shoro, Pir Mujeeb, and Rawal Sharjeel Memon.

The meeting reviewed in detail the preparations and arrangements for the gathering scheduled to be held at Hattri Ground



Hyderabad on April 18. It was informed in the meeting that the people of Hyderabad Division will participate in the rally in large numbers.

Addressing the meeting, Faryal Talpur stated that the rally will take place at 6 PM at Hattri Ground, Hyderabad, under the leadership of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

She said that this grand rally would serve as a public referendum against the ongoing projects on the Indus River. Every child of

Sindh will heed the call of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and participate in the rally.

Faryal Talpur made it clear that the Indus River is our lifeline, and if its water is diverted elsewhere, Sindh will become barren. She emphasized that the PPP does not accept any form of engineering on the Indus River and that the distribution of water must be carried out with complete transparency in accordance with the 1991 agreement.

NA-213 by-poll will be final nail in PPP politics' coffin

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh said on Tuesday that the by-election in NA-213 Umerkot would serve as the final nail in the 'coffin' of the Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) politics in the province.

During his visit to Umerkot, Haleem, along with senior PTI Sindh leaders, actively campaigned for PTI-backed candidate Lalchand Malhi. Addressing a public gathering, he expressed confi-

dence in Malhi's victory, affirming that the residents of Umerkot have already turned away from the PPP and are poised for change.

Emphasizing Malhi's role as a dedicated supporter of Imran Khan, he declared Malhi's success inevitable. The PTI Sindh chief criticized the PPP and accused it of misusing public resources and betraying Sindh's populace.

He warned that this election would leave no room for manipulation or rigging, urging citizens to safeguard

their votes.

Haleem outlined a robust strategy by PTI to counter alleged electoral fraud tactics by PPP, asserting that the by-election would significantly alter Sindh's political scene.

He mentioned the coalition of PTI, Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), and other parties in the Save River Sindh Movement, suggesting that a decisive victory could enable PTI to establish the next provincial government in Sindh, continuing its national momentum.

Punjab approves landmark Acid Control Act 2025

LAHORE (APP): The government of Punjab has taken a landmark step to prevent acid attacks by approving the draft of the first-of-its-kind law in Pakistan, the 'Punjab Acid Control Act 2025.'

According to a spokesperson for the Punjab

Home Department, the new law classifies the sale of acid without a license as a non-bailable offense. Under the legislation, illegal sale of acid in Punjab will result in up to 3 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 500,000.

Furthermore, even licensed sellers will face penalties for negligence, which include 2 to 5 years of imprisonment and fines ranging from Rs 200,000 to Rs 1,000,000.

The spokesperson

added that under the new law, victims of acid attacks will also be entitled to compensation.

The legislation mandates that during packaging, transport and sale of acid, clear safety instructions must be displayed on the container.

The packaging must include details such as the type of acid, volume, quantity, license holder information, and must display a red danger symbol.

The spokesperson noted that previously, there were no laws regulating the transport, storage, purchase or sale of acid. Considering the irreversible damage caused to victims of acid attacks, the government has introduced the new law to regulate the acid trade.

The proposed Act regu-

lates 30 types of acid, and authority to issue licenses for acid-related businesses has been given to deputy commissioners.

The spokesperson said that the Act was initially introduced as a Private Member Bill by MPA Hina Pervaiz Butt. The final draft was prepared by the Punjab Home Department and the Law Department on the direction of the Standing Committee on Home Affairs.

The Standing Committee has approved the Punjab Acid Control Act 2025, which will now be presented for final approval in the ongoing session of the Punjab Assembly. Once passed, the Home Department Punjab will implement the law throughout the province.

Karachi Cattle Market set to open on April 19

KARACHI (PPI): All arrangements have been finalized for the Cattle Market 2025 at Northern Bypass, Karachi, with operations commencing on April 19.

The market will offer a wide array of sacrificial animals from Punjab and Sindh. Administrator Shahbaz Khan is scheduled to brief the media on April 18 about the new developments, including a token system designed to streamline the buying process for traders and buyers.

The token system aims to ensure the safety and protection of sacrificial animals. Each animal purchased will come with a token, which will facilitate the easy removal of the animal from the market premises. This initiative is part of broader efforts to enhance convenience for both buyers and sellers.

An ATM facility will be available at the market, and parking fees have been reduced by up to 50 percent to attract more visitors. Traders can bring their own standard tents to general blocks, while VVIP and VIP blocks offer discounted tent setups.

Traders and cattle owners arriving from Punjab and Sindh are already benefiting from the facilities, even before the official opening.

The administration's focus on convenience and security underscores their commitment to a smooth operation this year.

Ghulam Murtaza Sajjad Memon hosts grand diplomatic gathering

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A grand and prestigious gathering was hosted at the residence of Ghulam Murtaza Sajjad Memon in Islamabad — a distinguished lawyer, political and social leader originally from Tando Muhammad Khan. The event saw participation from notable national and international dignitaries.

Among the attendees were renowned American General Bergman, Congressman Tom Suozzi, the U.S. Ambassador, President of the Economic Council Brooke De Montluzin, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, Pakistani diplomats, senior bureaucrats, and a large number of Ghulam Murtaza Memon's American friends. The purpose of the event was to engage in discussions around global relations, national and international politics, economic ties, and the current regional situation.

During the event, in-



depth exchanges of views took place between the host and guests on national, regional, and global political scenarios, economic challenges, and their possible solutions. The guests also shared valuable suggestions for Pakistan's political stability, strengthening of the legal system, and economic growth.

The evening concluded

with a grand dinner featuring traditional Sindhi cuisine. As a token of cultural identity, guests were presented with Ajraks, lungis, and Sindhi topis — a gesture that was warmly received and appreciated by all.

All attendees expressed gratitude to the host, Ghulam Murtaza Sajjad Memon, praising his

knowledge, personality, and hospitality. They also promised to visit Tando Muhammad Khan soon, where they plan to meet with local communities and engage in discussions on developmental issues.

This event not only served to strengthen diplomatic ties but also positively highlighted Pakistan's image on the global stage.

Rs80bn being spent on water projects: Mayor

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab said on Tuesday that a letter has already been sent to the Prime Minister requesting Rs7 billion for ongoing development works in the city, while Rs80 billion is being spent on water projects.

Addressing a ceremony organized by the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) for the handing over of trees as

part of a plantation drive on Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Expressway, Wahab said that efforts were underway to allocate funds for industrial areas in the current fiscal year's budget to support development projects for industrial associations.

He added that federal assistance had also been sought for the timely completion of the K-IV water supply project. Wahab announced that the second

phase of Shaheed Bhutto Expressway would be completed by April 30, and the third phase by December 2025.

The Jam Sadiq Flyover is expected to be finished by August 14, 2025, while the Korangi Crossing Bridge will be opened to the public by August 30. He described the plantation campaign as a means of not only environmental improvement but also public awareness.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah chairing the meeting of Provincial Task Force for Polio Eradication.

Task Force reviews preparations for April 21 anti-polio drive

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Task Force for the Eradication of Polio convened under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, to assess the province's ongoing polio eradication efforts and finalize preparations for the upcoming National Immunization Days (NID) campaign, set to begin on April 21 across all districts.

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders, including relevant administrative secretaries, senior law enforcement officials, the Coordinator of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and representatives of international partner organizations such as UNICEF and the World

Health Organization (WHO). Commissioners, Regional Police Officers, Deputy Commissioners, District Health Officers, and officials from the National EOC in Islamabad also participated via video link.

The Special Secretary of Health and the Coordinator of the Provincial Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) briefed the forum on the current polio situation and outlined the strategy for the April campaign, which aims to vaccinate 6.5 million children. The campaign will place special emphasis on 276 low-performing Union Councils.

The Task Force reviewed progress made on decisions from its previous meeting and was informed that staff training for the April campaign has

been completed. The meeting was also told that influencer-led strategies have been adopted in specific areas to increase community engagement.

Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah urged Deputy Commissioners and Health Department officials to approach the campaign with dedication and commitment, terming polio eradication a national cause. "Protecting our children from this crippling disease must remain a top priority," he stressed, adding that robust microplanning and quality assurance are key to the success of the drive.

District-level data on environmental surveillance and LQAS trends from the last three campaigns were presented. The Chief Secretary announced that polio performance would

be a key assessment metric for Deputy Commissioners and District Health Officers, particularly their focus on LQAS outcomes.

He further emphasized the need for data-driven monitoring and planning, calling for context-specific solutions to address persistent challenges, such as vaccine refusals and instances of children being unavailable during campaigns. Reviewing and improving communication microplans was identified as essential for overcoming refusals.

The Chief Secretary concluded by underlining the importance of accountability in polio communication efforts, stating that effective and transparent mechanisms are crucial to achieving complete eradication of the virus from the province.

Degree verification of KP Assembly employees begins

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The process of verifying the academic credentials of all employees working in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Secretariat has formally begun. In this regard, a grand meeting was convened today on the invitation of Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati. The meeting was attended by Vice Chancellors of universities and Chairmen of education boards across the province. Leader of the Opposition Dr. Ibadullah, MPA Sajjad Ullah Khan, Special Secretary of the Assembly Syed Waqar Shah, and other concerned officials were also present.

Speaker Babar Saleem Swati stated that the primary purpose of inviting the heads of all universities and education boards was to hand over the academic credentials of

Assembly employees directly to these institutions. This is to ensure that the verification process remains transparent, timely, and impartial—eliminating any chances of tampering or backdoor deals. He emphasized that the process should be conducted under the direct supervision and responsibility of the heads of these institutions.

He further highlighted that today's meeting marked the second and more significant phase of the verification process. Earlier, only the Vice Chancellor of the University of Peshawar and the Chairman of the Peshawar Board were invited, and initial documents were handed over to them. In contrast, today's meeting brought together all university and board heads from across the province.

The Speaker reaffirmed

that the Provincial Assembly is being transformed into a transparent, merit-based, and credible institution, with no place for individuals holding fake degrees.

This initiative is part of a broader vision for institutional reform, accountability, and transparency, ensuring that only competent and honest individuals serve the public through this vital institution.

He also reiterated that the Assembly is being run above party lines, with opposition members being on board in all key decisions in line with democratic principles.

"We are here to serve the people, regardless of political affiliation. Our leader Imran Khan has always emphasized the strengthening of institutions and promotion of democracy," the Speaker said.

Speaker expressed his

determination to make the Provincial Assembly a model for other institutions to follow. He mentioned that the Assembly had previously signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with various educational institutions, under which students visited the Assembly, attended live sessions, and were educated about the legislative process.

Additionally, a public feedback feature is now being introduced on the Assembly's website, enabling citizens to directly share their opinions on important legislative matters.

He concluded by saying that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly is a public institution where transparency and integrity in all public interest matters are of utmost priority—and these standards will be upheld at all levels.

PHC seeks govt and PEMRA responses

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notices to federal and provincial government as well as Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority against using "killed" for security personnel in news and social media, on Tuesday.

PHC's two-member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Naeem Anwar and Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhal heard the petition.

The petitioner's lawyer, Muhammad Hamdan advocate argued that using the term "killed" for martyred security personnel is inappropriate.

The lawyer requested the court to impose a ban on using the term "killed" for security personnel in news websites and social media.

PHC issued notices to the federal government, provincial government, and PEMRA, seeking their response to the petition.

Mashwani chairs meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Standing Committee for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, held on Tuesday at the Provincial Assembly Secretariat, chaired by Committee Chairman and Member of the Provincial Assembly, Ifthikhar Ali Mashwani.

The meeting was attended by committee members and MPAs, Secretary of Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Department Amir Afaq, senior officials from the department and its affiliated institutions, as well as representatives from the Provincial Assembly and relevant departments. Similarly, president and members of the Abbottabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry were also in attendance.

During the meeting, the committee reviewed a range of matters included in the agenda and reached several key decisions. One of the major issues discussed was related to the Lucky Cement Factory, raised by an MPA representing Lakki Marwat.

A sub-committee was formed to visit the area and thoroughly examine the issue from all angles. Based on its recommendations, efforts will be made to resolve the matter in a best manner.

The committee also reviewed issues observed during its recent visits to the Abbottabad 1 and 2 Small Industrial Estates.

As a result, a committee comprising representatives from the departments of Law, Irrigation, Environmental Protection Agency and local administration was constituted. This committee will visit both industrial estates and will submit a detailed report within 15 days.



PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati in a group photo with Vice Chancellors of universities and Chairmen of education boards across the province.

Aqib Ullah Khan visits Warsak Canal Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Irrigation Aqib Ullah Khan has said that serious steps are being taken to establish the best irrigation system in the province.

Work is underway on the construction of a total of 36 small dams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, of which work has been completed on 8 dams.

The completion of the Remodeling of Warsak Canal project will not only irrigate thousands of acres of land in Peshawar and Nowshera districts, but it will also significantly increase water flow and solve the water shortage problems of

farmers.

These views were expressed by Provincial Minister Aqib Ullah Khan while talking to the media on the occasion of his visit to Warsak Canal Peshawar yesterday.

On this occasion, the Project Director gave a detailed briefing to the Provincial Minister on various aspects of the Remodeling of Warsak Canal Stem Project.

The Provincial Minister for Irrigation was informed that about 73 percent of the work on the project has been completed. He inspected the approximately 5 km tunnel under construction and the pump house.

On this occasion, the Irrigation Minister was

briefed about the construction work of the project, development issues, efficiency, cost, expenses and problems faced.

Irrigation Minister Aqib Ullah Khan said that the construction of dams will not only solve water problems but also create new opportunities in agriculture, energy, tourism and employment, which will strengthen the economy. He said that the provincial government is committed to public service. The provincial minister issued instructions that no compromise should be made on construction standards, while also assuring that steps would be taken to resolve the challenges faced.

Apna Ghar for All loans to be distributed to all districts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Housing, Dr. Amjad Ali, spoke about the procedure for obtaining a loan under the Ehsaas Apna Ghar Scheme.

He said Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has truly implemented the vision of PTI founder Imran Khan by launching

the "Apna Ghar for All" initiative, providing interest-free loans up to 1.5 million rupees. A clear framework has already been laid out by the provincial government.

These Qarz-e-Hasna loans will be distributed without discrimination across all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with a repayment period of seven years amounting to 18,000 rupees per month.

In his statement, Dr. Amjad Ali mentioned that this loan facility targets individuals earning less than 100,000 rupees per month and owning a house or plot smaller than five marlas.

Loan applicants must be between 18 and 55 years of age, permanent residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and holders of valid CNICs. The loans will be disbursed through Bank of Khyber.



PM's Youth Program: A landmark step to financially empower youth

PESHAWAR (APP): In a significant stride toward inclusive development and youth empowerment, the Prime Minister's Youth Program has emerged as a transformative initiative, equipping Pakistan's young citizens with the necessary tools, resources, and opportunities to realize their potential and contribute meaningfully to national progress.

Launched last year, the program targets youth aged 18 to 35 and aims to address key challenges such as unemployment, underemployment, and skill gaps.

It takes a comprehensive approach by integrating education, entrepreneurship, digital skills training, and civic engagement.

One of the cornerstone elements of the initiative is the provision of interest-free or low-interest loans to support startups and small businesses—an essential step to help creative and ambitious youth overcome financial barriers.

"This program gave me the push I needed," says Sidra Khan, a 27-year-old educationist from Pabbi tehsil in Nowshera district.

A graduate of the University of Peshawar,

Sidra used the funding to establish Alsufa Model School in the village of Khush Maqam, dedicated to her late mother-in-law.

The school, which currently educates over 300 students including 100 out-of-school children (OSC), aims to foster inclusive learning in a region with limited educational infrastructure.

"Teaching these children brings me inner happiness," Sidra shared. "Before opening my school, I applied several times for teaching positions such as PST, CT, and lecturer roles, but couldn't secure a job due to tough competition. The PM's youth program turned my aspirations into reality."

The PM's Youth Program also partners with top-tier educational platforms to offer free digital and vocational training in fields such as IT, artificial intelligence, agriculture, and green technologies—sectors that are increasingly vital in the modern economy.

To ensure access in remote regions, mobile training units and community centers have been established to serve as hubs of innovation and learning.

Prime Minister's Coordinator for Information and KP Affairs, Ikhtiar Wali Khan, highlighted that the government launched an about Rs150 billion mega package under the Prime Minister's Youth Development Initiatives.

This includes 15 sub-programs such as the Teleschool Pakistan App, Google for Education, and Digital Continuous Professional Development—all designed to revolutionize Pakistan's formal education landscape.

Key components of the package include 60,000 paid internships across various sectors, technical and vocational training for 100,000 youth, distribution of 100,000 laptops, 5,000 scholarships for students from Balochistan and the former tribal districts, 1,000 PhD scholarships at the world's top 100 universities, establishment of 21 new university campuses in remote districts, development of 250 sports complexes across the country.

Additionally, the program supports youth-led peace and development student councils in 80 universities, 75 leadership awards, 500 innovation grants worth

Rs5–20 million each, and significant research and scholarship initiatives including 12 Seerat chairs and seven centers of excellence.

While the federal government's initiatives have been praised for their scope and inclusivity, Ikhtiar Wali also pointed out the challenges posed by previous provincial policies in KP.

He criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government for opening several public sector universities in remote areas without proper planning, leading to financial and academic difficulties.

He said several universities suffer from insufficient resources and underdeveloped postgraduate programs, affecting higher education quality and research works.

The experts said that PM's Youth Program is being hailed as a beacon of hope in KP. Its impact, already visible in provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, innovation, and inclusive education—positioning Pakistan's youth as vital architects of the nation's future.



In brief

Steps taken to rise cultivation F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Director Agriculture (Extension) Gujrat division Arfan Ullah Warriach along with Deputy Director Agriculture Hafizabad Muhammad Yousaf call on Saira Afzal Tarar, here and gave briefing regarding different measure taken by the Punjab government for increasing per acre agriculture yield and improving socio-economic condition of farmers.

Director Agriculture Arfan Ullah Warriach informed on this occasion that government was launched different programs for provision of modern agriculture machinery, subsidy, green tractor, Kisan Card, Livestock Card, modal fields and water management for achieving the destination of self-reliance in food production as well as prosperity of farmers while positive results are reflecting result-oriented steps of the government. Chief Minister Advisor Saira Afzal Tarar urged the need of launching awareness campaign in rural areas about farmer friendly schemes of the government.

Sukkur named for global award F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Sukkur has been selected as one of four cities from a pool of 900 candidates worldwide for a distinguished award at the upcoming World Water Summit in Paris, a significant acknowledgment of its advancements in water management. During a press conference, Mayor and Sindh Government Spokesperson Barrister Arsalan Islam Shaikh detailed the enhancements in Sukkur's water supply and drainage systems, including the construction of a modern water treatment plant in the industrial region and the installation of filtration plants in every union committee. Plans are underway to ensure all households gain access to clean drinking water. Barrister Arsalan also outlined the progress in healthcare and infrastructure under the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party, pointing to the establishment of hospitals such as NICVD, Children's Hospital, and SIUT, and the reconstruction of 90% of the city's major roads, including Military Road and Barrage Road. The nomination reflects the city's commitment to sustainable development goals.

Police arrests accused F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Police, after a hectic search operation of three days, arrested two accused who were involved in an attack on Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) Sindh Jam Mehtab Hussain Dahar. Special Superintendent of Police (SSP) Dherki said that a search operation was conducted under the supervision of DSP Obaro Abdul Qadir Soomro in the Khenjo and Barota area. An APC van, armoured vehicles, and a heavy contingent of police participated in the search operation. Both arrested accused were later identified as Atal Sher and Mohammad Nawaz. SSP further revealed the search operation is still underway to apprehend the remaining culprits. Earlier in March 2025, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) MPA Jam Mehtab Hussain Dharki survived a firing attack near Khenjo, Dharki. According to Jam Mehtab Hussain Dharki, unidentified assailants opened fire on his convoy, injuring three to four people. "Our vehicles were targeted, and several individuals sustained injuries.

PPP delegation greets PBA new cabinet



F.P. Report

PABBI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Pabbi president Muhammad Ilyas along with party delegation and congratulated the newly elected tehsil bar association office bearers including Tariq Mahmood Khattak Advocate and General Secretary Sharaf udin advocate.

The newly elected cabinet including Vice President Muhammad

Fazeel Awan Finance Secretary Najam uz Zaman, Joint Secretary Waheed Gul, Press Secretary: Ali Raza and Yasir welcomed PPP's delegation. The Executive members Shazia Mir Aftab Advocate, Haroon Rashid Advocate, Malik Noor Muhammad Advocate, and Syed Usman Shah Advocate were also present.

PPP president Muhammad Ilyas addressed the lawyers,

stating that they will utilize their energies to resolve the issues faced by Tehsil Bar Pabbi. The lawyers have expressed confidence in the new team for the second time, indicating satisfaction with their performance.

The success of the joint candidates from Malgari Wakelan, People's Lawyers Forum, PML-N, and other allied lawyers is considered a victory for democratic forces.

