

Five killed in Kohat F.P. Report

KOHAT: A domestic dispute between two groups in the outskirts of Kohat claimed the lives of at least five people including three women. The property dispute between the two groups had been going on for a long time, when both of them started firing as soon as they saw each other. The clash resulted in the death of five people. 8 other persons including 4 women also sustained injuries in firing.



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LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visiting stalls at Health, Engineering and Minerals show at Expo Centre.

PM vows agricultural revival through innovation

— urges global investors to tap into Pakistan's expanding economic opportunities

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD, LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday reiterated his government's commitment to revitalize Pakistan's agricultural sector through innovation, sustainable development, and active participation of young experts and stakeholders.

"Pakistan has fertile land, capable agricultural engineers, and hardworking farmers. Other than climate challenges, we have all the ingredients for success. Real growth and progress in this sector can only come through science-led strategies," the prime minister said chairing a high-level consultative meeting on agriculture sector here. The meeting was attended by a diverse group of young agricultural scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs, and exporters, along with key federal ministers, to explore a forward-looking roadmap for agricultural reform in the country. Prime Minister Shehbaz called for tapping into the talent of young professionals and researchers, while leveraging the wisdom of experienced experts to guide the process. He said that cotton production had fallen so low that Pakistan had become an importer, while neighboring countries like India and China had progressed in crop yields.

Referring to 65% of Pakistan's rural population, the prime minister stressed the need to provide meaningful opportunities

to rural youth, particularly in agri-tech and entrepreneurship. He noted the absence of patronage for local agri-machinery manufacturers and service companies supporting small farmers, urging that these be brought into a systematic framework.

"Today's meeting is a turning point. We must learn from past neglect and embrace a comprehensive, inclusive strategy to move forward," the prime minister stated, lamenting the lack of off-season storage facilities and value addition plants that could create jobs and reduce food wastage. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the formation of working committees on five critical sectors identified during the meeting to submit actionable recommendations within two weeks.

"This is our chance to revive Pakistan's agri-economy with the help of our young minds, scientific knowledge, and collective commitment. Let's not waste any more time," the prime minister said. The participants agreed on several priority areas requiring urgent attention mainly technological integration as proposals were floated to improve digital access in rural areas through better smartphone and internet availability, creating a central database for farmers and incorporating blockchain and QR code systems for input delivery to boost transparency and efficiency.

(Continued on Back Page)

KP CM directs regulating construction related matters F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In view of the increasing environmental fragility, unregulated construction, and the critical need for climatic-responsive and culturally appropriate development in the mountain regions of the province, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur has directed the concerned authorities to constitute a Working Group to come up with guidelines to properly regulate construction related matters in the mountainous areas of the province.

Chief Minister's Secretariat has issued a formal letter to Additional Chief Secretary, Planning and Development (ACS-P&D) to constitute and lead a Working Group having membership of the concerned administrative secretaries, heads of the concerned entities and experts of the field.

The letter suggests to the proposed Working Group to study and recommend the adaptation and institutionalization of the "Mountain Architecture Guidelines" - a research work authored by one Dr. Zahra Hussain for implementation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The letter highlights that the above-mentioned pioneering work presents a contextually grounded, climatic-responsive, and culturally sensitive architectural approach tailored to Pakistan's mountain regions, developed through extensive community engagement, academic research, and technical validation adding that the guidelines offer practical strategies on sustainable built form, passive solar design, cultural landscape preservation, material use, visitor management, and integration with local economies and ecosystems; and is considered a master guiding framework for harmonizing environmental stewardship, tourism infrastructure, and vernacular wisdom.

The letter further suggests the Working Group to deliberate on how the proposed principles of the aforementioned research work can be customized, adapted, institutionalized, and legally adopted for the mountainous districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in accordance with provincial laws, planning frameworks, and operational realities.

exercises and highlighted that PATS is the right forum, which appropriately combines professional military skills and tactical acumen of all participating soldiers fostering much needed team spirit in the face of evolving character of war. To this effect, Pakistan Army upholds rich soldierly attributes of "character, courage and competence which has been amply displayed by our men in the face of fight against terrorism"



PATS competition conducted at Kharian Garrison

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The 8th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Competition was conducted from 14 to 18 April 2025 at Kharian Garrison. Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, NI(M) graced the closing ceremony as Guest Chief.