MNA chairs meeting on Afghan refugees return

F.P. Report

KOHAT: In order to ensure the dignified repatriation of Afghan Refugees as per the decision of the Federal government, an important meeting was held with the elders of Afghan Refugees living in Kohat under the chairmanship of former Interior Minister and Member National Assembly Shehryar Khan Afridi at Kohat the other day.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, Assistant Director Afghan Refugee Camps Rahim Afridi, Officers of the District Administration and other concerned departments. Elders of the Afghan Refugees on this occasion apprised Shehryar Afridi of their problems in detail.

Stressing on the dignified return of Afghan Refugees, Shehryar Afridi MNA said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will talk to the federal government to ensure the dignified return of Afghan Refugees. He declared that we do not believe in the forced return of Afghan Refugees rather their wants their dignified return. He added, after the federal government's decision to send Afghan Refugees back to their homeland Afghanistan, on the directions of the Quaid Imran Khan, the PTI provincial government has decided to send Afghan Refugees with dignity and respect.

Shahryar Afridi said that a plan of action is being formulated for the establishment of logistical points for the dignified return of Afghan Refugees settled in Kohat, mapping and remapping of Afghan citizen card holders, data of known and unknown persons, and identification of legal and illegal Afghan refugees, and the process of returning the refugees will be started in an effective manner.

Open court held: District Administration Kohat has on the direction of the Deputy

Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, organized an Open Court for the Women under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda" today, which was chaired by the Assistant Commissioner Kohat Nimra Owais.

The aim of the open court was to hear the problems of women directly and pave the way for its immediate solution. The open court was attended by the women representatives of the line departments, while a large number of women belonging to different Village and Neighborhood Councils also participated and put their problems before the Assistant Commissioner.

Women presented their complaints and suggestions regarding their issues mostly relating to the health, education, sanitation, roads, water supply and other basic sectors. Most of the problems of common nature were resolved on the spot while some were sent to the quarters concerned for further action.

On this occasion, the Assistant Commissioner said that the government is serious enough in resolving the problems of women folk and today's special women's court is a clear proof of it. She assured that all the problems and issues presented here will be resolved on priority basis. The public circles have appreciated this initiative and expressed the hope that continuation of such open courts will prove helpful in timely resolution of public problems.

Condolence reference held: A significant Condolence Reference was arranged in Kohat by Abasin Adbi Tolana Kohat in memory of the Tolana's former chairman and renowned poet and writer Professor Mohabat Khan Khattak, who died on April 6, 2025, in which literary, academic, political and social figures of Kohat participated in large numbers.

The event was presided over by the organization's

Patron-in-Chief Rahmat Shah Rahmat while former MPA and famous poet Dr. Iqbal Fana was the chief guest.

The Chief Guest Dr. Iqbal Fana and other speakers including Maulana Abdul Halim-ul-Hakimi, Millat Khan Afridi, Ghulam Sher Afridi, Syed Masoom Shah Masoom, Niaz Ali Khan, Professor Zafarullah Wazir, Mazhar Mohabat Khan, Rahmat Shah Rahmat, Feroz Khan Sadiq, Muhammad Jan Atif, Khalid Pakhtun, Syed Zafar Shah Zafar, Azam Chacha, Asad Afridi, Millat Khan Afridi, Naem Kohat and Pehlwan Shah Siyawal paid tributes to the late Mohabat Khan Khattak and said that the late Khattak was a man of love and affection and a treasure of knowledge and literature. Personalities like Professor Mohabat Khan Khattak are born after centuries, they said. They stressed the need to publish his thoughts in book form. They said, Khattak Sahib was blessed by Allah Almighty with many qualities and was a person of great value like his name.

The speakers said that Mohabat Khattak played an important role in the promotion of Pashto language and literature in Kohat, whichever literary gathering he attended, he would completely dominate the gathering with his captivating personality and thoughts. A lot has been learned from him in the world of literature.

The Tolana also announced the holding of a provincial-level seminar to promote the thoughts of the late Professor Mohabat Khan Khattak and the publication of all his books as soon as possible with the cooperation of his son.

Publication of the poems and articles written on Professor Mohabat Khan in book form also announced on this occasion. All friends were appealed to submit the poems presented in the memory of Khattak to the organization so that it can be collected and published.

Budapest Water Works delegation visits WSSCM

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A delegation of five members from Budapest Water Works (BWW) a historical Municipality visited Pakistan to strengthen collaboration with Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM). The purpose of the visit was knowledge sharing, Capacity development, Exchange of technical expertise and partnership to strengthen both of the institution.

A high-level meeting between BWW and WSSCM held at Islamabad. The meeting was chaired by Chief Executive Officer WSSCM Shahid Khan. The delegation was led by Director of Innovation Development and Sustainability Gabor Brandstatter while Andrea Ivanics and Timea Faust from the Customer Services and Billing Group, SCADA expert Pal Bartok, Martin

Bor from the IT Group, Mr. Emrah Engindeniz Focal Person of UN-Habitat, and Deputy Country Head Hameed Mumtaz included.

Manager Planning and Projects Imran Zaman briefed the delegates on company's customer services, billing and revenue, Information Technology, SCADA System and water supply systems. He highlighted that the company applied for the Europe Union funded Water Operators' Partnership Program under the Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance (GWOPA) to support sustainable development goals. After a competitive selection process, WSSCM and WASA Lahore from South Asia, and Budapest Waterworks from Europe were chosen for the program.

This program is funded by the European Union and implemented under UN-

Habitat's GWOPA, the initiative aims to enhance urban water supply and sanitation system, increase awareness and improve customer services. As part of the program, WSSCM staff are receiving technical support and international training to benefit from the expertise of global professionals.

Speaking on the occasion, CEO Shahid Khan stated that the implementation of the SCADA system will enable the automatic operation of tube wells. He also shared that a Non-Revenue Water (NRW) study is currently underway in Mardan with the support of Budapest Waterworks, aimed at curbing water theft. He added that the company is actively working to enhance its management systems, with most departments now digitized to promote a paperless environment.

Two killed, 20 injured as bus overturns F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: A passenger coach traveling from Gilgit to Rawalpindi overturned on the Hazara Motorway, resulting in death of two passengers and injuries to 20 others. Rescue sources said on Tuesday that the tragic road mishap occurred near Shah Maqsood due to the negligence of the driver.

Among the injured, seven are reported to be in critical condition and have been shifted to a trauma center for medical treatment. Police officials stated that the accident occurred after the driver reportedly fell asleep at the wheel. The coach was carrying a total of 48 passengers, including three foreign nationals—two Chinese citizens and one from the Czech Republic.

Rescue teams responded swiftly to the incident, providing first aid and transportation to nearby hospitals. Police were continuing to investigate the exact cause of the accident.

Wildfire ravages Haripur forests F.P. Report

HARIPUR: A massive wildfire broke out in the forests of Haripur district, spreading fear among the local population and destroying the much-celebrated Billion Tree Tsunami project on Tuesday.

Residents told media that the blaze, which has been raging for the past four hours, burning everything in its path in the forests of Nalla area in Upper Khanpur. Local residents have taken it upon themselves to battle the flames, as government fire-fighting teams have yet to arrive on the scene.

Despite their best efforts, the fire continues to spread uncontrollably across the mountainous terrain, consuming hundreds of acres of forestland. Eyewitnesses report that the fire department has been absent during this critical time, and no responsible authorities have stepped forward to address the situation so far.

The scale of the damage is extensive, with a large portion of the plantation under the Billion Tree Tsunami initiative now reduced to ashes. The incident has sparked concern and outrage, with locals demanding swift action and accountability for the environmental disaster.

Farmers hold protest F.P. Report

LARKANA: Pakistan Kisan Rabta Committee (PKRC) held a protest demonstration in front of the press club against the non-fixing wheat price, due to the preparation of the wheat crop.

This is the reason why the local traders are robbing the farmers by giving the price of wheat 2000 rupees per Maund with both hands, which is causing economic massacre of the farmers.

However, by abolishing the "Pasco" department established by the government for the purchase of wheat, the farmers have made the farmers helpless helpers, which has caused great damage to the farmers, which is being made barren so that agricultural land becomes barren and destroyed.

DDEO visits exam centers F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Deputy District Education Officer (DDEO) Kamalia Yawar Ali Khawaja visited the different Girls examination centers to review the arrangements for the ongoing 9th grade board examinations.

DDEO visited Center No. 506, Center No.507, Center No.509. On this Occasion, He inspected the examination halls, security, seating arrangements for students and other facilities. He directed the staff to ensure transparent conduct of examinations and not leave any room for cheating or mismanagement.

Residents ask resolution of land dispute through jirga

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The elders of village Damamo including Haji Abdul Hakeem Khan, Sher Muhammad Khan, Sher Baz Khan, and others have strongly denied the bribery allegations made by their opponents from Manzaray Tangay against the jirga that was responsible for resolving a land dispute.

Talking to local journalists and addressing a gathering of local residents in Damamo village here the other day, they said that the lands in village Damamo belonged to them and have been in their possession for generations.

They stated under oath that the jirga did not take even a single rupee in bribes and that the allegations were baseless and fabricated. They emphasized that the jirga held 124 sessions, dedicating their valuable time to the matter. During this period, the jirga members even suffered a car accident in which they were injured, and their vehicle was badly damaged, yet they never asked for any compensation.

Following a Supreme Court verdict on the land ownership, and upon the request of their rival Malik Muhammad Sher Khan, the district administration formed a jirga to resolve the dispute between both parties. Both sides gave written consent that they would accept the jirga's decision. On March 15, 2017, during a meeting at Timergara Rest House in the presence of the then Deputy Commissioner of Lower Dir, both parties unanimously agreed to abide by the jirga's decision.

After several meetings, the jirga announced its verdict on March 25, 2019, in the presence of the district administration. However, the Manzaray Tangay eld-

ers refused to accept the decision and backed out.

The speakers emphasized that, following the Supreme Court verdict, disputes over lands in several areas of Lower Dir—such as Adenzai Ouch, Rabat Dara, and Malakand Dara—were successfully resolved through lasting solutions provided by similar jirgas. They urged the Manzaray Tangay elders to abandon stubbornness and uphold Pashtun traditions by accepting the jirga's decision.

AIOU education: Shahid Ali Khan Orakzai, Regional Director of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), has said that the university is committed to delivering quality education at the doorstep of students. "Currently, over 11,000 students are pursuing higher education under the supervision of the regional office in Dir", he told local journalists at Timergara here on Tuesday, during a surprise visit to the examination hall at Government Centennial Model High School, Timergara.

Orakzai emphasized that providing maximum facilities to students remains the top priority of AIOU, and all available resources at the regional office were being utilized toward this goal.

He further stated that more than 650 tutors from the districts of Malakand, Lower Dir, Upper Dir, and Chitral were playing a key role in the success of the admission campaign and in improving literacy rates efforts which would be further enhanced. He added that AIOU was offering scholarships to poor, needy, and deserving students, and assured that all obstacles in the timely delivery of textbooks will soon be resolved.

20 women injured in BISP fund distribution

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: As many as 20 women injured in a stampede occurred during Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) fund distribution at Government Boys School No#2 Nowshera Cantonment, on Tuesday.

Rescue 1122's control room dispatched two ambulances with medical teams from Rescue Station 77 to the scene. The medical teams provided first aid to the injured women at the site. All injured women received prompt medical attention from Rescue 1122's medical teams.

District Emergency

Officer Malik Ashfaq Hussain instructed Rescue 1122 Nowshera to station an ambulance at the site to handle any potential emergencies. The incident highlights the importance of crowd management and safety measures during public events.

Afghan ringleader of notorious robbery gang arrested: An Afghan national leading a notorious inter-provincial robbery gang involved in looting and murder has been arrested in the Nowshera district, police confirmed on Tuesday.

The Akora Khattak Police apprehended the ringleader, responsible for a

recent armed robbery targeting a local textile trader. During the heist, three suspects allegedly snatched Rs. 3 million and fatally shot the trader's driver just days before Eid.

The Afghan gang leader, who had been residing in Akora Khattak, was arrested along with key evidence, including the pistol used in the crime, stolen mobile phones, and a motorcycle. All three suspects, including the arrested ringleader, are wanted by Punjab Police in connection with at least 14 cases of robbery and violent crimes. Raids were continued to apprehend the remaining two accomplices.

Livestock disease outbreak; camps set up

F.P. Report

ZHOB: As the livestock disease – Foot and Mouth (FMD) hit many parts of the bordering district Zhob, the Livestock and Dairy Development Department organized numerous of free veterinary camps in remote areas, were according to the officials thousands of livestock have been vaccinated and free veterinary medicines have also been provided to the livestock keepers.

Under the supervision of District Livestock Officer Dr Naseebullah Kakar, the camps have been set up at rural veterinary health facilities and in the disease control areas - Abdullah Zai and Mandokhel of the district.

Dr Naseebullah Kakar tells journalist Rafiullah Mandokhel, that the camps have been organized in view of the rapidly spreading foot-and-mouth disease, or FMD, in the district. Dr Dad Khan Mandokhel, Dr. Karim Dad Babar, and other veterinary staff participated in the free veterinary medical and vaccination camps.

"The camps have been organized in the Gustoi, Sambaza, Mandokhel area,



Abdullah Zai area, Garda Babar, Khosti area, Murgha Kibzai, and bordering Qamar Din Karez area, while in various dairy farms of the city, cattle have also been protected from diseases and sprayed with disinfectants," adding that veterinary medicines were dispatched to the Sambaza area through the district administration and the Frontier Corps Balochistan.

The experts say foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease of livestock that has a significant economic impact. The disease affects cloven-hoofed animals, such as cattle, sheep, and goats. The characteristic

sign in FMD-infected animals is blisters. These are apparent in the mouths and hooves of infected animals—especially in the soft tissue immediately above the hoof and between the two toes that form the hoof.

According to District Livestock Officer Dr Naseebullah Kakar, the livestock sector plays an important role in the rural economy in poverty-hit Balochistan. Livestock rearing is the primary source of livelihood, as the rural economy is heavily reliant on livestock. In Zhob the total number of livestock is around three million, while the number of sheep and goats is 2.3 million.

Traders demand reopening of Angoor Adda crossing

F.P. Report

WANA: A critical trade gateway between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Angoor Adda border gate has remained shut for an alarming 17 months, creating widespread economic distress in region.

Once a bustling hub of cross-border trade and employment, the continued closure of the gate has brought local business activity to a standstill, leaving thousands jobless and resulting in financial losses worth billions of rupees.

Local traders, laborers, and residents of the area are bearing the brunt of the clo-

sure, with nearly 7,000 workers ranging from daily wage earners to hotel owners—now unemployed. Saif-ur-Rehman Wazir, President of the District Chamber of Commerce and Industry, highlighted that the prolonged shutdown has not only harmed the livelihoods of thousands but also dealt a severe blow to the national economy. The ripple effects of this economic paralysis are evident in the growing number of children forced out of school due to their families' financial hardships.

Meanwhile, sources report that Afghan business

leaders, including those from the Urogoon community, are in ongoing discussions with senior officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, aiming to facilitate the reopening of the gate. These negotiations, now stretching into their third day, are being viewed with cautious optimism by stakeholders on both sides of the border.

Local business representatives and community members are now urging the federal and provincial governments to treat the Angoor Adda gate on par with other operational border points like Torkham, Chaman, and Ghulam Khan.



Ukrainians mourn Sumy strike victims as Russia denies targeting civilians

KYIV (AFP): Residents of the Ukrainian city of Sumy grieved the victims of one of the deadliest attacks of the war as Russia denied targeting civilians and US President Donald Trump resumed his onslaught against Ukraine's leader. A day after two missiles killed at least 35 people, people laid flowers beside a destroyed university building as workers dug through the rubble.

"We used to walk here all the time," said Igor Koloshchuk, stood by the makeshift memorial with his wife Tetyana. "We came to pay our respects," Tetyana said, adding she felt "shock, incomprehension, and probably hatred." Authorities said the dead included two boys aged 11 and 17. But Russia said its missiles hit a meeting of army commanders, accusing Ukraine of using civilians as a "human shield".

Russia's attack drew international condemnation. The US president -- who is pushing for a ceasefire -- called it a "horrible thing" and a "mistake" by Russia's President Vladimir Putin, but also targeted Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky. Trump -- who had a blazing White House row with Zelensky six weeks ago -- said the Ukrainian leader shared the blame for "millions of people dead" with Putin, who ordered the February 2022 invasion, and former US president Joe Biden. "Let's say Putin number one, but let's say Biden, who had no idea what the hell he was doing, number two, and Zelensky." Trump said during a meeting with El Salvador's president. Zelensky was "always looking to purchase missiles", Trump said. "When you start a war, you got to know that you can win the war," Trump said. "You don't start a war against somebody that's 20 times your size, and then hope that people give you some missiles."

Commenting on the Sumy strike for the first time, Russia's defence ministry said its army launched two ballistic Iskander-M missiles at "the place of a meeting of command staff", claiming to have killed 60 Ukrainian soldiers. The Kremlin denied targeting civilians or making



any kind of "mistake". "Our army hits only military and military-related targets," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

The defence ministry appeared to concede there were civilian casualties, but blamed Ukraine. "The Kyiv regime continues to use the Ukrainian population as a human shield, placing military facilities and holding events with the participation of soldiers in the centre of a densely populated city," the ministry said. Russia has made similar accusations during the war. Conservative independent estimates say however that thousands of civilians have died as Russian missiles have hit Ukrainian apartment blocks, hospitals, schools, train stations and other civilian areas. "Only completely deranged scum can do something like this," Zelensky said of the Sumy strikes. Sumy's residents recalled the horror of the strikes.

"It was chaos. There were mountains of corpses," recalled Artem Selianyn, a combat medic, who ran from his home to help, despite his family's flat being severely damaged in the attack. The 47-year-old said one of the first victims he treated was a young woman working at a mobile coffee shop who was bleeding from an artery after her leg was hit by shrapnel. "My shoes were covered in blood. I haven't cleaned them yet, it's

the blood of the wounded," he said. Kyiv said the attacks showed that Russia had no intention of halting its invasion, after Putin last month rejected a US call for a ceasefire.

Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff held talks with Putin in Saint Petersburg that the Kremlin called "extremely helpful and very effective". Ukraine's European allies strongly condemned the Russian attack however. France's foreign ministry said the attack -- along with another this month that killed nine children and nine adults in Kryvyi Rig -- constituted "war crimes". Germany's chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz also described the attack as "a serious war crime". The Kremlin criticised Merz for saying he was open to supplying Ukraine with Taurus missiles. "He is agitating on the side of toughening his position and in favour of various steps that can -- and will -- inevitably lead to a further escalation of the Ukraine situation," Peskov said.

While Trump again criticised Zelensky, a senior official in Kyiv told AFP that Ukraine-US talks in Washington last week on a proposed mineral deal had gone "constructively". Separate Russian strikes on the northeastern region of Kharkiv killed four elderly residents, officials said. Russia said Ukrainian drone strikes on border villages in the Kursk region killed three people.

Search for 5 missing from capsized boat suspended

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (AP): The search has been suspended for five people missing after a boat capsized during a "failed suspected smuggling venture" off of Florida's Atlantic Coast, the US Coast Guard said. Coast Guard crews rescued four people from the ocean some 29 miles (25 nautical miles) off of St. Lucie Inlet, which is 46 miles (74 kilometers) north of West Palm Beach. They also recovered the body of one person.

After the rescue, a survivor reported the vessel departed Bimini with nine people, and it capsized, the Coast Guard said. Another boater contacted the Coast Guard about the capsized boat. Crews searched for about seven hours, and covered more than 1,240 square miles (3,212 square kilometers).

"The decision to suspend a search is always difficult and never taken lightly," said Chief Warrant Officer Edgardo Insignares, a Coast Guard Sector Miami search and rescue mission coordinator. "Smugglers routinely exploit vulnerable aliens for profit while putting their lives at risk aboard overloaded and unseaworthy vessels. These dangerous and illegal voyages must not be attempted. Safe, legal and orderly migration saves lives. Don't take to the sea." Martin County Fire Rescue officials told news outlets that three of the four rescued from the water had injuries that were not life-threatening.

Former Colorado deputy gets 3 years in prison

DENVER (AP): A former Colorado sheriff's deputy convicted of killing a 22-year-old man in distress who called 911 for help was sentenced to three years in prison, the maximum sentence, by a judge who said the shooting was about power.

Andrew Buen was convicted in February of criminally negligent homicide in the 2022 death of Christian Glass, which drew national attention and prompted calls to reform how authorities respond to people with mental health problems. Prosecutors alleged that Buen needlessly escalated a standoff with Glass, who showed signs of a mental health crisis and refused orders to get out of his SUV near Silver Plume, a small, former mining town along Interstate 70 in the Rocky Mountains west of Denver.

His parents and the agencies involved reached a \$19 million settlement that included crisis intervention training for officers responding to people in distress. Judge Catherine Cheroutes said Buen's sentence needed to address both the loss of Glass and the damage done to the community by the shooting.

"I think this was about power. It wasn't a mistake. It was about, 'you need to listen to me because I'm in charge,'" she said. She said she believed Buen's family and supporters that he was a "shirt-off-your-back kind of guy" but said he acted differently when he put on a uniform and had a gun. Buen, wearing an orange jail uniform, apologized to the Glass family, dabbing his eyes with a tissue with his handcuffed hands as he spoke at a podium. Glass's family had questioned whether any remorse Buen might show would be sincere. Buen, his voice shaking, said they had every right to feel the way they do. He said his actions had escalated the standoff and told the judge he wasn't "owed" anything.

"There are a million things I should have done better that night," he said before he was sentenced. Sally Glass told Cheroutes that Buen had acted like a "bully" toward her son, a creative and gentle artist who was born in his father's native New Zealand. "He met evil that night and there was no compassion," she said. Simon Glass said his family's grief was compounded at first by authorities initially describing his son as the aggressor in the standoff, which the sheriff's office later apologized for.

Trump-wary EU has energy security dilemma

PARIS/BERLIN (Reuters): More than three years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Europe's energy security is fragile. US liquefied natural gas helped to plug the Russian supply gap in Europe during the 2022-2023 energy crisis. But now that President Donald Trump has rocked relationships with Europe established after World War Two, and turned to energy as a bargaining chip in trade negotiations, businesses are wary that reliance on the United States has become another vulnerability.

Against this backdrop, executives at major EU firms have begun to say what would have been unthinkable a year ago: that importing some Russian gas, including from Russian state giant Gazprom, could be a good idea. That would require another major policy shift given that Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 made the European Union pledge to end Russian energy imports by 2027.

Europe has limited options. Talks with LNG giant Qatar for more gas have stalled, and while the deployment of renewables has accelerated, the rate is not fast enough to allow the EU to feel secure. "If there is a reasonable peace in Ukraine, we could go back to flows of 60 billion cubic metres, maybe 70, annually, including LNG," Didier Holleaux, executive vice-president at France's Engie, told Reuters in an interview.

The French state partly owns Engie, which used to be among the biggest buyers of Gazprom's gas. Holleaux said Russia could supply around 20-25% of EU needs, down from 40% before the war. The head of French oil major TotalEnergies, Patrick Pouyanne, has warned Europe against over-relying on US gas. "We need to diversify, many routes, not over-rely on one or two," Pouyanne told Reuters. Total is a large exporter of US LNG and also sells Russian LNG from private firm Novatek.

"Europe will never go back to importing 150 billion cubic meters from Russia like before the war ... but I would bet maybe 70 bcm," Pouyanne added. France, which produces large amounts of nuclear power, already has one of the most diversified energy supplies in Europe, Germany relied heavily on cheap Russian gas to help drive its manufacturing sector until the Ukraine war and has fewer options.

In Leuna Chemical Park, one of Germany's biggest chemical clusters hosting plants of Dow Chemical and Shell among others, some makers say Russian

gas should return quickly. Russia used to cover 60% of local needs, mainly through the Nord Stream pipeline, which was blown up in 2022. "We are in a severe crisis and can't wait," said Christof Guenther, managing director of InfraLeuna, the operator of the park.

He said the German chemical industry has cut jobs for five quarters in a row, something not seen for decades. "Reopening pipelines would reduce prices more than any current subsidy programmes," he said. "It's a taboo topic," Guenther added, saying many colleagues agreed on the need to go back to Russian gas. Almost a third of Germans voted for Russia-friendly parties in the February federal election.

In the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the east German region where the Nord Stream pipeline comes ashore after running from Russia under the Baltic Sea, 49% of Germans want a return to Russian gas supplies, a poll carried out by the Forsa institute found. "We need Russian gas, we need cheap energy - no matter where it comes from," said Klaus Paur, managing director of Leuna-Harze, a mid-sized petrochemical maker at the Leuna Park. "We need Nord Stream 2 because we have to keep energy costs in check." The industry wants the federal government to find cheap energy, said Daniel Keller, economy minister for the state of Brandenburg - home to the Schwedt refinery, co-owned by Russian oil firm Rosneft but held in German government trusteeship.

"We can imagine resuming the intake or transport of Russian oil after peace is established in Ukraine," Keller said. US gas covered 16.7% of EU imports last year - behind Norway with 33.6% and Russia with 18.8%. Russia's share will drop below 10% this year after Ukraine shut pipelines. The remaining flows are mainly LNG from Novatek. The EU is preparing to buy more US LNG as Trump wants Europe to lower its trade surplus with the United States. "For sure, we will need more LNG," EU trade commissioner Maros Sefcovic said last week.

The tariff war has strengthened Europe's concern about reliance on US gas, said Tatiana Mitrova, a research fellow at Columbia University's Centre on Global Energy Policy. "It's becoming increasingly difficult to regard US LNG as a neutral commodity: at a certain point it might become a geopolitical tool," Mitrova added.

China accuses US of launching cyberattacks

BEIJING (Reuters): Chinese police in the north-eastern city of Harbin have accused the United States National Security Agency (NSA) of launching "advanced" cyberattacks during the Asian Winter Games in February, targeting essential industries.

Police added three alleged NSA agents to a wanted list and also accused the University of California and Virginia Tech of being involved in the attacks after carrying out investigations, according to a report by state news agency Xinhua. The NSA agents were identified by Xinhua as Kathryn A. Wilson, Robert J. Snelling and Stephen W. Johnson. The three were also found to have "repeatedly carried out cyber attacks on China's critical information infrastructure and participated in cyber attacks on Huawei and other enterprises."

It did not specify how the two American universities were involved. The US Embassy in China did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. The detailed allegations come as the world's two largest economies spiral deeper into a trade war that has already spurred travel warnings for Chinese

tourists going to the US and halted imports of US films into China. "The US National Security Agency (NSA) launched cyber attacks against important industries such as energy, transportation, water conservancy, communications, and national defence research institutions in Heilongjiang province," Xinhua said, citing the Harbin city public security bureau. The attacks had "the intention of sabotaging China's critical information infrastructure, causing social disorder, and stealing important confidential information," it added.

Xinhua said the NSA operations took place during the Winter Games and were "suspected of activating specific pre-installed backdoors" in Microsoft Windows operating systems on specific devices in Heilongjiang. In order to cover its tracks, the NSA purchased IP addresses in different countries and "anonymously" rented a large number of network servers including in Europe and Asia," Xinhua said. The NSA intended to use cyberattacks to steal the personal data of participating athletes, the news agency said, adding that the cyber attacks reached a peak from

the first ice hockey game on February 3. The attacks targeted information systems such as the Asian Winter Games registration system and stored "sensitive information about the identities of relevant personnel of the event," Xinhua said.

The US routinely accuses Chinese state-backed hackers of launching attacks against its critical infrastructure and government bodies. Last month, Washington announced indictments against a slew of alleged Chinese hackers who targeted the US Defense Intelligence Agency, the US Department of Commerce, and the foreign ministries of Taiwan, South Korea, India, and Indonesia. Beijing denies all involvement in overseas cyber espionage. After years of being accused by Western governments of cyberattacks and industrial espionage, in the past two years several Chinese organisations and government organs have accused the United States and its allies of similar behaviour. In December, China said it found and dealt with two US cyber attacks on Chinese tech firms to "steal trade secrets" since May 2023, but did not name the agency involved.

Britain sends Ukraine second part of \$3b war loan

LONDON (Reuters): Britain sent Ukraine 752 million pounds (\$990 million) to buy air defences and artillery, part of a broader \$50 billion international loan programme backed by frozen Russian assets, Britain's government said. "The world is changing before our eyes, reshaped by global instability, including Russian aggression in Ukraine," finance minister Rachel Reeves said.

The Group of Seven advanced economies agreed an outline lending package in October 2024 - before the election of Donald Trump as president changed the United States' approach to the conflict - and Reeves and her Ukrainian counterpart

Serhiy Marchenko finalised details of Britain's contribution in March. Pressured by the United States' increased reluctance to provide security in Europe, Britain's government announced in February that it would raise defence spending from about 2.3% of national income to 2.5% by 2027 and 3% some time after 2029. Payment to Ukraine is the second of three instalments totalling 2.26 billion pounds. The first was on March 6 and the final part will be paid next year. Defence minister John Healey said Britain would give Ukraine 4.5 billion pounds of support this year and that the funds would be used to purchase air defences, artillery and

spare parts for vehicles and other equipment.

Other British aid includes help by its defence ministry to procure radar systems, anti-tank mines and hundreds of thousands of drones. Two Russian ballistic missiles hit the centre of the northern Ukrainian city of Sumy. Kyiv said the attack killed 34 people and wounded 117. Russia's defence ministry said it had targeted a gathering of Ukrainian commanding officers in the city. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was appalled by the attack. Support in Britain for Ukraine's military operations remains high across the public and most major political parties.

US lawmakers look to boost Ukraine, sanction Russia

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Democrats in the US House of Representatives introduced legislation to bolster Ukraine in its war with Russia, another effort to pressure the Trump administration to back the Kyiv government, sources familiar with the effort said.

Representative Greg Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, introduced the Ukraine Support Act, which would provide security and reconstruction funding for Ukraine and impose steep sanctions on Russia, according to a copy of the bill seen by Reuters.

The bill, which has not yet been made public, was filed two weeks after Republicans and Democrats in the Senate introduced stiff sanctions that would be imposed on Russia if it refuses to engage in good-faith peace negotiations with Ukraine. The efforts in Congress reflect

increasing concern among lawmakers from both parties about Ukraine's fate, as Republican President Donald Trump has taken a more conciliatory stance toward Moscow since starting his second term on January 20.

Trump, who is trying to broker a peace agreement, has repeatedly blamed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy for the three-year-old conflict even though it began with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. He did so again, with a complaint about Kyiv asking for missiles. Congressional aides who helped write the House bill said their goal was to influence negotiations on any Ukraine-related legislation eventually passed by Congress. Parts of the bill were expected to appear in any final broad Ukraine package even if the measure itself cannot find a way for-

ward in the Republican-majority House.

"This bill obviously will be part of the legislative conversation," one said. The effort was given additional urgency, when two Russian ballistic missiles hit the center of the northern Ukrainian city of Sumy as residents attended Palm church services. Kyiv said the attack killed 34 people and wounded 117, dozens of them civilians. Russia's defence ministry said it had targeted a gathering of Ukrainian commanding officers in the city. Trump administration officials have been increasingly at odds over how to settle the Ukraine-Russia conflict, Reuters has reported, with some suggesting Ukraine should cede territory to Russia and others favoring more direct support to Ukraine.

The House bill is divided into three sections and

would provide more support than the Ukraine legislation in the Senate. The first affirms support for Ukraine and NATO and includes measures to help Ukraine rebuild, including creating the position of a special coordinator for Ukraine reconstruction. The second provides security assistance for Kyiv, including direct loans and military financing, and the third would impose stiff sanctions and export controls on Russia, including on financial institutions, oil and mining and Russian officials.

While many members of Congress from both parties have strongly supported Ukraine during the three-year conflict, many of Trump's closest Republican allies have grown cooler since his party took control of the House two years ago, and then the White House and Senate in January.

FEMA denies Washington state disaster relief from bomb cyclone

WASHINGTON (AP): The Federal Emergency Management Agency has denied Washington state's request for emergency relief funds to help repair an estimated \$34 million in damage from a deadly bomb cyclone storm system in November, according to Gov. Bob Ferguson.

Ferguson said in a news release that the state's January application for assistance was denied in a letter he received. The state's application had met all of the criteria necessary to qualify, he said. "This is another troubling example of the federal government withholding funding," Ferguson, a Democrat, said. "Washington communities have been waiting for months for the resources they need to fully recover

from last winter's devastating storms, and this decision will cause further delay. We will appeal."

The November storm system battered the state with strong winds and rain that caused widespread damage and power outages, and toppled trees that killed at least two people. It was considered a "bomb cyclone," which occurs when a cyclone intensifies rapidly. Bomb cyclones have been associated with major weather events across the country including hurricanes in recent years. After Washington's storms, then-Gov. Jay Inslee issued a disaster declaration in 11 counties - including where Seattle is located - and filed the application for disaster relief with FEMA to repair damage to public highways,

public utilities and electrical power systems.

FEMA's letter denying the application didn't give an explanation and said the assistance was "not warranted." The state has 30 days to appeal. The denial comes as FEMA's future is in question. President Donald Trump has questioned whether to disband it entirely and give money directly to states to handle disasters. Trump has created a council to study what to do with FEMA and whether to get rid of it.

Earlier this month FEMA said it was ending a key program that has been used by communities across the country to pay for projects designed to help them prepare for natural disasters like flooding and fires. Under the Biden adminis-

tration, the agency was instrumental in responding to a growing number of disasters linked to climate change. The agency also tried to address historical inequalities in how aid is dispersed after disasters.

FEMA helps respond to disasters when local leaders request a presidential emergency declaration, a signal that the damage is beyond the state's ability to handle on its own. FEMA can reimburse governments for recovery efforts such as debris removal, and it gives stopgap financial assistance to individual residents. Washington's preliminary damage estimate of \$34 million will likely increase as the state works with counties to update their information for an appeal, Ferguson said.

Death toll in Dominican Republic disaster nears 250

SANTO DOMINGO (Reuters): The death toll at last week's nightclub roof collapse in the capital of the Dominican Republic rose to 231, the Minister of Interior and Police said, as families of victims began filing lawsuits against the nightclub's owners.

Holy Week will be different this year in the Caribbean tourist destina-

tion, with multiple events and activities canceled and beach parties banned, according to the Dominican Navy. Municipal authorities have also suspended the traditional Easter activities that take place in public squares and parks.

Relatives of Virgilio Rafael Cruz, one of the victims who died on April 8,

have begun a legal action against the establishment's owners, the family's lawyer told local media. Other families have also indicated they will file lawsuits. Jet Set nightclub is owned by Antonio Espaillet, the second-largest broadcaster in the Dominican Republic and owner of 50 radio stations. "From the very beginning we have been

collaborating fully and transparently with authorities," Espaillet said in a video posted on Instagram shortly after the incident.

Local media and ticketing sites indicate the club could accommodate between 700 and 1,000 people, though there is no official confirmation on how many were present at the time of the disaster.

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Rip-off claims hoodwinking of US public

THE US administration has long accused foreign countries of taking advantage of the United States at the expense of domestic jobs and US industries. In US President Donald Trump's view, the US has received less return value and resources for what it has given the world in terms of the amount of money, trade preferences and other resources. "They're ripping us off" is his constant refrain.

It is this fabricated premise of a long-standing grievance that has been the launchpad for his administration's sweeping "Liberation Day" tariffs targeting almost all foreign imports, and which have set up a global trade war and promise to upend the decades-old global trading order.

Though the US leader hit a 90-day pause button on many of the tariffs after his radical power play resulted in US stocks volatility, bond yields surging and recession fears intensifying, his administration's haughty demolition job on the global trade system is far from over, not least because there is still a 10 percent tariff on virtually all exports to the United States. This provides leverage for the US administration to extract concessions in terms of the real trade war it is waging against China and in reshaping the bilateral relations with the US' other trade partners in favor of the US by extorting undue concessions.

One of the aims of the US administration is to use the tariffs to close, if not reverse, the trade deficits with nearly all of the US' trade partners. The preoccupation with trade deficits stems from a warped idea that they are proof that the US has been exploited by other countries. This has also made the US president and his trade advisers wrongly claim that the current rules governing global trade have put the US at a distinct disadvantage.

This is contrary to the belief of mainstream economists that a trade deficit simply means a country is importing more goods and services from a given country than it is exporting to that market, and has nothing to do with the state of a country's economic health.

While bemoaning surging deficits in the US' trade of goods with other countries, the US administration has deliberately ignored the fact that the US sells far more services than it buys from other countries, which means the US' service sector enjoys a trade surplus with almost every trading partner around the world, including those at the center of the ongoing trade war such as China and the European Union. The service sector includes retailers, software, internet and telecom providers, movie studios, as well as health care providers, law firms and accounting agencies. According to the US Commerce Department, the US' trade surplus in services rose to \$293 billion in 2024, up 5 percent from 2023, and 25 percent from 2022.

Trade in services, especially finance, legal, entertainment, and high-tech services, has become a major source of US economic strength. In 2023, US services exports were worth more than \$1 trillion, accounting for 13 percent of the global total, and they expanded a further 8 percent last year, according to the World Trade Organization. "Global trade in services ... is booming. And there is a clear winner on this front: the United States," wrote Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, WTO director-general.

Moreover, Trump's claim that foreign countries steal US manufacturing jobs through unfair trade practices, and that only sweeping tariffs will help the US reverse the decades-long decline in manufacturing and create related jobs is out of step with historical realities.

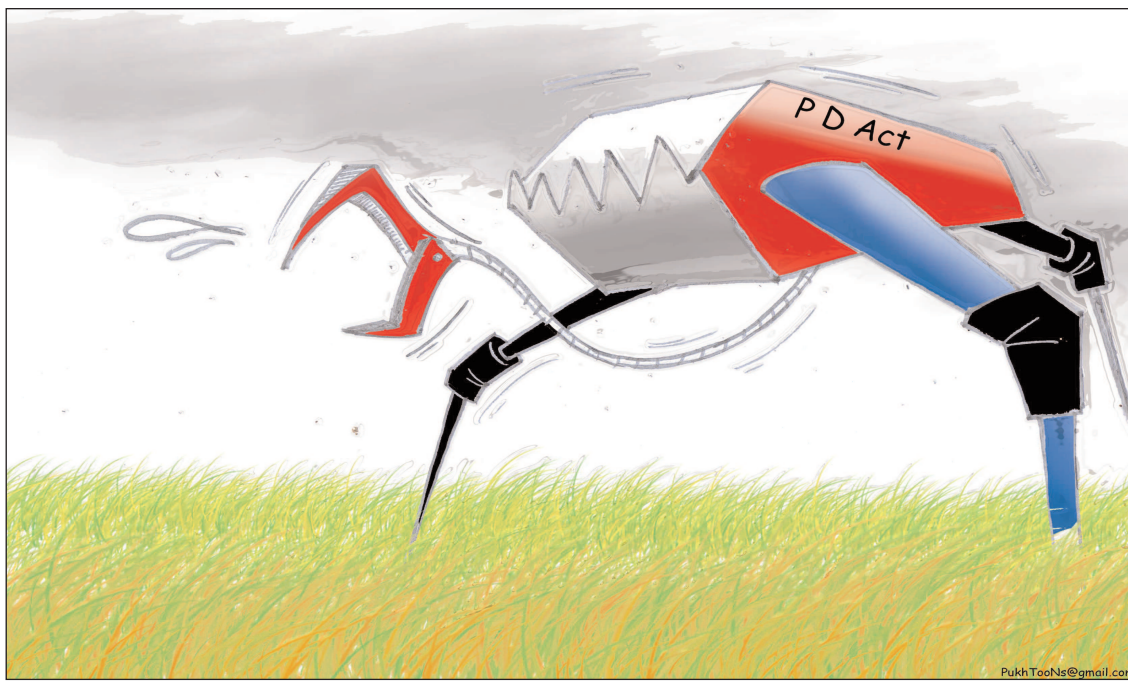
This is because service sector jobs have long driven the US economy — the sector employed 57 percent of private sector non-farm workers in 1939, when the US Labor Department started tracking US employment, and today, service sector businesses account for 84 percent of those jobs.

The modern manufacturing reality suggests that, even if US companies do reshore, the cost of labor in the US means it is more economically viable for machines to do the work than humans.

The US is not getting ripped off by anybody. The problem is the US has been living beyond its means for decades. It consumes more than it produces. It has outsourced its manufacturing and borrowed money in order to have a higher standard of living than it's entitled to based on its productivity. Rather than being "cheated", the US has been taking a free ride on the globalization train. The US should stop whining about itself being a victim in global trade and put an end to its capricious and destructive behavior. Instead, it should commit itself to working with its trading partners to establish a fair, free and WTO-centered multilateral trading system that is in line with the times.

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Gaza's impossible choice: extermination or forced transfer

Osama Al-Sharif

THE second chapter of Israel's war on Gaza, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launched after the end of the first phase of the ceasefire agreement last month, is not about returning the Israeli captives, alive or dead. The Israeli public knows this by now, and so do thousands of Israeli reservists who, for the first time in the history of the state, are refusing to report for duty.

The second chapter of the war is also not about destroying Hamas, as Netanyahu claims. Much of the militant group's military capacity had been destroyed many months before. The movement has been decapitated both militarily and politically. This is the conclusion of many of Israel's generals. And the resumption of the war is not about reoccupying the entire enclave. That is a secondary objective.

Netanyahu is now seeking to fulfill a more sinister goal — the forced transfer of millions of Palestinians in Gaza. By cutting off all kinds of aid for more than a month now, by indiscriminately bombing tent camps to kill as many civilians as possible, and forcing hundreds of thousands of hapless people to move to the beaches of Gaza at Al-Mawasi, Israel is physically choking off the Palestinians and forcing them to embrace the only choice they have if they want to stay alive: leave.

We do not know what happened during Netanyahu's unscheduled and rushed visit to the White House two weeks ago. Israeli reports suggest that the Israeli leader was summoned to meet

President Donald Trump, but not to talk about recently imposed US tariffs on Israeli products — and it now seems that it was not to suspend the renewed attacks on Gaza. The talks failed to resolve the deadlock regarding the release of Israeli captives held by Hamas.