The 60 hours long rigorous patrolling exercise was aimed at enhancing combat skills through sharing of innovative ideas / experiences by the participants of the forum. Seven teams from Pakistan Army along with a team from Pakistan Navy and fifteen teams from friendly countries including Bahrain, Belarus, China, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Nepal, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, United States of America and Uzbekistan participated in the exercise. Additionally representatives from Bangladesh, Egypt, Germany, Kenya, Myanmar and Thailand witnessed the exercise as observers.

The exercise was conducted

ed in the semi mountainous terrain of Punjab. Over the years, the exercise has gained much prominence as a very competitive professional military activity for the friendly countries.

While addressing the ceremony, COAS appreciated the participating teams for their professionalism, physical and mental endurance and high moral displayed during various stages of the exercise. COAS reiterated mutual learning during such

But Israeli officials now believe that their military could instead launch a limited strike on Iran that would require less US support. Such an attack would be significantly smaller than those Israel initially proposed. It is unclear if or when Israel would move forward with such a strike, especially with talks on a nuclear deal getting started. Such a move would likely alienate Trump and could risk broader US support for Israel.

Parts of the plans were previously presented last year to the Biden administration, two former senior

Biden administration officials told Reuters. Almost all required significant US support via direct military intervention or intelligence sharing. Israel has also requested that Washington help Israel defend itself should Iran retaliate. In response to a request for comment, the US National Security Council referred Reuters to comments Trump made on Thursday, when he told reporters he has not waved Israel off an attack but that he was not "in a rush" to support military action against Tehran.

"I think that Iran has a chance to have a great country and to live happily without death," Trump said. "That's my first option. If there's a second option, I think it would be very bad for Iran, and I think Iran wants to talk." The Israeli prime minister's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A senior Israeli official told Reuters that no decision has been made yet on an Iranian strike.

The Frontier Post

Karakoram Highway blocked F.P. Report

DIAMIR: Karakoram Highway has been blocked suspending all kinds of traffic due to landsliding triggered by heavy rainfall in the region. Police sources said that heavy rain continued in Diamir and Upper Kohistan areas since late Friday night. Due to landsliding at six locations, traffic on Karakoram Highway was suspended.

Kabul, Islamabad commit to joint efforts for peace

Dar says Afghan side told won't allow each other's soil to be used for terror

KABUL: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that Afghanistan has assured that its soil wouldn't be used against Pakistan. Talking to media in Kabul on Saturday, Dar said that Pakistan would also not allow anyone to use its land against Afghanistan. "We'll have to work together for the development, prosperity and peace in the region," said the foreign minister.

Dar also announced that Pakistan's Transit Track-and-Trade System will become operational by June 30 this year, aiming to streamline and boost trade with Afghanistan. He added that both the sides have agreed to resolve outstanding issues through dialogue.

He also revealed that the IT system at the Torkham border would be activated soon to support smoother trade operations. Strengthening the trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan is very important for the region, he added.

He said that the repatriation of Afghan refugees will take place with dignity and respect. Ishaq Dar also acknowledged the generosity shown by Pakistan in hosting Afghan citizens for decades.

Before his departure, the deputy prime minister addressed the media at Noor Khan Airbase and spoke about the significance of Pakistan's relationship with its western neighbour. "Afghanistan is a neighbouring Muslim country and Pakistan has longstanding and historic ties with it," he said. "Our [Pakistan and Afghanistan's] relationship has been joined together — and it should remain like this."

Dar acknowledged that ties between the two countries had been frosty during the past few years due to a number of reasons, particularly concerns over national security. "There has been some coldness in the ties recently, primarily due to the security of Pakistan, the safety of our people's lives and property and the most important concern for Pakistan



— terrorism," he added.

Despite the challenges, the deputy prime minister expressed optimism about the economic and trade potential between the two nations. "There are countless trade and economic opportunities between the two countries. We can connect to the Central Asian countries via railway from Afghanistan," Dar noted. "However, this idea cannot be realised unless there is a proper department of railways in Afghanistan."

He lamented that the current economic potential of the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship was not being fully utilised, and stressed the need for greater cooperation. "I'm going with goodwill, and I will try to bring these two Muslim countries closer together. We must do whatever is possible for the economic progress and betterment of our people through

mutual cooperation." During his visit, Dar is scheduled to hold meetings with Afghanistan's top leadership to discuss bilateral relations, trade, and regional stability.