Trump wanted to inform Netanyahu that the US has decided to negotiate with Iran to reach a new agreement regarding Tehran's nuclear program. Netanyahu was told to stay put and not interfere or disrupt the new round of negotiations. The Israeli media announced that a stunned Netanyahu left Washington empty-handed.

But the Israeli leader did not leave empty-handed. He was not told by the Americans to end the war in Gaza or to embrace a new ceasefire deal. In fact, after his return to Israel, Netanyahu told Israelis that he was going to win the war and bring the hostages back. How to achieve both remains unclear.

Indeed, tens of thousands of Israelis who protested last Saturday do not believe him. And now, while mired in legal and political challenges, Netanyahu is facing an unprecedented mutiny in the armed forces.

Still, he sees a rare opportunity to carry out the scheme of all time: to empty Gaza of its inhabitants and reclaim the enclave. His army has leveled the southern governorate of Rafah and is now moving into parts of Khan Younis. His Minister of Defense, Israel Katz, boasts that Israel has now

created buffer zones in all of northern Gaza, and has created a new military corridor in the south that has reduced the enclave's area by one-third. There is more to come, he says. Katz claims these buffer zones — created through the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians — are meant to force Hamas into accepting a deal to return the captives.

Ironically, Hamas made such an offer weeks ago. More recently, in Cairo, Hamas said that it was willing to free all Israeli captives in return for ending the war and the complete withdrawal of Israel. Netanyahu said no.

Israel is moving from carrying out a genocidal war to total extermination. And why not? It has the backing of the US president and most US lawmakers. Instead of calling on a wanted war criminal to cease, the US is welcoming Netanyahu with open arms. Furthermore, those who dare investigate Israel for war crimes and genocide, such as the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, are threatened with sanctions.

The second chapter of the Gaza war is about the threat of extermination to force millions to leave. The starvation, the indiscriminate bombings, the destruction of hospitals, the bombing of tents to kill as many civilians as possible, the leveling of entire governorates, and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands will undoubtedly achieve that egregious objective.

What is mind-boggling is that the world knows exactly what the end game

in Gaza is about. Still, the failure to stop this crime of the century is astounding. The world has been unable to force Israel to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza for weeks now. The UN Security Council is deaf and blind, allowing the deliberate execution of 15 medics by Israel to go unpunished. The ICC and the ICJ have become silent witnesses to this blood-bath.

The case against what Israel is doing in Gaza is impossible to defend or justify. And yet, while millions protest weekly around the world against the genocide, no government has dared challenge or punish Israel.

Never mind that international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions, the laws of war, and Security Council resolutions have all been trampled by a rogue regime. Never mind that all governments are now directly or indirectly made into accessories in this crime of the century. The outcome of this bloody saga will haunt the world for decades.

Israel may succeed in forcing an exhausted, starving, and grieving population to leave Gaza, not by free choice, but to survive. How and where will they go? Netanyahu has no answer, nor does he care. He will throw the fate of millions at the feet of the world. This is a blemished insult to humanity.

Netanyahu's sinister scheme can still be stopped. But what has been lacking so far is the resolve of world leaders. There is no indication that the current trajectory will change. Palestinians in Gaza are now at the mercy of a ruthless killer.

Bibi the peacemaker: how starvation, bombs became his tools for 'stability'

Hani Hazaimah

AS the world watches in horror, Israel's war on Gaza rages on with unrelenting brutality. What began as a stated military campaign has morphed into a systematic effort to destroy an entire population's will to exist. The suffering is unimaginable. The destruction is relentless. And at the center of it all stands Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose policies have made starvation, bombardment, and forced displacement the cornerstones of his so-called strategy for "stability."

Netanyahu has repeatedly obstructed diplomatic efforts, vetoed ceasefire initiatives, and weaponized humanitarian aid. What he frames as self-defense has become a campaign of annihilation. In recent weeks, the world has witnessed the unthinkable: the deliberate targeting and destruction of hospitals, medical staff, and ambulances in Gaza. The few functioning health facilities that remain are overwhelmed, operating without electricity, medical supplies, or safe corridors. Entire wards — neonatal units, intensive care, surgery — have been turned to rubble. The international humanitarian principle of medical neutrality has been trampled underfoot with impunity.

This is not a war against Hamas. It is a war against the very idea of Palestinian identity. By turning Gaza's healthcare system into a battlefield, Netanyahu is not

merely violating international law, he is challenging the conscience of humanity. Through siege, starvation, and bombings, he aims to erase a people. But history tells us that such attempts always fail.

The memory of the 1948 Nakba — when over 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes — and the displacement following the 1967 war are not distant events relegated to textbooks. They are living history, woven into the collective Arab consciousness. These traumas, still raw and unresolved, are the context within which today's horrors are unfolding. Palestinians remember. And they resist.

Netanyahu's miscalculation lies in his assumption that brute force can extinguish the Palestinian spirit. He underestimates the power of memory, resilience, and rootedness. He believes that if the suffering becomes unbearable, the people of Gaza will simply vanish — cross into Egypt, scatter into permanent exile, and relinquish their land. But this is not 1948. It is 2025. The world is watching live. Every airstrike, every bloodied child, every collapsing hospital is documented and broadcast globally. Gaza's pain has become a shared human experience. Its people, now symbols of endurance, have shown the world what it means to stand tall in the face of systematic erasure.

Netanyahu's strategy is not only morally reprehensible, it is also politically self-defeating. Every targeted hospital, every blockade that prevents food and medicine, further isolates Israel on the world stage. Traditional allies are wavering. Within Israel, the narrative of national security is being challenged by the families of hostages and soldiers who see the war dragging on without clear purpose — except, perhaps, to protect Netanyahu himself from mounting legal and political pressure.

Facing corruption charges and widespread public dissent, the Israeli leader has weaponized war as a political shield. It is an old tactic: stoke fear, provoke nationalism, distract from domestic failures. But this time, the cost is devastating — not only to Palestinians, but also to Israel's moral standing and long-term security.

And yet, much of the international community continues to offer only muted objections. World leaders speak of "both sides" even as one side demolishes entire neighborhoods, flattens hospitals, and turns children into orphans. Humanitarian agencies warn of famine and disease, but still, convoys are blocked, aid workers killed, and ceasefires undermined.

How many more hospitals must be bombed before the world speaks plainly? How many more infants

must die in incubators without electricity before we say: enough?

To the Arab world, this is a historic test. The tragedies of 1948 and 1967 must not be repeated. Gaza is not a buffer zone. It is home to over 2 million people — families, students, doctors, poets, children with dreams. They do not need pity. They need protection. They need political action, humanitarian aid, and justice.

This war is not about eliminating Hamas. It is about redefining the Palestinian question — reducing it to a humanitarian crisis rather than a political struggle for rights, land, and self-determination. But that effort, too, will fail. Because Palestinians are not a charity case. They are a people, with a history, a culture, and an unbreakable bond with their land.

Netanyahu should study the fate of empires that sought to erase indigenous peoples. From the crusaders to colonial powers, they all eventually left. But the people remained.

Palestinians will remain. That is not in question.

The question is whether the international community will stand with them before Gaza is reduced entirely to ashes. Before the moral stain becomes permanent. Before the world's silence becomes complicity.

It is time for a clear, unified voice from humanity. Palestine belongs to its people. And no prime minister — however ruthless, however relentless — can change that.

Is America's Suez crisis moment under way?

Gavin Esler

LARRY Summers, who was US Treasury secretary in Bill Clinton's administration, has a sharp tongue and a very sharp mind. Mr Summers has been reflecting on US President Donald Trump's on-off-on-again tariff policies.

The latest extraordinary twist is suddenly to exempt Chinese-made smartphones and computers, products much loved by US consumers and hugely important for Apple, Dell and other US importers. But what, you may wonder, is the point of tariffs if the most important imports from Mr Trump's key target country — China — are suddenly exempted?

It's supposedly a "temporary" exemption, but as Mr Summers said of Mr Trump's various flip-flops: "I suspect the [Trump] administration stepped back because it saw a Suez moment approaching, with general lack of confidence in US financial assets spreading to the dollar."

Suez is a damning historical parallel. It was a self-inflicted disaster in which delusions of imperial power in Britain and France were finally shattered by reality.

In 1956, the British and French governments colluded with Israel to invade Egypt and seize the Suez Canal. They were forced to leave when the US (and most of the rest of the world) saw the military adventure as last-gasp imperial arrogance from two fading European nations with delusions of grandeur. Those European countries that once proverbially ruled "half the world" suddenly appeared more like middle-sized powers that had made a profound geostrategic gamble, and lost.

Mr Summers may, therefore, be astute in seeing this as a "Suez moment" not just for Mr Trump, but for the US itself. Are we witnessing a great power significantly overplaying its hand, embarrassing its friends and allies, and eventually being forced to retreat?

Predictions about Mr Trump's next moves are a fool's game. What we can say is that the US President backing down "temporarily" over tariffs on key Chinese imports shows a profound lack of strategic thinking about the policy itself. The smartphone reversal is even clearer evidence of bad planning than the bizarre tariffs on remote Antarctic islands inhabited only by penguins.

Mr Trump, critics say, is merely trying to make sense of his own supposed strategy, and backing down on some of the most significant imports of all.

About 300,000 Chinese workers around Zhengzhou in China make 80 per cent of Apple iPhones. The sensitivity of American consumers to threatened massive price rises on these most favoured products has forced the White House rethink. And that shows where the US President is most vulnerable. Mr Trump does not care

about consistency. He does not care about most foreign governments, the foreign media nor indeed about much of the American media, nor scholars, economists and those businesspeople and financial experts who think his policies are doomed. What he does care about is his image.

He fears ridicule at home and defiance abroad especially from strong players like China, plus the reaction of the bond market, the interests of donors, including America's tech and investment titans, and — in political terms — support from the "Maga" faithful.

Trump voters like affordable smartphones and laptops as much as the rest of us. The White House has been told explicitly by US tech companies that the tariffs on "Made in China" products will add hundreds of dollars to the cost of smartphones for the American consumer, but not for other consumers in other countries.

The Maga-faithful may have voted for Mr Trump to penalise the rising superpower of China, but — as expert after expert has tried to explain for some weeks — a high tariff policy is actually a tax on Americans themselves. That realisation may take some months to show up in the system, but unless Mr Trump's "temporary" pause on penalising China on key imports becomes more permanent, show up it will.

Mr Summers's acerbic comparison with the political failure of Britain and France in 1956, therefore, makes a profound point about a badly thought-out grand plan potentially leading to a sudden and humiliating reversal.

Of course, Mr Trump should never be underestimated. But neither should the ability of the American people to change course. More than a third of US voters were so turned off by politics in the 2024 presidential election that they did not even vote. But even the most apathetic voters will notice major price rises and the potential significant dislocation of the US economy if the Trump tariffs really bite. Will they blame China? Or their President?

And that's why Mr Summers's Suez quip may prove significant. Like the British and French in 1956, Mr Trump has made a hugely risky gamble to show the strength of a great power. It might work. But Mr Trump might instead learn the hard lessons of the British prime minister behind the Suez fiasco, Anthony Eden. When his Suez adventure failed, Mr Eden was humiliated. He resigned. Mr Trump, even if the tariff policy fails, will still be President until January 2029.

But Mr Eden ended his career with a warning. He said that if you break the eggs, you need to make the omelette. With tariffs, Mr Trump has broken the eggs. The evidence is that things are now merely scrambled.

Whispers of the Withering Green

(A Heartbreaking Monologue of a Plant)

Noshaba Naseem

*I am a plant, gentle and still,
Rooted in earth, with a silent will.
Once I danced in winds so clean,
Now I choke in skies unseen.
The air is thick, polluted, dark,
No more birds, no morning lark.
Air pollution steals my breath,
Each gust of wind smells like death.*

*Photochemical smog blinds the skies,
Even the sun avoids my eyes.
CFCs broke the ozone's shield,
Now burns the sun upon my field.
Water once clear, now stings my vein,
Soaked in chemicals, full of pain.
Water pollution kills my roots,
No more life, no more shoots.*

*Eutrophication clouds the lake,
Algae bloom for nature's sake.
But I, who thrive on balance true,
Now drown in green that once I knew.
Thermal pollution brings heat so wild,
Scorching rivers that once were mild.
Sediments flow, choking the stream,
Shattering every growing dream.*

*Herbicides fall like acid rain,
Turning leaves to lifeless grain.
Soil once rich, now dead and dry,
No nutrients left, no reason why.
Acid rain burns from skies above,
Kissing me without any love.
And tanneries dump their poison deep,
Into the water where my roots sleep.*

*I do not scream, I do not cry,
Yet every leaf asks - "Why, oh why?"
I clean your air, I feed your earth,
Yet suffer for your careless mirth.
O human soul, will you not see?
Without your green, you cease to be.
Revive the bond that once was pure,
Let nature live, let life endure.*

Writer is Botany 8th Semester student at Government Girls Degree College No. 1

As he lionizes a strongman, Trump flexes power over the law, top colleges and the media

ONLY three months into his new term, President Donald Trump is escalating a battle against institutions that challenge his strongman instincts, including the courts, the legal profession, elite education and the media.

The administration is projecting presidential authority in a broader and more overt way than any modern White House. Its expansive interpretation of statutes and questionable interpretations of judges' rulings is causing alarm about its impact on the rule of law, freedom of expression and the Constitution.

"There's something broken," Trump said in the Oval Office on Monday. "The liberal establishment – but they're not running things anymore in this country."

He sat beside President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador, who brands himself as the world's "coolest dictator" and whose huge popularity is based on a brand of elected authoritarianism Trump admires. The warmth lavished on a leader who'd have been treated as a pariah by a conventional US administration was an ominous window into the 47th president's future intentions.

Bukele has suspended parts of the Salvadoran constitution and imprisoned tens of thousands of people without due process in a crackdown against crime.

He suggested Trump might try something similar. "Mr. President, you have 350 million people to liberate, you know. But to liberate 350 million people, you have to imprison some. You know, that's the way it works, right?"

Trump's own hardline aspirations were revealed in the meeting through the prism of his increasingly ruthless deportation policy, which is raising profound questions about apparent abuses of due process and human rights.

Both presidents relished the chance to publicly refuse to release an undocumented migrant who was seized in Maryland and deported to a notorious mega-prison in his native El Salvador without a court hearing and despite a judge's order that he should not be sent back to the country. The White House is refusing to act on another judge's order that Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia should be brought back to the US and is walking a fine line on a Supreme Court decision saying it must facilitate his return. It says Abrego Garcia is a gang member and terrorist despite producing no public evidence. It also argues that US courts have no jurisdiction because Abrego Garcia's fate is bound up in Trump's power to set foreign policy.

The Supreme Court ruled 9-0 last week that the administration must "facilitate" the return of Abrego Garcia after it admitted expelling him over an administrative error. But the White House is using its rather imprecise language – perhaps motivated by a push for unity or a desire to avoid a direct constitutional showdown – to claim the justices endorsed its position, rather than rebuking it. "I think the Supreme Court is responsible to some extent because they diced words," retired judge Shira Scheindlin told CNN's John Berman on Monday.

Stephen Collinson

those who are incarcerated, and deport them to draconian prison camps overseas might strain credulity. But Trump's words came amid an atmosphere of growing authoritarianism around his White House and an apparent determination to reject constitutional constraints on his behavior. The White House's power moves suggest it does not just want to unilaterally decide who gets deported, based on its own criteria and not those of the courts. It also wants to heavily influence the caseloads of big-time law firms; what is taught in top universities; and the news Americans see on television. These are

activities are detrimental to US foreign policy – a sweeping rationale that might be used to curtail almost any speech. Several foreign students have been approached in the street and taken into immigration custody hundreds of miles away or forced to flee the country. On Monday, Palestinian student Mohsen Mahdawi went into a Vermont immigration office hoping to begin the final step to becoming a US citizen. But the Columbia University student, who has been in the US for a decade, was taken away in handcuffs, his lawyer told CNN.

And the cronyism that often afflicts hardline regimes that thwart democratic freedoms seems to be taking root in Washington. Trump, for instance, signaled that he was open to negotiations with top CEOs for opt-outs from his tariffs that have rocked the US and global economies. Trump won his second term partly on a promise to his supporters to eviscerate an elite establishment that he argues is contemptuous toward many Americans and infected by extreme liberal values on race and gender. This is a popular stance among many voters – especially in Trump's political base, for whom he mostly seems to govern. A cultural assault on institutions regarded as dominated by elites is also a useful distraction from his trade war chaos and the failure so far of his peace initiative in Ukraine. Trump's wild rhetoric and obvious belief that he has limitless power – reinforced by a Supreme Court ruling on presidential immunity – have long caused his critics to warn, sometimes in overly alarmist terms, that he's a dictator-in-waiting. But his refusal to accept the result of the 2020 election and his fresh efforts to thwart government accountability, legal processes and even the freedom of expression are adding up.

But some of the institutions are fighting back. Harvard University on Monday rejected the administration's demands for policy changes. "The University will not surrender its independence or its constitutional rights," Harvard President Alan Garber said in a statement. The administration quickly froze several billion dollars in federal funding for the Ivy League school.

The White House had demanded changes to Harvard's diversity, equity and inclusion programs; a ban on masks at campus protests; and reforms to merit-based hiring and admissions. It wanted to reduce the power held by faculty and administrators. Harvard's decision could establish a precedent for other higher education institutions to follow suit. But Columbia University submitted to administration demands for restrictions on demonstrations and new disciplinary procedures, and immediate reviewed its Middle East curriculum.

The pattern of resistance and some submission to Trump policies is also playing out in the legal industry. Two large firms, Jenner & Block and WilmerHale, which have huge Washington practices, have sued the administration to challenge Trump executive orders targeting them and their clients. They accuse the government of using unconstitutional executive orders to punish or chill speech it doesn't like.

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Washington's 'Israel exception' is starting to restrict Americans' basic freedoms

James Zogby

FROM 2013 to 2017, I served as a White House appointee to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. Annually, we would review how the practices of countries around the world affected the ability of their citizens and residents to freely follow their faiths. We would identify countries that violated religious freedom, together with our recommendations for actions the US government could take to bring these countries into compliance.

Early on, I could see there was deep resistance to any examination of Israel by some commissioners, both Republican and Democratic appointees. In my first month as a commissioner, I was dragged into a bizarre battle over a Christmas op-ed the Commission wanted to publish expressing concern that "in the land where Jesus was born, Christians feared celebrating Christmas". As examples of places where Christians might face persecution, the article cited a few Arab countries (weirdly, including Lebanon and Syria) and added Pakistan and Nigeria for good measure. When I asked about Palestinian Christians, the response was a near hysterical rejection – more like a "How dare you?"

And when, a year later, the Commission received a visit from the Roman Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem seeking our support for a few rather small requests he had of Israeli authorities – like visas for priests and unimpeded passage for Christians between Israel and the West Bank at Christmas and Easter – he was startled when two of my colleagues not only rejected his appeal, but insisted that his priority ought to be demanding that Hamas disarm.

Knowing it would be an uphill battle, I wanted to make the best case possible before proposing that the Commission investigate Israel. I asked a team of attorneys to prepare an extensive brief on Israel's repressive actions that affected Palestinian Christians and Muslims, as well as Israeli non-Orthodox Jews. The study was modelled on the Commission's studies of cases of hostile occupations in other countries.

When I submitted the report, together with another Democratic appointee (who was Jewish and was deeply concerned with the treatment of non-Orthodox Jews in Israel), we were greeted with a firestorm of abuse. Our report was not discussed (or even read). Instead, I was subjected to the charge of being anti-Semitic, because two Commissioners claimed I was "singling Israel out for criticism". This accusation is a hallmark of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism, which equates many forms of criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. It is used to

silence critics of the state.

My response to my colleagues on the Commission was to remind them that I had voted with them every year to criticise the practices of two dozen countries and therefore it wasn't I who was singling Israel out for criticism. It was they who were singling Israel out as the one country that could not be criticised.

This is the "Israel exception" in many American circles. Israel can violate religious freedom, international law, humanitarian law, US laws regarding the use of aid to violate human rights and the lives of civilians, and yet never be criticised. And if it is criticised, those who do so are deemed anti-Semites. This insidious situation has allowed Israel to operate with impunity. Its impact has not only taken a toll on the lives and fortunes of Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and others – it is now being weaponised in the US, putting at risk Americans' basic freedoms.

This acceptance of the IHRA definition has been with us since the first

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Trump administration's Department of Education formally adopted it. A dozen states have also legislated its use. After several failed efforts to have it passed by Congress, it may very well pass this year.

Most concerning has been the way the current Trump administration has weaponised the Department of Education's use of the IHRA definition to threaten universities into taking measures that violate academic freedom and free speech on campuses, the firing of some faculty members, the cancelling of courses and gutting of departments of Middle East Studies. This same IHRA definition is also being used by the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security to cancel visas and green cards, resulting in deportations or cancelling of visas for hundreds of pro-Palestinian advocates.

The individuals being deported, university programmes being cancelled, and students being threatened with expulsion are denounced for their anti-Semitism that is creating a hostile environment for Jews on campuses. On examination, however, their "crimes" are nothing more than being critical of

Israel or supportive of Palestinians.

Disturbing is the silence of too many liberals in Congress and academia who, out of fear, have allowed this to continue. They have permitted the "Israel exception" to morph into the "Palestine exception". In this situation, any state (even the US itself) can be criticised. But not Israel. Victims of human rights violations and genocide must be supported. But not Palestinians. Even US policies can be protested or condemned. But not Israel's policies.

This implementation and expansion of the "Israel/Palestine exception" by the Trump administration and the enabling silence of too many liberals in Congress and civil society have left many in my community feeling vulnerable and powerless. They are witnessing Israel acting with impunity as it devastates and imposes itself on Lebanon and Syria and accelerates what is increasingly being described by experts as a genocide in Gaza and new levels of repression and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank.

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Many in the US are afraid to speak out or become engaged in political protest. Not only visa holders, but citizens, are concerned about travel not knowing how they will be treated on re-entry and, in the case of visa holders, whether they'll be allowed to return.

We have reached the point where the "Israel/Palestine exception" not only distorts American foreign policy and erodes our stated commitments to international law and covenants but also compromises our right to free speech and assembly and the right to petition our government. As we have witnessed in recent weeks, it is threatening academic freedom and the very idea of the university in American life.

What is heartening is that the coalition that has come together to meet this challenge to Americans' rights is broad and diverse, encompassing not only Arab Americans, but also an array of civil and human rights organisations, ethnic and faith-based groups, and students and professors. They are coming together to demand an end to the "Israel/Palestine exception".

— The National

Social benefits benefit everyone

Yossi Mekelberg

A combination of domestic and global circumstances is being exploited, by some deliberately and by others inadvertently, and used against the welfare state. There are those who ideologically oppose the very notion of wealth distribution to create a more just society, while others, despite supporting it, are afraid that it is becoming unaffordable, especially at times when economic growth is sluggish and there are other urgent and compelling reasons to divert public money to competing public goods.

Neither group is calling for the abolition of what amounts to a redistribution of wealth, but the first group would like it to be permanently limited to the very minimum, and the other only when its fiscally prudent. Both sides are missing the essence of the welfare state, which serves both the direct recipients of its benefits and those who pay for it through their taxes, for the good functioning of society as much as the moral reasons.

The budgetary priorities set by the current Labour UK government,

which came to power less than a year ago, are increasingly taking the affordability approach, and this is causing disquiet among its traditional supporters as well as many backbenchers in Parliament. In the past few months the government, rather shockingly, cut winter fuel payments to pensioners, as well as cutting disability benefits to the tune of £5 billion (\$6.6 billion), leaving the most vulnerable in society exposed in these times of exponential rises in the cost of living. There can be a case for abolishing universal benefits, but not at the expense of those in desperate need. Come the next general election Labour will be largely held accountable by the voters if it has not managed to save the welfare state after nearly a decade and a half of its gradual and deliberately imposed decline under the Conservatives.

An earlier notion of the welfare state emerged in the 19th century, first in Bismarck's Germany, as an institutional response to negative side-effects of industrialization in order to protect individuals, workers, and their families from several risks during the course of their

life. These were, most importantly, loss of income due to disease, work-related accidents, unemployment, and old age. In the UK, it was the

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adoption of the Beveridge Report, titled "Social Insurance and Allied Service," which proposed that all people of working age should pay a weekly national insurance contribution, and in return benefits would be paid to those who were sick, unemployed, retired or widowed.

At the heart of the report was Beveridge's view of society and economy: He believed that vested interests should

not hinder what he saw as the top priority for government, which was to abolish the "Five Great

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Evils" that plagued society: want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness. This led in the post-Second World War era to the establishment of the National Health Service, a major public housing program, and massive investment in public education. It was also obvious that it would not be enough to treat just some of the "evils" and not others, but instead to address all of them concurrently, as they are in most cases

interlinked. It was a departure from considering helping those in need as an act of charity. Alas,

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the establishment of a social security system is charitable, with strong moral and ethical underpinnings, but charity it is not, because when it is successful, it also enhances two of the most important pillars of society: prosperity and security.

The classic argument against the welfare state is that it is bound to become a "nanny state" that restricts initiative and enterprise, and any-

way it is not the responsibility of the collective to cater for the needs of the individual, and certainly not to create social justice through redistribution of

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wealth. This argument looks at social security benefits, or universal services free at point of delivery, such as national health and education services, as a burden on a free market by imposing high taxes and therefore discourages those who work hard and contribute most to society.

Seeing society only through this narrow prism of a free market and low taxation is oversimplistic, and conveniently ignores,

for instance, that a modern and efficient health service literally gets people back on their feet and back at work, enabling them to earn, spend, and pay taxes (and not live on benefits), which keeps the economy thriving. A first-class education system for all produces generation after generation of those who generate wealth, not to mention responsible citizens. When the welfare state is at its best, it is inclusive of everyone in society, including the less fortunate, but equally it must be seen as an investment.

Those who oppose welfare are quick to blame the safety net of social security benefits for creating a culture of dependency, even a poverty trap, or say that there are those who find ways to defraud the system.

Either argument points to a system that is not perfect and not free of loopholes. Nevertheless, in the UK, the estimated percentage of fraud in the social security system is around 3 percent of total benefit expenditure, and in most other OECD countries it is similar or even lower. This certainly calls for better safeguards against fraud, but it is

hardly significant enough to do away with social security. Moreover, in the case of pensioners for instance, it is no more than partial repayment of what they paid into the system throughout their working lives; and furthermore, a healthy society should be proud of not leaving behind those who due to their unique circumstances need the support of the rest of us, even if it is for their entire lives.

In times of slow economic growth and competing pressures on public expenditure, such as the current need to invest more in Europe on defense due to the war in Ukraine, the easiest route is that of cutting social security.

However, there is a case to be made for increasing borrowing within strict rules and limits to protect the most vulnerable — otherwise by the time the economy grows again, the societal decline would exact much higher economic and social costs. After all, the welfare society is a marriage of morality and expediency, and both are united in the cause of creating a better and more prosperous society.



Strengthening primary health care at high-level symposium:

Minister reaffirms national commitment

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: At a high-level National Symposium on Primary Health Care (PHC), Federal Minister of State for Health, Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath, reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to revitalizing PHC as a cornerstone for achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The event brought together key national and provincial leaders, including Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, provincial health ministers, and representatives from international partners such as the Aga Khan University, Gates Foundation, World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and the World Bank.

"This forum is a critical opportunity to align national and provincial efforts, in close partnership with global health actors, to build a resilient, inclusive, and people-centered health system for Pakistan," said Minister Bharath.

Referencing the Alma Ata (1978) and Astana (2018) Declarations, the

Minister emphasized Pakistan's long-standing commitment to Primary Health Care. "As we approach the 50th anniversary of PHC in 2028, we must seize this moment to reaffirm our dedication to equitable health for all," he said.

The Minister highlighted that the National Health Vision (2016-2025) has laid a strong foundation for the forthcoming National Health and Population Policy (2025-2034), which will prioritize health system resilience, equity, and efficiency. This forward-looking policy aims to tackle pressing health challenges, including climate change, emerging diseases, and the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

A central focus of Mr. Bharath's address was the nationwide rollout of the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) at the district level, especially in high-burden areas. This package targets critical health domains such as maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health, and non-communicable dis-

eases (NCDs) and their risk factors.

He reiterated the Federal Government's firm resolve to eradicate communicable diseases, including Polio, Tuberculosis, and Hepatitis C. Notably, he shared that the Prime Minister recently endorsed a PKR 67.77 billion PC-1 to eliminate Hepatitis C in partnership with provincial governments. Additionally, \$18 million has been secured to strengthen national preparedness for future pandemics.

The Minister also spotlighted digital transformation in healthcare, announcing the Ministry's PKR 33 billion proposal to establish telemedicine centers across Pakistan-aimed at expanding access and enabling real-time data management at the PHC level.

"We plan to gradually increase public health spending from 1% to 3% of GDP, ushering in a new era of PHC-focused reforms in collaboration with provinces and partners," he affirmed.

Addressing the health workforce crisis, Bharath

called for scaling up the production of nurses and paramedics, along with expanding the Lady Health Worker (LHW) program. He also stressed the need to strengthen Health Care Commissions to regulate service quality in both public and private sectors.

The Minister expressed deep appreciation for the continued support of development partners, particularly the Gates Foundation, citing successful collaborations such as the Tando Allah Yar PHC model and urban immunization drives in Karachi as exemplary initiatives.

He concluded with a strong call for multi-sectoral action to tackle the broader social determinants of health and urged participants to translate insights from the symposium into tangible policy actions.

"The Government of Pakistan is committed to acting on the outcomes of this dialogue and looks forward to working closely with all stakeholders to ensure a healthier, more equitable future for our people," he concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Japanese business delegation meeting with Convener of Pak-Japan Friendship Group Senator Nadeem Ahmed Bhutto at Parliament House.

Ahsan appointed as CMO at Telenor



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Ahsan Maykan has been assigned on taking the role of Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) at Telenor Pakistan.

He has been heading the entire Marketing value chain and helped do a turnaround of the business performance of Telenor over the last one year. Due to his relentless efforts, Telenor Pakistan has shown strong performance over the last year with double digit revenue growth.

Along with the Product, Revenue, Pricing and Brand Communication area, Mr Ahsan has been responsible for leading the Digital Transformation effort, and with building advanced data analytics & AI capabilities. Under Ahsan Maykan's stewardship, the company's future looks promising.

Gold prices increase by Rs600/tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs600 and was traded at Rs339,400 on Tuesday as compared to its sale at Rs338,800 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs514 to Rs290,980 from Rs290,466 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up to Rs266,741 from Rs266,261, 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 increased by \$6 to \$3,224 from \$3,218 whereas that of silver also increased by \$0.05 and at \$31.35, the Association reported.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where four ships, Eleni-T, Asia Inspire, Victoria Glory and IVS Went-Worth carrying Container, Palm oil, Gas oil and Coal berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, FOTCO oil Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively Monday.

Meanwhile eight more ships, MSC Roberta-V, SM Kaveri, MSC Yumna-VI, Kashi, Valianta, DM Condor, Lebrethah and IVS North Berwick carrying Container, Palm oil, Chemicals, LNG and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage during last 24 hours.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Eleni-T and Norse Sequel were expected to sail.

Cargo volume of 149,282 tonnes, comprising 116,755 tonnes imports cargo and 32,527 export cargo carried in 3,590 Containers (2,090 TEUs Imports & 1,500 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

BoDs appointment in key industries:

Haroon chairs review meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting to review appointments of the Board of Directors (BoD) and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in key institutions under the ministry.

During the meeting, Haroon Akhtar highlighted the critical role played by Board members and CEOs in the performance and success of public sector organizations, said a news

release.

Haroon said that "Board members and CEOs are essential leaders in any institution. Their selection must reflect transparency and merit, in line with the Prime Minister's vision." Highlighting the significance of effective leadership, he said, "The performance of government institutions is directly linked to the efficiency and capabilities of their Boards and CEOs."

Haroon Akhtar instruct-

ed the Ministry to expedite the process of appointing CEOs and called for the immediate submission of proposed names and profiles for Board of Directors positions.

In the next meeting, the profiles and names of the BoDs and CEOs will be brought for under consideration. The meeting reinforced the government's commitment to strengthening institutional governance through capable and transparent leadership.

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 385 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 385.47 points, a positive change of 0.33 percent, closing at 116,775.50 points as compared to 116,390.04 points on the last trading day.

A total of 479,465,114 shares were traded during the day as compared to 484,547,019 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs30,449 billion against Rs27,430 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 447 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 219 of them recorded gains and 174 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 54 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Cnergyco PK with 32,091,019 shares at Rs8.53 per share, TRG Pak Limited with

21,511,574 shares at Rs 67.90 per share and B O Punjab with 20,785,866 shares at Rs11.17 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs184.62 per share closing at Rs23,294.62 whereas runner-up was PIA Holding Company LimitedB with Rs142.36 rise in its share price to close at Rs1,604.76.

Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs85.61 per share price, closing at Rs1,175.87, whereas the runner-up Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs58.56 decline in its per share price to Rs7,114.77.

Rupee gains 04 paisa against US Dollar

The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 04 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.56 against the previous day's closing

of Rs280.60.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.60 and Rs282.10, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 81 paisa to close at Rs318.94 against the last day's closing of Rs319.75, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs1.95, whereas an increase of Rs1.57 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs371.23 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs369.66.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham decreased by 01 paisa to close at Rs 76.38, while the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paisa and closed at Rs74.77.

SBP launches 'Pakistan Financial Literacy Week'

SIALKOT (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Tuesday officially inaugurated Pakistan Financial Literacy Week (PFLW) 2025, a nationwide initiative aimed at fostering financial awareness, inclusion, and empowerment across the country.

The event was inaugurated by Fouzia Aslam, Chief Manager SBP Banking Services Corporation, Sialkot Office, who emphasized the vital role of financial literacy in building a stable and prosperous economy.

"In today's rapidly evolving financial landscape, equipping individuals with financial knowledge is more crucial than ever," she noted. Under the theme "Financial Inclusion through Collaboration and Innovation," PFLW 2025 will feature 260 financial literacy camps, 350 outreach programs at schools and universities, 400+ interactive workshops and awareness sessions targeting women, youth, and persons with disabilities, activities spread across 101 districts, engaging over 100 partner institutions, 60 universities and colleges, and all commercial banks.

The inaugural ceremony

was attended by Ikram-ul-Haq, President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) alongside Vice Chancellors of different universities, SBP employees, Regional Heads of Financial Institutions, National Financial Literacy Program (NFLP) focal persons and many others.

The State Bank of Pakistan extends its gratitude to all participating institutions and stakeholders for their continued support in promoting financial literacy and inclusion across the nation.

FPCCI hails 'Made in Gujranwala Exhibition'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) leadership and business community leaders have hailed the holding of "Made in Gujranwala Exhibition 2025," organized by Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) and termed it important in promoting domestic trade.

The participation of 87 industrial brands of Gujranwala in the industrial exhibition in Islamabad and the participation of such a large number of foreign ambassadors and diplomats gave this industrial exhibition an international color, which is a great achievement of the President of Gujranwala Chamber of

Commerce and Industry, Rana Muhammad Saddique Khan and the Executive Committee of the GCCCI, Patron-in-Chief of United Business Group, SM Tanveer here in message.

The three-day event is a premier Business to Business (B2B) trade fair organized by the Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI).

S.M. Tanveer praised the Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry for successfully organizing the three days Industrial Expo being held from April 11-13, 2025, which had brought together industry leaders, businesses, and innovators to showcase local production, craftsmanship, and innovation.

Senior business leader said that Gujranwala industries have huge potential for playing their due role in the country's economy and increasing the country's export at the optimum level.

He said that Gujranwala has 18000 Small and Medium Industries (SMEs), which are the backbone of the country's economy and have big potential for increasing exports.

President, FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh felicitated the GCCCI leadership for holding of Made in Gujranwala Exhibition 2025 and said that Gujranwala is fourth biggest industrial city of Pakistan and can play pivotal role for increasing the country's exports.

Soneri Bank Limited announces first quarter results for 2025

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Board of Directors of Soneri Bank Limited, in their 210th meeting held in Karachi on 15th April 2025, approved the Bank's condensed interim financial statements for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

The results reflect consistent and sustained performance despite declining spreads; as the Bank posted profit before tax (PBT) of Rs. 3,337 million and profit after tax (PAT) of Rs. 1,147 million for the quarter ended 31 March 2025, as compared to Rs. 3,554 million and Rs. 1,760 million respectively in the same period last year. The Bank's EPS was recorded at Rs. 1.0406 per share for the current reporting quarter, as compared to Rs. 1.5965 for the comparative prior period indicating a decline due to additional tax incidence on Banking

Companies introduced via Income Tax (Amendment Ordinance), 2024 with an effective tax rate of 65.62 percent (31 March 2024: 50.48 percent). The Bank's net interest income for the quarter ended 31 March 2025 improved to Rs. 7,289 million from Rs. 5,849 million for the comparative prior period, indicating an impressive growth of 24.62 percent, on the back of improved volumes. Non-interest income for the period was reported at Rs. 1,564 million as against Rs. 1,603 million for the comparative prior period, declining marginally due to lower FX related income partially offset by an increase in fee and commission income.

Non-markup expenses were reported at Rs. 5,215 million for the current year as against Rs. 4,385 million reported for the comparative prior period. Despite high inflation levels and an

ongoing branch expansion drive, growth in expenses was restricted at 18.93 percent as compared to the previous year as a result of strict cost rationalization measures and prudent cost control policies and discipline. Building on its strategic drive of footprint expansion, the Bank is now operating with a network of 551 branches (31 December 2024: 544 branches).

The bank's Deposits registered an increase of 5.17 percent when compared to 31 December 2024, ending at Rs. 571,231 million at 31 March 2025. Period end CASA mix improved to 83.13 percent as against 81.94 percent at 31 December 2024.

The Bank's net advances portfolio stood at Rs. 197,855 million as at 31 March 2025, 18.70 percent lower than the year end 2024 level. Net investments increased by Rs. 80,725 million or 21.01 percent

from the year-end balance of Rs. 384,306 million, ending at Rs. 465,030 million as at 31 March 2025.

As at 31 March 2025, the Bank's Non-performing loans to total Advances ratio inched up to 3.95 percent (31 December 2024: 3.13 percent), with specific coverage at 89.63 percent (31 December 2024: 90.02 percent) and overall coverage including the Expected Credit Loss provision under IFRS 9, Financial Instruments, closing at 103.93 percent (31 December 2024: 102.90 percent).

The Bank remains adequately capitalized, with a Capital Adequacy Ratio of 15.25 percent at 31 March 2025.

The Bank remains focused on maximizing shareholder value through our customer focused business strategy aimed at serving the needs of our customers across all business segments.

Sarsabz Baba Guru Nanak Kabaddi Cup kicks off in Lahore

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Kabaddi Federation and Fatima Fertilizer Company Limited proudly announced the commencement of the highly anticipated Sarsabz Baba Guru Nanak International Circle Style Gold Kabaddi Cup 2025. The three-day tournament, from April 16-18, 2025, brings together teams from Pakistan, India, and Iran.

A press conference was held in Lahore on Tuesday, marking the beginning of this international sporting event. Team captains Ali Saffari (Iran), Germanjit Singh Ladda Balpur (India), and Kaleem Ullah Jutt (Pakistan), along with representatives from title sponsors, Fatima Fertilizer, were also present, sharing their enthusiasm and commitment to promoting Kabaddi as a sport of unity.

Matches will be hosted in Lahore, symbolizing peace and unity across borders. Competing teams include the SPGC Tigers from India, the Lions of Tarbaiz from Iran, and the Pakistani Eagles—each bringing their own unique strength and flair to the traditional circle style format. Notably, this marks a sig-



nificant moment as an Indian Kabaddi team travels to Pakistan for a tournament after many years, reflecting a spirit of renewed regional engagement through sports.

Rabel Sadozai, Director Marketing and Sales at Fatima Fertilizer, said, "We are honored to sponsor the Sarsabz Baba Guru Nanak International Kabaddi Cup, a tournament that celebrates not just the sport of Kabaddi but the shared heritage and spirit of our region. At Fatima Fertilizer, we believe in

strengthening the roots of our nation—both through sustainable agriculture and meaningful cultural engagement. This event is a powerful symbol of unity, resilience, and our ongoing commitment to uplifting rural communities across borders."

Rana Sarwar, Secretary General, Pakistan Kabaddi Federation, said, "We are pleased to welcome the Indian and Iranian Kabaddi teams to Pakistan for this prestigious tournament. The participation of international teams is a strong

testament to the fact that Pakistan is a safe and welcoming destination for global sporting events."

The Sarsabz Baba Guru Nanak Kabaddi Cup 2025 is more than just a sporting event—it is a celebration of regional camaraderie, cultural pride, and the unifying power of sports. With top-tier athletes, historic venues, and enthusiastic fans, the tournament promises to be an unforgettable experience that fosters goodwill and strengthens cross-border connections.

Cars' sale up 40.99 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of cars during the first nine months of the current fiscal year 2024-25 increased by 40.99 percent compared to the same months of last year, a recent data released by Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA) said.

According to the data, as many as 76,265 cars were sold during the months

under review as opposed to 54,091 units in the same months of last year.

The breakup figures showed that 11,460 units of Honda Civic and City were sold during July-March 2024-25 compared to the sale of 8,514 units during July-March 2023-24.

Toyota Corolla and Yaris cars sales increased by 48.92 percent as it went up

to 15,980 units from 10,730 units..

Suzuki Swift's sales also rose by 57.45 percent as its sales surged from 3,586 units to 5,891 units this year.

Sales of Suzuki Cultus declined to 1,984 units during the period under review, whereas during the same period last year, the sale was recorded at 2,803 units while the sale of

Suzuki WagonR also decreased to 1,705 units from 2,652 units last year.

Suzuki Alto's sales witnessed an increase of 37.91 percent from 22,683 units to 31,284 units during the current year, whereas the sales of Suzuki Bolan surged to 3,168 units as opposed to sales of 1,734 units in the same months of last year.