Earlier in the day, Pakistan and Afghanistan had reaffirmed their commitment to fostering mutually beneficial relations during the high-level talks. Pakistani side was led by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and the Afghan side by its Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. The two sides agreed on the importance of maintaining high-level engagement. The discussions encompassed a comprehensive range of topics pertaining to bilateral relations, underscoring the need to devise strategies for enhancing cooperation across diverse areas of mutual interest, including security, trade, transit, connectivity, and people to people contacts. — Agencies

Bilawal asks Centre to withdraw canal projects on River Indus

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has taken a resolute stance, emphatically calling on the federal government to immediately abandon its controversial plan to construct six new canals on the Indus River. He warned that if the project is not abandoned, it will no longer be possible for the PPP to continue supporting Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government. He said, "If I am ever forced to choose between the government and the people, I will stand with the people—every single time."

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP, while addressing a grand public gathering in Sindh's second-largest city, Hyderabad, thanked the people for their overwhelming participation. He said that the bond of trust between the PPP leadership and the people remains strong even today, rooted deeply across generations.

Bilawal also expressed gratitude to the people of Umerkot for electing the PPP's nominated candidate with a resounding victory in the recent NA-213 by-election. He said that ideally, the opposition should have respected

democratic traditions by electing the widow of the late veteran politician and senior parliamentarian Nawab Yousuf Talpur unopposed, after the seat was vacated due to his demise, but they chose not to.

He furthered that the people of NA-213 defeated a coalition of 17 parties, sending a clear message that their support for the PPP remains unwavering. He pointed out that both the PML-N and PTI were allied in the NA-213 by-election, jointly contesting against the PPP with the support of other parties. "I am grateful to the people of Umerkot," he said. "You have handed them (the opposition) such a historic defeat that they are now left with no face to show. All of them were united on one point: to defeat the PPP."

Bilawal said that the struggle to ensure fair distribution of water among provinces is a legacy he has inherited. "Before me, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto also fought this battle. At that time, we were in the opposition, despite winning the elections, we were made to sit on the opposition benches," he recalled. He said that even then, when Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto raised her voice against the controversial water project, not only in Hyderabad but also in Lahore, Multan,

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Quetta, PPP workers came out in large numbers in the form of caravans. Through their protests, they compelled the government to withdraw from the controversial project.

PPP Chairman said that his party does not believe in "opposition for the sake of opposition", and it is opposing the controversial canal project because it poses a threat to the federation. "At a time when terrorist organizations are attacking Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the entire country is burning in the fire of terrorism, they have stirred a matter that risks turning brother against brother, endangering the federation, and above all, threatens our people with death by thirst," he added. He continued, "We want the country to progress. We want the terrorists and the global powers backing them to suffer a humiliating defeat. We want development in all four provinces, a reduction in inflation, and increased employment opportunities — and we were willing to walk together on all such matters." He further said that if Shehbaz Sharif is Prime Minister today, he owes it to the people of Sindh. He made it clear that the PPP is not interested in ministries, but it will not back down on the canal issue.

Israel still eyeing a limited attack on Iran's nuclear facilities

JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israel has not ruled out an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities in the coming months despite President Donald Trump telling Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the US was, for now, unwilling to support such a move, according to an Israeli official and two other people familiar with the matter.

Israeli officials have vowed to prevent Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and Netanyahu has insisted that any negotiation with Iran must lead to the complete dismantling of its nuclear program. Over the past months, Israel has proposed to the Trump administration a series of options to attack Iran's facilities, including some with late spring and summer timelines, the sources said.

The plans include a mix of airstrikes and commando operations that vary in severity and could set back Tehran's ability to weaponise its nuclear program by just months or a

year or more, the sources said. The New York Times reported on Wednesday that Trump told Netanyahu in a White House meeting earlier this month that Washington wanted to prioritise diplomatic talks with Tehran and that he was unwilling to support a strike on the country's nuclear facilities in the short term.

But Israeli officials now believe that their military could instead launch a limited strike on Iran that would require less US support. Such an attack would be significantly smaller than those Israel initially proposed. It is unclear if or when Israel would move forward with such a strike, especially with talks on a nuclear deal getting started. Such a move would likely alienate Trump and could risk broader US support for Israel.

Parts of the plans were previously presented last year to the Biden administration, two former senior

Biden administration officials told Reuters. Almost all required significant US support via direct military intervention or intelligence sharing. Israel has also requested that Washington help Israel defend itself should Iran retaliate. In response to a request for comment, the US National Security Council referred Reuters to comments Trump made on Thursday, when he told reporters he has not waved Israel off an attack but that he was not "in a rush" to support military action against Tehran.

"I think that Iran has a chance to have a great country and to live happily without death," Trump said. "That's my first option. If there's a second option, I think it would be very bad for Iran, and I think Iran wants to talk." The Israeli prime minister's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A senior Israeli official told Reuters that no decision has been made yet on an Iranian strike.

A senior Iranian security official said Tehran was aware of Israeli planning and that an attack would provoke "a harsh and unwavering response from Iran." "We have intelligence from reliable sources that Israel is planning a major attack on Iran's nuclear sites. This stems from dissatisfaction with ongoing diplomatic efforts regarding Iran's nuclear program, and also from Netanyahu's need for conflict as a means of political survival," the official told Reuters.

Netanyahu received pushback from the Biden administration when he presented an earlier version of the plan. The former senior Biden officials said Netanyahu wanted the US to take the lead on airstrikes but the Biden White House told Israel it did not believe a strike was prudent unless Tehran moved to accelerate its enrichment of nuclear material or expel inspectors from the country. The Biden officials also questioned the extent to which Israel's military

could effectively carry out such an attack.

Former officials and experts have long said that Israel would need significant US military support — and weapons — to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities and stockpiles, some of which are in underground facilities. While the more limited military strike Israel is considering would require less direct assistance — particularly in the form of US bombers dropping bunker-busting munitions that can reach deeply buried facilities — Israel would still need a promise from Washington that it would help Israel defend itself if attacked by Tehran in the aftermath, the sources said.

Any attack would carry risks. Military and nuclear experts say that even with massive firepower, a strike would probably only temporarily set back a program the West says aims to eventually produce a nuclear bomb, although Iran denies it. Israeli officials have told Washington in recent

weeks that they do not believe US talks with Iran should move forward to the deal-making stage without a guarantee that Tehran will not have the ability to create a nuclear weapon.

"This can be done by agreement, but only if this agreement is Libyan style: They go in, blow up the installations, dismantle all of the equipment, under American supervision," Netanyahu said following his talks with Trump. "The second possibility is ... that they [Iran] drag out the talks and then there is the military option." From Israel's perspective, this may be a good moment for a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

A top Israeli official, speaking with reporters earlier this month, recognised there was some urgency if the goal was to launch a strike before Iran rebuilds its air defences. But the senior official refused to state any timeline for possible Israeli action and said discussing this would be "pointless".



CM meets EU's parliamentary delegation for South Asia

LAHORE (APP): The European Union's Parliamentary Delegation for South Asia (DSAS) called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, here on Saturday.

Matters related to mutual interests, bilateral relations, trade, education and investment were discussed in detail. The CM agreed to further strengthen bilateral relations for trade, peace, development and common goals. She offered EU companies to invest in education, IT, green energy and health sectors in Punjab.

The CM said, "Pakistan values its enduring friendship with the European Union. The EU is not only a key trading partner but also a voice for global stability." She noted that the GSP Plus status has significantly boosted Pakistan's exports, particularly in the textile sec-

tor, and reaffirmed Punjab's commitment to meeting all EU requirements, including those related to human rights and labor reforms.

Highlighting Punjab's role as the economic hub of Pakistan, CM Maryam Nawaz said the province offers a conducive and investor-friendly environment. She expressed a desire to expand cooperation with the EU in agriculture, energy, digital infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

Emphasizing the importance of youth development, she stated that the government is actively providing skills training to help connect young people with global employment opportunities. "It is encouraging to see that Pakistani students continue to rank among the top recipients of Erasmus Mundus scholarships for the third consecu-

tive year," she added.

The CM reiterated Pakistan's firm commitment to both regional and global peace. The EU delegation lauded the Punjab government's forward-looking initiatives and welcomed the prospects for deeper cooperation.

CM sets targets of zero polio cases, zero missing children: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the Punjab government is committed to eradicating polio from the province, setting an ambitious target of zero polio cases and zero missing children during vaccination campaigns.

Chairing a meeting here on Saturday, the CM added, "no child should be deprived of polio vaccine," and directed Deputy Commissioners across the province to ensure the

effectiveness of the ongoing anti-polio campaign. She instructed them to monitor union council-level performance daily and to actively oversee the implementation of the microplan for vaccination.