In brief

Indian team arrive in Lahore

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The three-nation Baba Guru Nanak International Kabaddi Cup is set to kick off tomorrow in Lahore with the arrival of the Indian Tigers Kabaddi Team. The Indian team, representing the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), reached Lahore via the Wagah Border, where they were warmly welcomed by officials of the Pakistan Kabaddi Federation. According to tournament organisers, the prestigious Baba Guru Nanak Kabaddi Cup will officially begin tomorrow at the WAPDA Sports Complex in Lahore. The Iranian team had already arrived in Lahore a day earlier to take part in the tournament, which aims to promote cross-border sportsmanship and cultural harmony. The international event is expected to draw kabaddi fans from across the country as teams from Pakistan, India, and Iran face off in a show of strength, skill, and traditional South Asian sport.

Zampa's IPL ends due to injury

NEW DELHI (INP): Australia legspinner Adam Zampa has been ruled out of the remainder of IPL with Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) due to a flair up of a previous shoulder injury. Zampa played in SRH's first two matches of the tournament as the Impact Sub and took 1 for 48 and 1 for 46 in two very high scoring games - including the one which brought 528 runs between SRH and Rajasthan Royals. But he suffered some shoulder soreness in his bowling arm and missed the next four matches before flying home to Australia for further medical consultation. It is understood to be a recurrence of an issue he had battled in the lead-up to the 2023 ODI World Cup. There he recovered to finish as the tournament's second-leading wicket-taker and was a key figure in Australia winning the trophy. There was a possibility that Zampa could return to the IPL after a short rest to settle the problem but SRH opted to replace him with 21-year-old Karnataka batter R Snaran. Zampa is now unlikely to play again until Australia's next T20I series against West Indies in the Caribbean starting in late July. He is a key part of Australia's build towards the T20 World Cup next year in India and Sri Lanka with the team set to play 19 bilateral T20Is between July and February ahead of the tournament.

Ferguson all but out of IPL

NEW DELHI (INP): Punjab Kings (PBKS) fast bowler Lockie Ferguson has been all but ruled out of the remainder of IPL 2025, their fast-bowling coach James Hopes has said. Ferguson had hobbled off the field in their previous game, against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) on Saturday after bowling just two balls. "Ferguson is out indefinitely, and the chances of us getting him back by the end of the tournament are very slim, I would have thought," Hopes said ahead of PBKS' match against Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in Mullanpur on Tuesday. "I think he has sustained a pretty serious injury." Ferguson had pulled up after the second delivery of the sixth over against SRH and was seen holding the side of his left leg just below the hip. He had to leave the field after consultation with the physio and did not return to bowl again as SRH pulled off the second-highest successful chase in IPL history with eight wickets in hand.



KARACHI: Shaheen Shah Afridi struck twice in his first over.

Alcaraz follows Ruud into Barcelona Open last 16

BARCELONA (AFP): World number two Carlos Alcaraz came back from a break down in the second set to defeat Ethan Quinn 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) and reach the Barcelona Open last 16 on Tuesday.

The home favourite, who triumphed at the Monte Carlo Masters last week, stormed through the first set but Quinn, ranked 126th, battled valiantly in the second. Alcaraz has endured an inconsistent start to the year, crashing out of the Miami Open at the first hurdle in March, as he prepares for his French Open title defence.

The 21-year-old is aiming for a third triumph on the clay in Barcelona, after lifting the trophy in 2022 and 2023. He was unable to participate in the last edition because of injury.

"Last year it was very painful not to be here, so I am very happy to be able to come back and play here again, and more so to win," Alcaraz told TVE.

"I made some mistakes, I found it hard to maintain (the right) level, but I am happy to have solved the problems that came in the second set, and to end up winning in two sets."



Alcaraz saved all five break points he faced in the first set, breaking Quinn in the third and fifth games for a 5-1 lead. The Spaniard failed to convert a set point in the seventh game but did so at the third time of asking on his serve after opening up a triple set point.

The second set was topsy-turvy, with both players exchanging breaks on three occasions, forcing a tie-break. Alcaraz saved a set point before dispatching Quinn with a drop shot to claim victory.

Earlier, defending Barcelona Open champion Casper Ruud sailed into the last 16 with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Daniel Elahi Galan. The world number 10, targeting his first trophy of

the season, blew away his Colombian opponent hitting 25 winners and without facing a break point.

Norwegian Ruud put heavy pressure on Galan's serve before securing the only break of the first set in the 10th game.

In the second set Ruud broke for a 4-2 lead and served it out. "I'm happy to be back in Barcelona and get a straight-sets win," said Ruud. "One year ago, I had one of the best weeks of my life, so the memories come back."

France's Arthur Fils beat Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, while last year's runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas crushed giant American Reilly Opelka 6-2, 6-2.

Peshawar Zalmi Owner Javed Afridi Rejects Pepsi Offer

POTHI MAKWALAN (PPI): Javed Afridi, the owner of one of the most important cricket franchises in the Pakistan Super League, Peshawar Zalmi, has rejected an offer from the Israel-friendly multinational company Pepsi.

According to a statement from the Press Information Department - Azad Jammu and Kashmir today, Pepsi had offered a significant fee to advertise their logo on the Zalmi jersey, which Javed Afridi refused, calling it a betrayal of the blood of Palestinians.

Afridi's move has been widely praised by cricket fans. This offer was made just a few days before the start of the PSL cricket tournament. Pepsi has been dealt a major blow by this decision, and it is highly likely that other cricket franchises will also reject the offer.

In recent months, there has been a widespread boycott of Pepsi in Pakistan; however, unexpectedly, people purchased Pepsi beverages during Eid al-Fitr. Following Javed Afridi's decision, there has been an increase in support for Zalmi, and chants and expressions of thanks in favor of Zalmi are expected during the matches held in Pakistan.

Four players of Kohiwal village shine in national hockey teams

MULTAN (APP): In a remarkable achievement for a single village, four hockey players from Kohiwal have earned spots in Pakistan's national senior and junior hockey teams, bringing pride to the rural community in District Khanewal.

Rao Arsalan and Rao Arshad Liaqat have been selected for the national training camp ahead of the 2025 Nation Hockey Cup in Malaysia. They join fellow villagers Rao Aqeel and Muhammad Ahmad, who are already representing the country in the junior national team.

This collective success reflects the impact of grassroots development, driven by Al-Majeedia Hockey Club Kohiwal, which has nurtured local talent through consistent training and community support.

Club leaders expressed pride over the players' national representation and reaffirmed their commitment to the revival of Pakistan's national sport through village-level enthusiasm and discipline.

Key members of the club's executive council include lifetime patron Rao Ali Riaz, discipline committee members Rao Muhammad Akmal, Rao Abdul Khaliq, and Rao Iqar Ahmad, with Qamar Rao Sajid Hussain serving as chief organizer and Rao Gulzar Ahmad Tanha as organizer. Coordinators Rao Arif Aziz and Rao Amir Sajjad, administrator Rao Muhammad Nadeem, protocol officer Rao Tariq Aziz, and advisory members Sarfraz Ahmad (Army), Imran Badr (Danish School coach), Muhammad Naeem (Rescue 1122), Imran Shabbir (Army), and Sher Zaman also play vital roles in the club's operations.

Lahore Qalandars beat Karachi Kings by 65 runs

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Shaheen Afridi and Rishad Hossain took three wickets each as Lahore Qalandars beat Karachi Kings by 65 runs in the sixth game of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 on Tuesday. Chasing 202, Karachi Kings were bowled out for 136 in 19.1 overs.

Kings were off to a horrid start in their chase as their captain David Warner and James Vince were dismissed by Shaheen Afridi on ducks in the very first over.

Tim Seifert and Shan Masood made 18 runs each while Irfan Khan could contribute six runs in the chase. Khushdil Shah remained the top run-getter for the losing side, having scored 39 off 27 balls. He was involved in two late-inning partnerships with Hasan Ali and Adam Milne to reduce the losing margin of Karachi Kings in their second game of the PSL 10.

Adam Milne was the last batter to get dismissed after scoring 16 runs as Lahore Qalandars secured their second victory in the ongoing edition of the Pakistan Super League.

Earlier, Fakhar Zaman and Daryl Mitchell scored fifties as Lahore Qalandars posted 201/6 on the scoreboard.

After opting to bat first, Qalandars lost two quick wickets as opening batter Mohammad Naeem departed after scoring seven runs.

Abdullah Shafique then joined Fakhar Zaman in the middle, however, he was dismissed on six, with the scoreboard showing 25/2 in 3.5 overs.

Daryl Mitchell Fakhar then took charge and stitched a 125-run partnership to put Lahore Qalandars in a strong position.

The partnership ended with Fakhar Zaman's dismissal after he scored 75 off 47 balls, with the help of six fours and five sixes. Sam Billings then joined Daryl Mitchell in the middle and added 19 off 10 balls to the total.

Daryl Mitchell was dismissed after a well-made 75 off 41 balls, laced with nine fours and two sixes. For Karachi Kings, Hasan Ali picked up four wickets while Abbas Afridi took one wicket.

Bangladesh thrashes Scotland in ICC Women's Qualifier thriller

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Bangladesh defeated Scotland by 34 runs in the ICC Women's Qualifier clash at Gaddafi Stadium Lahore. In reply to a massive total of 276 runs scored by Bangladesh batters, Scotland women displayed a solid performance but fell well short of the total. They made 242 for the loss of nine wickets in 50 overs.

Bangladesh began their defense strongly, with Marufa Akter delivering a stunning delivery to dismiss Abbi Aitken-Drummond early. Nahida Akter soon joined the action, claiming the crucial wickets of Scotland captain Kathryn Bryce and Pippa Sproul, leaving Scotland in deep trouble at 31/3.

A brief rebuilding effort was cut short when Ailsa Lister was run out for 18, adding further pressure to the Scottish chase. Sarah Bryce tried to steady the

chase but her efforts ultimately went in vain after she hit one straight back to Jannatul Ferdus, who caught it with ease.

Megan McCall and Katherine Fraser were dismissed for measly figures of 5 and 8, respectively, further denting Scotland's stride. Just when things were looking done, Priyanaz Chatterji and Rachel Slater combined to add a blazing 115-run stand for the eighth wicket, notching up half-centuries each as Scotland eventually finished on 242/9 after their allotted quota of 50 overs.

Nahida Akter led with the ball for Bangladesh, picking up 4-40 from her 10 overs. Bangladesh will now face the West Indies on April 17, while Scotland will be in action against Ireland on April 18.

Earlier, batting first, Bangladesh displayed a solid performance with the

bat. Captain Nigar Sultana led from the front with a commanding unbeaten knock of 83 runs.

She was well-supported by opening batter Shamima Sultana and experienced campaigner Fargana Hoque, both of whom scored identical half-centuries — 57 runs each.

All-rounder Fahima Khatun also contributed with a valuable 26 runs, adding to the team's total in the final overs. Scotland struggled to contain Bangladesh's momentum.

Katherine Bryce emerged as the most successful bowler for Scotland, claiming two wickets. Meanwhile, Rachel Slater, Chloe Abel, Priyanaz Chatterji, and Kathryn Fraser chipped in with one wicket each but could not prevent Bangladesh from building a strong total over their 50 overs.

Malam Jabba Ski Resort hosts grand dinner to promote skiing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Malam Jabba Ski Resort on Tuesday hosted a grand dinner in honour of the International Advisory Board (IAB) members here at a local hotel as part of its efforts to boost winter tourism and skiing in Pakistan.

The event brought together high-level dignitaries, tourism stakeholders and international advisors committed to shaping the future of ski sports in Pakistan. The IAB plays a vital role in offering strategic direction for enhancing visitor experiences, attracting international tourism and investment, and developing world-class ski infrastructure in the country.

The dinner was attended by Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, members of the IAB Board, including Lord

Sarfraz of Kensington, Chair of the International Advisory Board, Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton TD PC, former National Security Advisor, UK, Waqar Malik, Ambassador at Large, Ahmer Bilal Soofi, former Federal Minister and Yousaf Jamal Shah, senior lawyer and secretary to the Board.

Talking to APP, Lord Sarfraz of Kensington underlined the importance of such collaborations in promoting Pakistan as a premier skiing destination. He said that Pakistan's breathtaking mountain ranges, particularly in the northern regions and Malam Jabba offer immense potential for winter sports development. "But we will also have to engage local people to get the desired results," he said.

Ahmer Bilal Soofi said: "Pakistan possesses a proper skiing infrastructure. The nature has bestowed the country with stunning mountains, which are perfect for any skiing. I'm sure soon it will be an ideal hub for international skiing events," he added.

He underscored a collective commitment to reviving Pakistan's image as a haven for adventure and eco-tourism.

Meanwhile, attendees engaged in productive discussions on sustainable tourism models, international collaborations and strategies to position Pakistan prominently on the global ski map. The event concluded on a high note with optimism and renewed momentum for transforming Pakistan into a global hotspot for skiing and winter sports.

Anti-corruption commission raids BCB's headquarters

DHAKA (Agencies): The Bangladesh government's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) raided the BCB's headquarters on Tuesday to collect documents and records following allegations against the cricket board. The three-member probe team held a press briefing following their raid, alongside BCB chief executive Nizam Uddin Chowdhury.

The allegations include financial misappropriation of ticket sales during BPL and irregularity in expenses for cricket-related activities around a political programme called "Mujib 100" (to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) in 2020 but which got cancelled due to the Covid pandemic.

The ACC team also looked into details about the rule change in Dhaka's third division qualification competition. All three allegations fall under the time when Nazmul Hassan was the BCB president.

"We will file a report in the enforcement unit after

verifying all these documents," ACC's assistant director Al Amin said. "The ACC will then decide what the next step will be. Every one of the ACC's raid is due to a specific complaint. We collect complaints from the media. We have a committee that verifies these complaints. Once it is approved, we go on a raid. It is the same in this case."

The ACC officials said they are looking into the financial anomaly in the BPL's ticket sales since the third edition. Ticket sales have earned the BCB around BDT 15 crore (1.2 million USD approx.) from the eight seasons, but in the eleventh season alone it was BDT 13 crore (1.07 million USD approx.).

"One of BCB's revenue streams is ticket sales. There was 15 crore in eight years, and then 13 crore in a single year. We are trying to collect documents to find out what the anomaly is," Al Amin said.

He added that there are allegations that the "Mujib

100" programme also had some financial anomalies, including misappropriation of funds of around BDT 17 crore (1.4 million USD approx.).

"There's also some anomaly in the expenses shown in the 'Mujib 100' programme. It showed expenses worth 25 crore, but actually it was around 17 crore. There's allegations that they didn't show the expenses of almost 19 crore. We have asked for those documents and records from the finance department," he said.

The ACC has also spoken to the BCB about their rule change in the Dhaka Third Division Qualifying tournament, which was introduced in the late 1990s. It is the non-league tournament from where the top two teams enter the third division league, the lowest in the Dhaka league pyramid. During Nazmul's reign, the BCB hiked the team's entry fee to BDT 5 lakh (4,000 USD approx.) from BDT 50,000 (412 USD approx.).



In brief

ANF recovers 98 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting five operations across the country, recovered as many as 98 kg drugs worth more than Rs 60 million and arrested one suspect, said an ANF Headquarter's spokesman on Tuesday. He informed that 8,750 kilograms of heroin recovered from a parcel was to be sent to a European country through Cargo from the Islamabad International Airport. In another operation, 3.6 kg of heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for a South Asian country through a courier office in Karachi. Similarly, 60 kg of hashish and 20 kg of heroin were recovered from an abandoned area of Kutchlak Bypass Road Quetta. As much as 4 kg of ice was recovered from a vehicle near Defence Road Lahore, and the suspect was arrested on the spot. 1,492 kg of ice hidden for smuggling was recovered near Zero Line in Torkham. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

IRSA releases 75,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 75,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 96,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1417.14 feet which was 15.14 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 32,600 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1107.25 feet, which was 57.25 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 25,400 cusecs and 17,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 50,300, 35,200, 27,800 and 6,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 27,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police accelerate crackdown on drug trafficking

RAWALPINDI (APP): In line with Chief Minister Punjab's vision for a drug-free province, Rawalpindi Police have intensified the campaign against narcotics, arresting five suspected drug suppliers and seizing a total of five kilograms of illicit drugs in coordinated operations across the district. The raids, conducted under the instructions of City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani, yielded significant results. In Gujjar Khan, police apprehended M. Abbas and recovered 1.52 kilograms of cannabis from him. The Naseerabad police team arrested Yasir and confiscated 1.32 kilograms of the contraband. Further successes came from Mandra, where Zafar Ali was taken into custody with 1.07 kilograms of cannabis, while Dhamial police arrested Shahid and seized 550 grams of cannabis, and Nadeem Alamgir, recovering 525 grams of cannabis. The police spokesman has confirmed that the arrested suspects will be prosecuted with concrete evidence to ensure maximum punishment. Meanwhile, CPO Hamdani reiterated the police commitment to eradicating the drug trade, emphasizing that such operations will continue relentlessly to protect the community from the scourge of narcotics.

Syedaal reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties with EU

ISLAMABAD (PPI): A high-level parliamentary delegation from the European Union, comprising 11 members led by Mr Serban Dimitrie Sturdza, met with Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan here at Parliament House on Tuesday.

The meeting served as a platform to discuss key areas of mutual interest, including bilateral relations, economic cooperation, investment opportunities, and the promotion of parliamentary diplomacy.

The Deputy Chairman Senate reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties with the European Union, particularly in the domains of trade, economy, and investment. He emphasized that parliamentary diplomacy plays a vital role in enhancing people-to-people connections and fostering mutual understanding.

He noted that the relationship between Pakistan and the European Union is built on shared values such as democracy, peace, mutual respect, and international cooperation. The growing collaboration in areas like trade, security, and institutional engagement is a positive and encouraging sign, he added.

Syedaal Khan highlighted that the European Union

is one of Pakistan's major trading partners, and bilateral trade has significantly increased under the GSP Plus scheme.

Welcoming the upcoming EU-Pakistan Business Forum in May 2025, he expressed hope that the event would attract investment in key sectors including IT, renewable energy, agribusiness, and textiles.

Referring to national initiatives such as the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Syedaal Khan underscored Pakistan's commitment to creating an investor-friendly environment. He further stated that Pakistan's investment framework is aligned with the European Union's Global Gateway Strategy, offering foreign investors promising opportunities in renewable energy, digital transformation, mineral development, and modern transportation infrastructure.

During the meeting, Senator Bushra Anjum Butt, Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, highlighted ongoing collaboration between Pakistan and the EU in addressing various national challenges. She noted that Pakistan's youth—comprising 60% of the population—are a valu-

able national asset, and steps are being taken to enhance higher education, including scholarship and student exchange programs.

Senator Rubina Qaim khani noted that numerous EU-supported projects are active in Punjab and emphasized that Sindh also presents vast investment opportunities. Senator Gurdeep Singh reiterated Pakistan's commitment to deepening relations with European countries and stressed that religious minorities in Pakistan enjoy full constitutional rights and religious freedom.

The EU delegation expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and reaffirmed the European Union's desire to enhance cooperation with Pakistan across multiple sectors.

In conclusion, Deputy Chairman Senate urged EU member states to take a firm stance against the ongoing atrocities and human rights violations in Palestine and occupied Kashmir. He stressed that a just resolution of these issues is essential for lasting peace and stability. He expressed confidence that the EU delegation's visit would serve to further deepen bilateral cooperation, mutual understanding, and strategic partnership.



ISLAMABAD: A kite picks pieces of meat thrown by people as an act of mercy at Chak Shahzad area in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Minister Kayani, IFC discuss key steps to modernise PR

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level delegation from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) led by Global Director Linda Rudo Munyengerwa met with Railways Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, with senior officials from both the Ministry of Railways and IFC in attendance to explore potential areas of collaboration.

The discussions centered on modernizing Pakistan Railways through strategic public-private partnerships, upgrading critical infrastructure, and enhancing freight train capacity. Drawing on successful railway governance models from the UK, Brazil, India, and other countries, the meeting explored best practices to improve operational efficiency, service delivery and the regulatory framework to support long-term growth.

Minister Bilal Azhar Kayani emphasized the government's commitment to modernizing Pakistan Railways. "Our railways have significant potential to drive economic growth, boost trade and improve regional connectivity. Tuesday's meeting is an important step in ensuring our rail network meets future demands with greater efficiency," he said.

He highlighted the need for international collaboration, including multilateral development partners such as IFC, to bring in expertise and investment required for transforming the sector. "Public-private partnerships are crucial in modernizing infrastructure and improving services. We want to create a working environment where both the private and public sectors can contribute to developing a rail system that benefits everyone,"

the minister added.

Ms. Linda Rudo Munyengerwa also emphasized the importance of a strong railway system for Pakistan's economic future. "A modern, efficient railway system is key to boosting trade, enhancing connectivity, and supporting Pakistan's development. IFC is ready to offer its technical expertise, advisory services, and investment solutions to help make this a reality," she said.

Looking ahead, both Minister Kayani and Ms. Munyengerwa expressed their commitment to continuing the conversation and taking practical steps to improve Pakistan Railways.