"The goal of zero polio cases is within our reach through coordinated efforts," she asserted. "It is absolutely unacceptable for any child in Punjab to remain vulnerable to this preventable disease," she said. During the meeting, the Punjab Secretary for Primary and Secondary Healthcare gave a comprehensive briefing to the Chief Minister on the progress and challenges of the campaign. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif urged all district administrations to work with unwavering dedication, stressing that the health and safety of Punjab's children must remain a top priority.



KARACHI: PPP Sindh General Secretary Waqar Mehdi filing nomination paper for the vacant Senate seat from Sindh at Provincial Election Commission office. —APP Photo

PFA takes action against substandard food units

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) conducted a operation in Raiwind, resulting in the suspension of production at two bakery and cracker manufacturing units involved in severe violations of food safety regulations. On the special directives of PFA Director General Asim Javed, the crackdown was led by the Director of Operations.

During the operation, the enforcement teams imposed a fine of Rs. 200,000 on the violators and confiscated unsafe food products including 6,000 kg of substandard crackers, 2,500 kg of hazardous nimko, 200 liters of non-compliant flavoring substances, 350 kg of low-quality patties, and banned food colorants.

All confiscated items were safely destroyed on-site.

The DG PFA stated that the units were found preparing bakery and confectionery items using poor-quality flavors, while crackers were being produced with the use of prohibited, health-damaging synthetic colors—especially targeting children. The units were also found operating in highly unhygienic conditions, with foul-smelling processing areas, cobweb-covered walls, broken floors, and unclean storage spaces where raw and finished products were kept together.

Furthermore, the staff employed at these units did not possess mandatory medical fitness or professional training certificates, as required under the food safety laws of Punjab.

DG Asim Javed emphasized that those involved in endangering public health, especially children's health, will not be spared under any circumstances.

"Strict enforcement of food laws is essential for the safety and well-being of the people of Punjab," he added.

He also urged citizens to ensure they purchase only PFA-approved food items and to immediately report any suspicious or substandard food-related activity by calling the Punjab Food Authority helpline at 1223.

PMA condemns brutal attack on doctor at JPMC

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) vehemently condemns the brutal attack on a doctor at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) by the attendants of a patient. This act of violence against a healthcare professional, who was diligently carrying out their duties, is unacceptable and deeply concerning; it is state in the press release issued.

According to press release issued by Secretary General PMA (Centre), the PMA stands in solidarity with the medical fraternity at JPMC

and demands immediate and decisive action against the perpetrators. We call for the swift registration of FIR and the immediate arrest of all individuals involved in this assault.

Furthermore, considering the severity and brazen nature of this attack within a healthcare facility, which is meant to be a sanctuary for healing and care, the PMA strongly demands that this case be tried in an anti-terrorism court; press release said.

The PMA reiterates its long-standing demand for enhanced security meas-

ures at all healthcare facilities to ensure the safety and well-being of doctors and other healthcare staff. The government and hospital administrations must take immediate steps to prevent such incidents from recurring in the future.

The statement further said that, We urge the authorities to take swift and exemplary action in this case to ensure justice is served and to restore the confidence of the medical community. The PMA will continue to monitor the situation closely and will take all necessary steps to protect the rights and safety of its members.

Mayor sets June 30 as deadline for development schemes

KARACHI (PPI): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has directed the completion of 154 ongoing development schemes across the city by June 30, underlining the administration's resolve to fast-track urban infrastructure work ahead of the monsoon season.

Chairing a high-level review meeting of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's (KMC) Engineering Department, the mayor emphasized the timely execution of projects under both the District Annual Development Programme (ADP) and the Provincial ADP. The directive is aimed at ensuring

improved civic services and infrastructure reliability for Karachi residents.

According to Director General Technical Services Tariq Mughal, 80 of the ongoing schemes are being implemented under the District ADP, while 74 fall under the Provincial ADP. He added that 224 schemes have already been completed, reflecting progress in various sectors. Mughal also briefed the meeting that 109 additional projects have passed the tendering stage, with award letters due to be issued soon. Work on these schemes is expected to begin shortly.

The meeting was attend-

ed by Municipal Commissioner S. M. Afzal Zaidi, Financial Advisor Gulzar Abro, and other senior officials of the KMC.

Reaffirming his commitment to development, Mayor Wahab said the administration's focus is on delivering essential services and modern infrastructure through transparent and timely implementation of schemes.

The city government plans to intensify oversight of project execution to meet the June deadline, particularly in view of expected seasonal challenges and public demand for improved facilities.