They agreed to follow up on the issues discussed today and work toward making the railway sector a central pillar of Pakistan's economic growth.

Police dismiss 15 officers for misconduct and dereliction of duty

ISLAMABAD (APP): Fifteen personnel of Islamabad Capital Police, including five Head Constables and seven Constables, have been dismissed from service over negligence in duty and misuse of authority.

An official told APP on Tuesday that departmental inquiries were conducted under the supervision of a Superintendent of Police (SP), which found the personnel guilty of misconduct and failure to perform their duties effectively.

He said the dismissed officers include Sub-Inspector Qasim Zia, Sub-Inspector Talat Mehmood, and Assistant Sub-

Inspector Zaheer Ahmed. He said Head Constables Almas Haider, Muhammad Ishaq, Waqas Idrees, Naveed Butter, and Sajid Mehmood are also among those dismissed. He added that Constables Muhammad Nadeem, Muhammad Imran, Nazim Abbas, Zahid Khan, Ahsan Farooq, Imran Ahmed, and Qazi Azhar have also been removed from service following the inquiry.

He said the officials were penalized for exceeding their authority, failing to serve the public, and not taking effective action against criminal elements.

He said there is no place in the police force for those who fail to uphold the principles of public service, misuse their powers, or neglect their duties. He added that strict departmental punishments would be handed down in cases of poor performance, corruption, abuse of power, and failure to protect the lives and property of citizens.

He said personnel demonstrating good performance would be rewarded. "All officers and personnel must perform their duties with full honesty, considering their service a form of worship," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedal Khan, presents a shield to the European Union delegation following a meeting. —APP Photo

104 couples to tie the knot under the "Dhee Rani" programme

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engineer Amir Khattak has said that as many as 104 couples will tie the knot under phase II of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's "Dhee Rani" program.

Presiding over the meeting to review the arrangements of the Divisional Coordination Committee for the mass marriage ceremony, he said that the ceremony would be held on April 21 at the Fortress Event Complex, Main Express Highway.

The "Dhee Rani Program" was an exemplary initiative of social service by the Punjab Government, he said and directed the concerned to make the best kind of arrangements for a mass marriage ceremony of deserving families' daughters.

The director of the Social Welfare Department, Shahid Rana, briefed the meeting that the transportation of the couples has been entrusted to the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) while Rawalpindi Arts Council will organize the Band and cultural activities.

Rawalpindi Police will ensure the security arrangements, while the district administration will be responsible for the distribution of gifts, the hall's decoration, food and drink, and seating arrangements for the guests.

An additional Commissioner Syed Nazarat Ali, Secretary RTA Rashid Ali, Director Social Welfare Shahid Rana and other concerned officers were present.

Traffic Police celebrates Punjab Cultural Day

RAWALPINDI (APP): In line with the vision of the Punjab Chief Minister, the City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi marked Punjab Cultural Day with a colorful ceremony at the Traffic Headquarters. The event showcased the rich heritage of Punjab and Potohar, celebrating the province's traditions, arts, and linguistic diversity.

Under the directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Bensch Fatima, the program was broadcast live on CTP's social media platforms, allowing a wider audience to engage with the festivities. Inspector Numan Razaq (Incharge FM Radio) hosted the event.

Renowned poet, writer, and broadcaster Abid Hussain Janjua graced the occasion, enthralling the audience with verses that highlighted Punjab's history, values, and cultural values. Traffic Wardens Yasir, Zahid Bukhari, and Tauseef Ahmed Kalyami also delivered speeches emphasizing Punjab's cultural significance.

The event featured captivating performances by Potohari poets, including Shiraz Akhtar Mughal, Farid Zahid, and Sub-Inspector Naveed Aslam Kahut, who infused the gathering with regional charm. Traffic Warden Chaudhry Zulfiqar (sitar player) and his ensemble added a melodic touch which received great appreciation by the audience. Sanitary worker Liaquat Bhatti energized the crowd with traditional music.

Overseas Pakistanis are the real ambassador of the country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) Chairman Syed Qamar Raza on Tuesday said overseas Pakistanis are the ambassadors of the country and called them "pride of the nation" who hold the flag aloft "wherever they are in the world."

Speaking at the First Annual Overseas Pakistanis' Convention, he opened the session by calling it a significant moment for the community. "Today is a day we had long hoped for," Raza said over 12 million Pakistanis have been residing in more than 160 countries around the world.

"Solving the problems of overseas Pakistanis doesn't require money - it only needs the government's attention," he added.

He expressed gratitude to over 1,200 overseas Pakistanis for joining the convention with their families on short notice. He acknowledged the high

turnout, stating that the presence of so many participants showed their strong connection to Pakistan. "Your participation proves your commitment to the country," he said.

Qamar shared that when the idea of holding a convention was presented to the Prime Minister, he responded with full support. A high-level committee was immediately formed, led by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, to organize the event and prepare a 14-point plan for overseas Pakistanis.

He added that the prime minister understands the importance of the overseas community and values their contributions.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also directed that this convention be held every year to maintain regular engagement with the overseas community.

Qamar praised the role of overseas Pakistanis and said that they are the real ambassadors and precious

assets of the country.

He pointed to examples such as Sadiq Khan, who was recently elected Mayor of London for a third term, and the Bestway Group, a major business entity abroad. Both, he said, carry Pakistan's identity with them wherever they go.

Raza noted that the value of overseas Pakistanis goes beyond financial contributions. "You are not just sending money back home; you are the voice and face of Pakistan around the world," he said.

He said holding of this convention would not have been possible without the support and guidance of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir. He also praised the army chief and said he (Gen Asim) told him that these (overseas Pakistanis) are "my people; I want to speak to them." OPF chief said that the next convention would be held next year in April.

BISP to open bank accounts for nine million women beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a groundbreaking move to empower women across Pakistan, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will soon initiate individual bank accounts for all nine million female beneficiaries, marking a significant stride toward financial autonomy, transparency, and dignity.

"This initiative is transformative," said Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson BISP, during a high-level meeting with State Bank of Pakistan Deputy Governor Mr. Saleem Ullah and Secretary Amer Ali Ahmed at BISP headquarters. "The welfare of our beneficiar-

ies remains our top priority, and this endeavor will ensure enhanced transparency and empowerment for millions of women under BISP," she added.

The meeting finalized plans for the pilot launch of the bank account initiative in seven districts nationwide. Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized that this move aligns with the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to fortify women's roles in Pakistan's socio-economic development.

BISP Secretary Amer Ali Ahmad stressed the need for meticulous groundwork and a robust outreach and media campaign to ensure a seamless rollout.

"This is a pivotal initiative, and we must ensure beneficiaries feel integral to it. All our field offices must be prepared to help maximize the benefits of this project," he said. SBP Deputy Governor Mr. Saleem Ullah highlighted the importance of system integration, data matching through web portals and SMS, and close coordination among all stakeholders for the success of this transformation.

DG C&T Mr. Inam and CTO Mr. Moamer Qureshi also participated in the meeting, reiterating their departments' readiness to support this major reform initiative.

CDA Chairman directs restoration of 23 water fountains

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, on Tuesday directed swift restoration of 23 non-functional water fountains across the city, accompanied by artistic lighting.

It was decided in a meeting centered on enhancing Islamabad's aesthetic appeal through large-scale tree plantation, beautification of major roads, and upgrading recreational facilities. The CDA has identified five major avenues for immediate beautification include, Expressway, Margalla Road, Club Road, Park Road and Faisal Avenue. These roads will undergo lane marking, footpath repairs, green belt development, and medians' beautification.

Modern lighting, decorative planters, seasonal flowers, and natural boulders will be installed to enhance visual appeal.

All major roundabouts will be revamped, and mega parks will be upgraded with walking tracks, swings, and horticultural improvements. To combat pollution, urban forest projects will be prioritized, focusing on increasing green cover and sustainable land use. Sprinkler systems will be optimized to ensure plant survival amid water scarcity. A

mobile app will be launched to provide citizens affordable plants and seeds from CDA nurseries, promoting public participation in greening efforts.

Chairman Randhawa emphasized that these measures aim to elevate Islamabad's global image while ensuring environmental sustainability. "Our goal is to blend beauty with eco-conscious urban planning, making Islamabad a model city," he stated.

CDA urged to fully operationalize electric bus route: Residents in Islamabad have urged the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman to fully operationalize the electric bus route from Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) to Golra.

The incomplete implementation of this vital service is causing significant inconvenience for daily commuters, they said. Locals from Golra and nearby areas emphasized that this route is crucial for the city's transport network but remains only partially active. They expressed their frustration to the Pakistan Press

International (PPI), highlighting that despite the challenging launch of the service, it has not yet reached full functionality. Commuters are particularly concerned with the first

bus departing at 9:00 AM, which they argue is too late for most. They are demanding earlier operations starting at 6:00 AM with buses running at 10-minute intervals to meet the public's needs.

Additionally, commuters criticized the increased interval of the electric metro bus service from Bahara Kahu Jailani to Mandi Mor, which was extended from 15 to 30 minutes. They appealed for a reversal of this decision, citing increased crowding and delays as a result.

The shuttle service from Jailani to Satrah Meel has also seen changes, now running every 30 minutes instead of 15, coupled with a fare increase from Rs. 20 to Rs. 50. Passengers reported long waits at the Jailani terminal and noted that many are compelled to walk due to the infrequent service. Protests have arisen, with locals demanding direct buses from Jailani to Satrah Meel or Intiaz Store near Mandi Mor at more frequent intervals. They believe this adjustment would alleviate the burden of double fares and reduce travel delays.

There is also a growing call among residents for the extension of the Green Line bus service to reach Satrah Meel or Intiaz Store, aiming to enhance connectivity in the area.

296 Afghans freed from jails

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation says 296 Afghans released from prisons in Pakistan have returned to their homeland. Citing border officials in Kandahar’s Spin Boldak border, the ministry wrote on X the 296 Afghans, who had spent one to five days in jails, had been arrested in various parts of Pakistan. After receiving humanitarian assistance, the returnees were transported to their respective native areas, the ministry added.

2 killed in Takhar accident

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): Two individuals have been killed and two others injured as a result of a traffic accident in northern Takhar province of Afghanistan, police said on Tuesday. In a statement, the police headquarters said the accident took place when a vehicle veered off the road and overturned in Kor Aatam area of Rastaq district Tuesday (morning). It said two people died and two others were injured in the accident.

Ensuring public comfort, refugee care IE’s moral obligation

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Administrative Deputy of the Prime Minister’s Office, during a meeting with Mawlawi Abdul Rahman Muslim Kunduzi, the Governor of Helmand, stated that addressing the problems of citizens and ensuring their comfort are among the duties and responsibilities of the Islamic Emirate. The Press Office of the Prime Minister today released a statement saying that during this meeting, Mawlawi Abdul Rahman Muslim Kunduzi provided information on the general situation and local governance in the province. He stated that the Mujahideen and local officials in Helmand are working tirelessly to serve the people and resolve their problems. The Governor of Helmand also addressed the issue of assisting forced migrants returning from Pakistan to Afghanistan via Helmand province. He stated that all provincial officials are sparing no effort to provide services and shelter to the migrants, working around the clock to serve them. Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Administrative Deputy of the Prime Minister’s Office, commended the efforts and performance of local officials in Helmand province. He stated that addressing the concerns of citizens and ensuring their well-being are among the core duties and responsibilities of the Islamic Emirate, urging local authorities to intensify their efforts in this regard.

Fitrat rejects report about United States weapons



KABUL (Pajhwok): Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on Tuesday rejected a Washington Post report that some American weapons in Afghanistan had fallen into the hands of militants. The post reported that US weapons from Afghan war gave militants a deadly advantage, saying it found that sixty-three weapons seized from militants were provided by the US government to Afghan forces during America’s 20-year war. The IEA said American weapons were safe in Afghanistan, but these weapons had been sold on the black market in the past. “This does not mean that everyone who has American weapons must have received them from Afghanistan,” said Hamdullah

Fitrat, deputy spokesman for Islamic Emirate, while responding to the report: “It is wrong to say that American weapons and other ammunition have been smuggled from Afghanistan to other countries and have reached the hands of some militant groups there.” Fitrat said weapons in the past were supplied in containers to occupying forces and other ports and those convoys had been many times attacked and broken and their weapons and equipment reached the black market. Fitrat said all military ammunition and all weapons in Afghanistan have been safely and securely stored and any kind of smuggling has been prevented.

Work on residential scheme begins in Greshk

L A S H K A R G A H (Pajhwok): Construction work was initiated on a residential scheme in Gershak district of southern Helmand province on Tuesday. The township, which includes houses, a proper water system, healthcare centres, schools, commercial markets and playgrounds, is being constructed on 325 acres of land by a private firm in Dehmazang area of the district. Mohammad Isa Omari, head of the company, said: “Omari Township, whose construction started today, is planned on 325 acres of private land. It will include 2,700 houses, 100 commercial supermarkets, healthcare centres, schools, madrasas, and playgrounds. It will also directly create job opportunities for 2,000 people.” Meanwhile, Urban Development and Housing Director Maulvi Shamsullah Nazim said that the township was being built in coordination with the Ministry of Urban Development. He stated: “The plan for this township was designed by the technical team of the Urban Development Department and has been approved by the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. It is expected to create employment for

Silk weaving: Ancient heritage of Herat on brink of extinction



HERAT (TOLOnews): The ancient silk weaving industry in Herat, which has a glorious history, has recently declined. With the overwhelming imports of silk clothing from China and Pakistan, domestic silk production has significantly decreased. Many silk weavers in Herat have stopped their work, while others have turned to different professions. Aminullah, who has worked behind a silk weaving machine for 60 years out of his 70-year life, said that with the passing of his youthful days, his craft has also lost its prominence. This silk weaver in Herat told TOLOnews: “There were nearly 200 silk weaving machines in Herat, but now it has been reduced to just ten. The silk weaving industry is on the brink of destruction. The way forward for this industry is for people to use domestic silk products such as turbans, shawls, and handkerchiefs, and we no longer need foreign goods.” Amir Mohammad, another silk weaver from Herat, said: “This street used to be full of silk weavers, but since the arrival of Chinese handkerchiefs a few years ago, many silk weavers became unemployed or changed their profession.” In the heart of the old city of Herat, the silk clothing market exists. However, the number of customers in this market has significantly decreased compared to the past. Ali Reza Hosseini, a silk seller in Herat, told TOLOnews: “The silk market in Herat has lost its former vibrancy with the increase of Pakistani and

Chinese goods.” Ahmad, another silk weaver, said: “The number of silk weaving machines had reached four or five, but I brought some young people to learn this craft, and now it has reached ten machines. I feel that this industry is coming to an end.” Officials of the Ministry of Information and Culture in Herat pledged that it is committed to the growth of the ancient silk weaving industry in the province. Hamidullah Ghyasi, head of culture and art at the Ministry of Information and Culture in Herat, told TOLOnews: “The Ministry of Information and Culture in Herat has seriously supported the silk weaving industry. In the Dar al-Funun Herywa, located in the historical fortress of Herat (Qala-i-Ikhtiyaruddin), we have allocated a section for the silk weaving industry.” Silk weaving is one of the ancient industries in Herat. In the past, most citizens used silk clothing. However, with the rise in the import of low-quality silk clothing and pieces from neighboring countries, especially China and Pakistan, the indigenous silk weaving industry in Herat has lost its vibrancy.

Hundreds of youth enrolled in vocational program

GARDEZ (Pajhwok): A six-month long vocational training programme involving 280 youth has been initiated in southeastern Paktia province, an official announced on Tuesday. Labour and Social Affairs Director Qari Mohammad Rahim Nasrat told a ceremony in this regard the participants would receive both theoretical and practical training in mobile phone and motorbike repair, electricity and tailoring. He added that his department was also working to launch similar vocational training programmes for newly returned youth. One of the participants, Shafiqullah, told Pajhwok Afghan News that vocational training was vital for creating job opportunities for unemployed youth in the community. According to him, these trainings could help many young people stay away from drugs and, by learning a trade, they will be able to provide for their families. Rohullah, another trainee specialising in motorbike repair, also told Pajhwok that after completing the training, he plans to start his own business. He called on the authorities to support them with necessary tools and equipment after the training and help create job opportunities for them.

185,000 national ID cards issued

FARYAB (BNA): More than 185,000 national ID cards were issued across Faryab province last year, according to the provincial Statistics and Information Department. The total includes 101,921 electronic ID cards and 83,190 paper-based IDs distributed in 2023. Mawlawi Abdul Bari Anqiyadi, the head of the department, stated that in addition to ID distribution, the office also processed 16,346 civil registration cases—covering births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. Of these, 15,230 were birth certificates, reflecting the growing need for official documentation across the province. He added that 17,373 citizens received assistance with correcting or updating information on their citizenship ID cards, a service that is increasingly in demand as documentation plays a critical role in accessing public services and travel. The National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) continues to provide both paper and electronic ID services, along with civil registration and statistical services, through its provincial and district-level offices throughout Afghanistan. These efforts are seen as essential to improving governance and ensuring citizens are documented and counted.

Drug smuggler arrested

KABUL (Pajhwok): Anti-Counter Narcotic Department personnel have arrested a notorious drug smuggler in northeastern Khost province, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said on Tuesday. On its X platform, MoI wrote the drug smuggler was detained by police during an operation with narcotics. “A Kalashnikov, six magazines, 400 Kalashnikov bullets, a weapon, two hand grenades, and some hashish were seized from the detainee”. The arrested suspect will be handed over to judicial organs after investigation.

Man killed in Jawzjan

SHEBERGHAN (Pajhwok): A person has been killed as a result of a traffic accident in Shiberghan city of northern Jawzjan province, an official said on Tuesday. Police spokesman Qari Abdul Satar Halimi told Pajhwok Afghan News the collision took place between a motorbike and a truck in Jang Bagh area of Shiberghan city today. According to him, the motorcyclist died in the accident. Halimi attributed the accident to reckless driving.

Expansion of railway network discussed



KABUL (Pajhwok): Institute for Strategic Studies at the Office of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mohammad Ashraf Haqshanas, spokesman for Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) wrote on his X handle. Establishing a rail-link between Central Asia and South Asia via Afghanistan, expanding and standardis-

ing Afghanistan’s national railway infrastructure and enhancing the capacity and volume of commercial freight on Afghan railways came up for discussion. The two sides also deliberated on increasing the transit of Kazakh goods through Afghanistan, strengthening bilateral cooperation in the railway sector, and building technical capacity of Afghan railway personnel. The Kazakh delegation pledged that technical teams from Kazakhstan would soon engage with their Afghan counterparts to hold joint discussions and advance the implementation of the agreed initiatives.

Construction work on six check dams kicks off in Khost

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Construction work on six small check dams has been launched by the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in three districts of southeastern Khost province, an official said on Tuesday. Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Director Sher Mohammad Zabi told Pajhwok Afghan News the six check dams would cost \$120,000. He said: “These check dams are being built at a cost of \$120,000 with financial support of FAO in Sabri, Bak and Zazai Maidan districts, it is expected that their construction would provide a sustainable water supply for agricultural activities”. Some residents considered these projects necessary and explained such

dams would strengthen their economy. Amir Khan, a resident, told Pajhwok: “If the government and partner agencies build more small and large dams for rural areas, it will improve people’s economy and strengthen the country’s agricultural sector. These check dams will help keep the groundwater level high, Haji Saddam, another resident, added. “Our lands have dry soil due to lack of water, and nothing is cultivated, so if dams are built, God willing, our dry lands will be irrigated”. In 1403 solar year, more than 10 check dams have been built in different districts of Khost with financial assistance from the Ministry of Water and Energy.

Parandi Dam in Panjshir to start operating in near future

PANJSHIR (TOLOnews): Mohammad Agha Hakim, the governor of Panjshir, stated at a meeting called “Urban Dialogue” that the Parandi Dam project has been completed and will start operating in the near future. He added that the Dalan-Sang Dam in Panjshir has also been approved by the leader of the Islamic Emirate, and initial work on it has begun. According to the governor, the cost of the Parandi Dam is estimated at 7.6 million USD, and it has the capacity to produce four megawatts of electricity. Mohammad Agha Hakim further noted: “In the coming days, we will inaugurate the Parandi Dam, a project that had been halted for years. Thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Energy and Water and the leadership of the province, this project has been completed.” This meeting was organized by local officials in Panjshir with the aim of strengthening the connection between the people and the local government. The local authorities shared their annual reports with the people during the meeting. Rahmatullah Mohammadi, the mayor of Bazarak, Panjshir, announced the construction of a recreational park worth over 70 million afghani in the current solar year. Regarding the park, Rahmatullah Mohammadi said: “A recreational park worth 70 million afghani will be built. The letter of approval for this park has been issued by the Administration Affairs Department, and the contract has been signed. The company that has been contracted will arrive in Panjshir tomorrow.” Participants in the meeting identified the destruction of roads, the poor quality of telecommunications networks, lack of



access to clean drinking water, and shortages in the healthcare and education sectors as serious challenges faced by the people of the province, and they called for solutions to these issues. Baz Mohammad, a resident of Panjshir, said: “No one has addressed our agriculture, nor our canal issues. The people are dealing with these matters despite extreme poverty and hardship.” Mohammad Sharif, another resident of the province, said: “We ask the officials of the Ministry of Public Works and those responsible for roads to carry out their work with genuine care.” Local officials in Panjshir assured the residents during the meeting that they would address the challenges faced by the people of the province throughout the current solar year.

Dirt tracks trigger complaints in nine districts of Farah

FARAH CITY (Pajhwok): Roads leading to all but two districts of western Farah province remain unpaved, posing serious challenges to residents. In the 11-district province, a predominantly agricultural region lying cheek by jowl with the Iranian border, Bala Baluk and Farah Rud alone have paved roads. Deeply frustrated with the deplorable state of link routes across Farah, residents complain they have to grapple with a whole host of transportation problems on a daily basis. In the absence of proper roads, they grumble, patients cannot reach hospital in time. Agricultural products cannot easily find their way to the market as commute between the districts and Farah City, the provincial capital, takes several hours. Haji Ibrahim, a resident of Bakwa district, says: “The distance should take 45 minutes, but we have to travel for four hours to reach the city. The roads are damaged and we are forced to pay 450 afghanis in fare.” He believes if the Bakwa road is constructed, the travel time will be considerably shortened for passengers bound for Gulistan and Delaram districts. Ali Ahmad, who hails from Jawin district, also lamented the lousy condition of local roads. In particular, he says, it is extremely difficult to trans-

port patients to healthcare centres in time. He grumbled: “Our road is in a dreadful state and we don’t have an adequate hospital in the district either. We have no choice but to drive our patients along this broken road to the city. If the road were repaired, we could get there in 30 minutes — but currently, it takes three hours. We urge the authorities to take action.” Meanwhile, Mohammad Wazir, a driver from the Diwal Surkh village of Khak-i-Safid district, said vehicles frequently broke down due to the bumpy condition of the district road. “Farah is a largely agricultural province. If our roads are constructed, we will be able to easily bring our produce to the market,” Wazir pointed out. Meanwhile, the Department of Public Works acknowledged that the condition of most districts roads remained unsatisfactory. Eng. Sher Ahmad Nasri, an official of the department, told Pajhwok Afghan News under a five-year development plan, 110 kilometres of road would be built in Bakwa district. This route would pass through Gulistan and Parchaman, linking the Delaram district of north-western Nimroz with Ghor in the east. He said construction work was underway on a separate 120-kilometre road from the Afghanistan-Iran border to Farah City. This project was initiated by the Iranian government, with 64 kilometres having been constructed during the previous administration. Upon completion, it will link Qala-i-Kah district with the provincial capital.



DARFUR: Displaced Sudanese gathered at a camp near the town of Tawila.

EU and Britain boost aid for Sudan at London conference

LONDON (AFP): Britain and European Union countries led international calls Tuesday for “an immediate and permanent ceasefire” to end the devastating war in Sudan, as nations pledged more than 800 million euros in fresh humanitarian aid.

The international community also “stressed the necessity of preventing any partition of Sudan,” a statement at the end of a London conference said, as the conflict entered its third year. The war erupted on April 15, 2023 in a bitter power struggle between rival generals leading Sudan’s regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Neither of the strongmen, whose forces have been both accused of atrocities, were present for the London talks which gathered ministers from some 15 countries, and high-level representatives from international bodies such as the United Nations. More than 13 million people have been uprooted and tens of thousands killed in what the United Nations describes as the world’s worst hunger and displacement crises.

“We simply cannot look away,” the UK’s foreign minister David Lammy said as he opened the talks. “We have got to persuade the warring parties to protect civilians, to let aid in and across the country, and to put peace first,” he said. Various peace efforts have so far failed to lead to a ceasefire.

But Lammy said it was “morally wrong” to give up on Sudan “when we see so many civilians beheaded, infants as young as one subjected to sexual violence, more people facing

famine than anywhere else in the world.” The continued fighting has fueled fears the tensions will spill over Sudan’s borders and stir further instability in the impoverished Horn of Africa region.

And the final statement “underscored that the non-interference by outside actors remains paramount.” It also “rejected any plans, including any announcement of parallel governments, that risk the unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Sudan.” “There can be no military solution in Sudan, only an immediate, unconditional secession of hostilities,” warned the African Union’s commissioner for political affairs, Bankole Adeoye earlier in the day, urging inclusive peace talks.

A UN-backed assessment has concluded that famine is now blighting parts of the country. Britain’s foreign ministry said more than 30 million people were in desperate need, and 12 million women and girls were in danger of gender-based violence. Lammy unveiled 120 million pounds (140 million euros) in new aid for Sudan, with the EU pledging more than 522 million euros (\$591 million) to address the crisis, and Germany putting up some 125 million euros.

France also announced an extra 50 million euros in humanitarian aid this year. “How can we forget the world’s largest humanitarian crisis?” asked German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. During a visit to a refugee camp, she said she heard “horrific reports of women and children being raped” and of people dying of hunger. Germany and France as well as the

European Union and the 55-member African Union co-hosted the conference with the British government in London. The United States and Saudi Arabia were also said to be attending. Sudan’s government has protested that it was not invited, soliciting a rebuke from Khartoum. But the German foreign ministry said both the Sudanese army and the RSF militia were unwilling to come to the table.

Sudan has accused the United Arab Emirates of supporting the paramilitary forces with arms shipments. Those fighters and the Gulf state deny the charges. In a statement Tuesday, the UAE issued “an urgent call for peace” and accused both sides of “committing atrocities.” It said a senior foreign ministry official would attend the London conference. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot stressed “the unity of Sudan must be preserved” and there could be no unilateral government imposed on civilians.

The conflict pits the regular army of Sudan’s de facto leader Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan against the RSF led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo after relations between the two men soured following a 2021 coup. That coup ousted a fragile transitional government put in place following the 2019 overthrow of longtime leader Omar Al-Bashir.

The RSF are rooted in Darfur and control much of its territory, as well as parts of Sudan’s south. The army reclaimed the capital Khartoum last month, and holds sway in the east and north, leaving Africa’s third-largest country divided in two.

Israel has killed 71 civilians in Lebanon: UN

NEW YORK: The United Nations says at least 71 civilians have been killed by Israeli forces in Lebanon since a ceasefire was struck at the end of last year. Thameen Al-Kheetan, spokesperson for the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said on Tuesday that the death toll included 14 women and nine children. He called for investigations into “each and every military action where civilians are killed”.

OHCHR raised concerns about recent Israeli military operations hitting civilian infrastructure, including a strike on April 3 that destroyed a newly established medical centre run by the Islamic Health Society in the southern city of Naqoura. It also noted that at least five rockets, two mortars and a drone have been launched from Lebanon towards northern Israel, according to the Israeli army, and tens of thousands of Israelis remain displaced from the north.

“The ceasefire must hold, and any escalation is a risk for stability in general in Lebanon, Israel and the whole region,” Al-Kheetan said. Later on Tuesday, Lebanon’s Ministry of Public Health reported that an Israeli drone strike on a car in the southern town of Aitaroun killed one person and injured three, including a child.

The Israeli military in a statement said the air strike killed “a squad commander in the special operations unit” of Hezbollah. Israel has continued to strike Lebanon, including attacks on the capital, Beirut, since a November 27 ceasefire, which largely halted more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the armed group Hezbollah, including two months of all-out war.

Under the truce, Hezbollah was to withdraw fighters from south of Lebanon’s Litani River and dismantle any remaining military infrastructure there while Israel was to pull out all of its forces from southern Lebanon. Lebanon’s army has been deploying in the south near the border with Israel as Israeli forces have withdrawn although Israel continues to hold five fortified positions in Lebanon that it deems “strategic”.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun told Al Jazeera on Monday that the army was “dismantling tunnels and warehouses and confiscating weapons bases” south of the Litani “without any problem from Hezbollah”. On Thursday, a senior Hezbollah official told the Reuters news agency the group is ready to hold talks with the Lebanese president about its weapons if Israel withdraws from southern Lebanon and stops its strikes. — Aljazeera

Naval chief inaugurates new block at PN hospital

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy continues to uphold its commitment to the wellbeing of coastal communities by expanding advanced healthcare facilities along the coastal belt of Balochistan, Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, inaugurated a newly constructed block at Pakistan Navy Hospital PNS DARMAN JAH during a ceremony held in Ormara.

The newly operationalized block is equipped with state-of-the-art medical facilities, including a modern Operation Theatre (OT) complex, High Dependency Unit (HDU), Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Gynaecology Complex, Paediatrics Department, and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). These additions mark a significant advancement in strengthening the region’s healthcare infrastructure.

PNS DARMAN JAH is the only healthcare facility located along the coastal highway between Karachi and Parni, serving as a lifeline for the residents of Ormara and adjoining areas by providing quality medical services. While addressing the inauguration ceremony, Admiral Naveed Ashraf commended the hospital administration for their dedication and reaffirmed Pakistan Navy’s unwavering commitment to the uplift of coastal communities.

KP CM directs release of funds for development projects

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has taken a significant step to expedite the completion of due for completion development projects in various sectors, deciding to release 100% of the funds required for this purpose. He has directed the concerned authorities to promptly release required Rs. 13 billion to ensure the timely completion of these projects and delete them from the Annual Development Program (ADP) by the end of the current fiscal year.

With the release of these funds, 511 key public welfare development projects across the province will be completed by June this year. The Chief Minister emphasized that unnecessary delays in these public welfare projects will not be tolerated and strict action will be taken against officials responsible for any delays.

He was presiding over a high-level meeting regarding development projects on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister on Finance, Muzzammil Aslam, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Additional Chief Secretaries Ikrumullah and Muhammad Abid Majeed and other relevant administrative secretaries.

The meeting reviewed the progress on projects included in the development programs of various departments including health, education, local government, communications, agriculture, and public health engineering, among others.

The Chief Minister stat-

KP govt releases white paper on Mines and Minerals Bill

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Tuesday released a white paper on the proposed Mines and Minerals Bill 2025, outlining a comprehensive framework to align mineral laws with those of other provinces and the Federal government.

According to the document, the new legislation aims to attract large-scale domestic and international investment. A key feature of the proposed bill is the establishment of a Mineral Investment Facilitation Authority to streamline investment processes. The white paper highlights the introduction of a Digital Mining System to ensure transparency and accessibility in the licensing process. To facilitate easier lease acquisition, the license duration has been reduced to three years. The government also plans to crack down on illegal mining through stricter penalties and confiscation of machinery.

However, it was clarified that existing leases and applications will remain valid under the new law. The document further mandates the creation of a comprehensive geological database to support exploration and investment decisions. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, commenting on the proposed amendments, stated that misinformation is being spread about the bill, possibly by vested interests opposed to reforms. “No provincial authority is being handed over to any individual or group,” he said, adding that illegal mining at four gold sites has continued unchecked for the past 76 years, and previous governments failed to take action. The government insists that the new legislation will bring greater regulation, transparency, and economic opportunity to KP’s mining sector.

ed that unnecessary delays in development projects result in wastage of taxpayers’ money adding that frequent revisions of project costs must also be avoided. He further said that inquiry will be conducted into frequent cost revisions of development projects.

The Chief Minister has also decided to immediately launch work on the incumbent provincial government’s flagship projects. As part of this decision, work on 29 different flagship projects will commence soon. He has directed the release of Rs. 12 billion within this month for

these flagship projects and stated that funds required for the timely completion of development projects will be provided on a priority basis.

For the first time in the province’s history, an additional Rs. 30 billion is being released on top of the funds allocated for development projects. The meeting also reviewed the current status of fund utilization for development projects across various departments. The Chief Minister directed the relevant authorities to ensure 100% utilization of the released funds.

No one can be arrested without an FIR: SC

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail of Supreme Court has remarked that no one can be arrested without an FIR, nor can anyone be detained without a magistrate’s order.

He expressed these remarks while hearing intra-court appeals against civilian trials in military courts. A seven-member constitutional bench led by Justice Aminuddin Khan heard the appeals. At the start, Justice Mandokhail asked lawyers to conclude their arguments within 20 minutes. Khawaja Haris, counsel for the Ministry of Defence, said he would try to complete his arguments

today. Additional Attorney General Amair Rehman noted that if Haris concluded today, the Attorney General would present his arguments tomorrow. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that the law also provides some basic rights, and Rangers or FC personnel dismissed from service appeal through service tribunals.

Justice Mandokhail questioned whether in the police, appeals are heard by the IGP or trials conducted by the SP. He added that even in India, independent forums are available and stressed that no arrest or detention is legal without an FIR or magistrate’s order.

Justice Mazhar stated that those involved in the May 9 incidents were charged under the Official Secrets Act. The army did not directly lodge any FIRs; civilian custody was handed to the military through anti-terrorism courts. Whether such detention was lawful is a separate matter, he added.

Justice Mandokhail emphasized that this case will have long-term consequences, just like the FB Ali case, which is still being debated decades later. The Supreme Court adjourned the hearing until tomorrow. Khawaja Haris will continue his rebuttal, and the court has directed him to conclude within 30 minutes.

PHC extends protective bail of 10 PTI leaders

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has extended protective bail of 10 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, including Ali Amin Gandapur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Members National Assembly Asad Qaiser and Shahram Tarakai, and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Umar Ayub, on Tuesday.

The two-member bench, comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Salahuddin, heard the petitions filed by the PTI leaders seeking extension of their protective bail. The court extended the protective bail for the leaders, restraining the authorities from arresting them.

During the hearing, CM Ali Amin Gandapur’s lawyer, Alam Khan Adenzai, informed the court that the petitioner unable to attend the proceedings due to a crucial meeting in Islamabad. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor revealed that there was one ongoing investigation against the Chief Minister, while the Deputy Attorney General stated that there are 32 cases registered in Islamabad and 33 in Punjab.

The Additional Advocate General informed the court that eight cases were registered against the Chief Minister in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After hearing the argu-

ments, the court extended CM Ali Amin Gandapur’s protective bail until May 23.

The court also heard the petition filed by Asad Qaiser, who is currently abroad. His lawyer informed the court that Asad Qaiser is unable to attend the proceedings due to his absence from the country. The Deputy Attorney General stated that there were 15 cases registered against Qaiser in Islamabad and one investigation by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in Peshawar.

The Additional Advocate General informed the court that three cases were registered against Asad Qaiser in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After hearing the arguments, the court extended Asad Qaiser’s protective bail until May 13 and directed him to appear before the relevant courts.

The court also extended the protective bail of Opposition Leader Umar Ayub until May 15. The court directed him to appear before the relevant courts and cooperate with the investigation. The court also extended the protective bail of other PTI leaders, including Shahram Tarakai, Asif Khan, Shandana Gulzar, Zahir Shah Toru, and Faisal Khan. The court directed them to appear before the relevant courts and cooperate with the investigation.

The court directed the federal government to pro-

vide details of cases registered against the PTI leaders. The court also directed the leaders to appear before the relevant courts and cooperate with the investigation. The Opposition Leader Umar Ayub, stated that PML-N leader Shahbaz Sharif and the PPP are equally involved in the canals issue. “PPP is shedding crocodile tears,” he added.

This he said while speaking to the media after appearing at the Peshawar High Court Umar Ayub expressed gratitude for the court’s decision to extend his protective bail. Umar Ayub claimed that discussions are underway regarding Mines and Minerals Act, but any decision in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be made only after receiving instructions from PTI founder Imran Khan.

The opposition leader criticized the government’s approach, stating that FIRs are registered against PTI leaders when they raise their voices. He also accused the Islamabad IG of concealing two FIRs in the report submitted to the court. In a related development, PTI leader Shahram Tarakai echoed Umar Ayub’s sentiments, stating that the government had registered fabricated cases against them.

He assured that the PTI-led Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government wouldn’t pass any law detrimental to the province’s interests without the approval of the party’s founder chairman.

3 children die after consuming poisonous sweets

E.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Almost three children dead and five were hospitalized after consuming poisonous sweets in Qila Sahib Singh area of Hafizabad distributed unidentified individual, on Tuesday. According to family sources, the children aged between six and thirteen years were playing outside their homes when an unknown person, reportedly a rickshaw driver, handed them sweets.

Soon after consumption, the children began to show severe symptoms of poisoning. They were rushed to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital Hafizabad, where three of the children succumbed despite medical efforts. The remaining five children, all of whom are close relatives of the deceased, were provided emergency treatment before being referred in critical condition to Children’s Hospital Lahore for specialized care.

The deceased children include Danish, whose father, Shahbaz, lodged a formal complaint with the police. Acting promptly on the complaint, the Hafizabad City Police registered a case against an unknown rickshaw driver and initiated a thorough investigation into the incident. The bodies of the three children were handed over to their grieving families after medico-legal formalities, including post-mortem examinations.

Meanwhile, doctors collected biological samples from the affected children, which have been dispatched to the Punjab Forensic Science Agency in Lahore to determine the exact nature of the toxic substance involved. Upon receiving reports of the incident, Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Abdul Razaq, District Police Officer Atif Nazir, CEO Health Dr. Zaher Ahmad, and local political figure Ch. Muzaffar Hussain Tarar, along with other officers rushed to DHQ Hospital. They personally monitored the medical treatment of the affected children and expressed solidarity with the bereaved families.

PPP condemns opening of TP link canal

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Central Information Secretary of the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), Shazia Marri, strongly condemned the opening of the Taunsa-Panjinad (TP) Link Canal at a time when Sindh is grappling with a severe 62% water shortage.

In a press statement issued today, Marri questioned the rationale behind opening the canal, stating, “At a time when Sindh is facing a devastating 62% water shortage, why is the Taunsa Panjinad canal opened?” She emphasized that link canals like the TP Link were never meant to remain operational year-round. “The link canals were never supposed to be perennial. They could only be opened during the flood season,” she asserted.

Marri warned that opening the canal during a period of acute shortage would further deprive the lower riparian regions of their share and exacerbate the already dire situation. “Opening of the TP Link Canal during a shortage period will further increase the water shortage for the lower riparians and cause

more harm,” she said. Reiterating the PPP’s longstanding position, Marri stated, “PPP has always advocated for a fair and just distribution of water resources among the provinces.” She added that the party has consistently demanded implementation of the 1991 Water Accord and urged IRSA to fulfill its responsibilities accordingly.

“The Sindh Irrigation Department has rightly lodged a strong protest with IRSA over the untimely opening of the TP Link Canal,” she noted. Calling any diversion of water under the guise of “technical necessity” as unacceptable, Marri said, “Any diversion of water, when one province is suffering such acute shortages, is both unjust and irresponsible.” “Water is not a political tool—it is a constitutional right,” she stressed, adding that water issues must not be exploited for political point-scoring. “It’s a matter of life and death for us.”

Highlighting the broader impact, she stated, “The lifeline of Sindh’s agriculture, economy, and communities is under threat.” Marri also criticized the federal government’s silence on the issue,

saying, “The Federal Government cannot remain silent to the miseries of people living in federating units.”

“We demand immediate closure of the TP Link Canal and call upon IRSA and the federal government to intervene and ensure compliance with agreed frameworks,” she added. “The Pakistan People’s Party stands with the people and will not allow any province’s rightful share of water to be stolen,” Marri declared.

In a final critique, she noted the government’s constitutional failure, saying, “Despite its constitutional obligation, this Government has miserably failed to convene a single CCI meeting so far.” Adding further context, Marri said, “The Pakistan People’s Party has been continuously opposing construction of new canals on River Indus.” She questioned the logic behind such projects during an active water crisis: “When there’s no water in the system and when people are already facing severe water shortage, how would new canals be made?” Marri concluded by vowing to raise the issue at every relevant forum.

Putin open to Ukraine peace deal: US envoy

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin is open to a “permanent peace” deal with Ukraine, United States special envoy Steve Witkoff has said. President Donald Trump’s envoy made the claim in a TV interview, following “compelling” talks with Putin in Saint Petersburg last week.

However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned that agreeing terms on a deal is “not easy”, while Ukraine and its European allies have called on Washington not to be deceived by Moscow’s delay tactics regarding a ceasefire.

“I think we might be on the verge of something that would be very, very important for the world at large,”

Witkoff told Fox News in an interview following his meeting with the Russian leader on Friday, acknowledging that “it took a while for us to get to this place” but that he saw a deal “emerging” after five hours of talks.

He also noted a potential to “reshape” the Russian-United States relationship through “commercial opportunities” that would bring stability to the region. Meeting was the third between Russia and the US since Trump returned to the White House in January, claiming he could solve the conflict within 24 hours.

Despite the flurry of diplomacy, there has been little meaningful progress on achieving a ceasefire,

despite Ukraine agreeing to US proposals. Russia, however, has offered no key concessions, while continuing to bombard its neighbour. On Sunday, it launched one of the deadliest attacks of the war on the Ukrainian city of Sumy – a move Trump called a “mistake”, without elaborating.

Both sides have accused each other of breaching a US-brokered agreement to pause attacks on each other’s energy facilities. Despite Witkoff’s optimistic report, Lavrov said in an interview with the Kommersant newspaper published on Monday that it is “not easy” to agree on “key components” of a peace deal. — Aljazeera