KARACHI: A view of work progress on Karachi Safari Park road. —INP Photo

19 Ambassadors tour Lahore to foster cultural connections

LAHORE (APP): Foreign delegates from 19 countries were warmly welcomed in Lahore on Saturday for a specially curated tour along the historic Royal Trail.

According to a press release issued here the visit was organized by the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) with arrangements personally overseen by Director General Kamran Lashari, who graciously hosted the esteemed guests throughout the day.

Among the distinguished guests were the ambassadors of Korea, Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Philippines, Azerbaijan and representa-

tives from the Sri Lankan High Commission.

Their participation highlighted the growing interest of the international community in Pakistan's cultural heritage and historic preservation efforts. The objective of this visit was to show the world the rich architectural and conservation works underway in Lahore and to project a soft image of Pakistan globally.

The tour served as a platform to promote cultural diplomacy and to celebrate the city's unique blend of history, art and tradition.

The immersive experience began with a guided tour through the majestic Delhi Gate, followed by a

walk along the storied 'Gali Sabeel Wali' and 'Gali Surjan Singh' areas renowned for their preserved Mughal-era architecture and vibrant street life. The delegation also visited the stunning Wazir Khan Masjid, a 17th-century architectural gem known for its intricate frescoes and elaborate tile work.

A traditional breakfast was served at the historic Shahi Hamam, offering the guests a taste of local cuisine in a setting that once catered to Mughal nobility.

As night fell, the delegates were transported to the serene Shalimar Garden, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where they

were treated to an enchanting evening of cultural and musical performances, celebrating Pakistan's diverse heritage. The beautifully lit gardens, combined with the sounds of traditional music, left a lasting impression on the international visitors.

The Walled City of Lahore Authority's meticulous planning and warm hospitality showcased the very best of Lahore's cultural legacy. WCLA Director General Kamran Lashari's personal involvement in hosting the tour further underscored the city's commitment to promoting cultural diplomacy and fostering international goodwill.

PU pursues FIA action against defaulters

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab University has announced its plan to engage the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for the recovery of funds from 12 teachers who received scholarships for PhD programs abroad but failed to return.

The university administration will also request the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior to block the CNICs and passports of these teachers.

In a statement here today, a PU spokesperson revealed that 56 teachers received grants for international PhD studies, but 12 did not fulfill their obligation to return and serve five years at the university. These absconding teachers, who benefited from HEC and PU overseas scholarships, owe millions to the university as per their agreements.

The spokesperson identified several defaulters, including Farah Sattar, Syed Mohsin Ali, and Kiran Ayesha, who owe more than Rs 7 million, Rs 14 million, and Rs 10 million respectively. Others include Rabia Abbas, Khawaja Khurram Khurshid, Shumaila Ishaq, and Dr. Muhammad Usman Rahim, with outstanding amounts ranging from Rs 7.2 million to Rs 16.1 million.

Additional absconders are Salman Aziz, Dr. Seemab Ara Farooqi, Samia Mahmood, Muhammad Nawaz, and Javeria Iqbal, collectively owing substantial sums to the university. The Punjab University has terminated the services of these 12 teachers as part of its corrective actions.

JI calls for nationwide strike to support Gaza

KARACHI (PPI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi emir Monem Zafar announced that the Gaza solidarity campaign and the Karachi Rights Movement would be conducted simultaneously.

During a press conference at Idara Noor-e-Haq on Saturday, he declared a nationwide shutter down strike on April 26, following the call by JI Pakistan Ameer Engr Hafiz Naemur Rehman, to express solidarity with Gaza.

The strike is intended as a charge sheet against Muslim rulers for their failure to assist the oppressed

despite their military capabilities. Monem Zafar pointed out the growing animosity towards the United States and other western powers for backing Israeli actions. He asserted that while the hearts of Muslims align with Palestinians, their leaders prioritize personal interests. Addressing the Karachi Rights Movement, Zafar emphasized that JI will continue advocating for both the rights movement and the solidarity campaign. He criticized the 150 percent rise in municipal charges imposed by the

mayor and mentioned that JI has already approached the court against the collection of these charges through K-Electric bills.

He also condemned the alliance between the government, National Electric Power Authority, and K-Electric. Zafar demanded the withdrawal of K-Electric's licence and called for a forensic audit of the company. He further attributed ongoing crises such as power shortages, water scarcity, and inadequate civic facilities to the Pakistan People Party's 17-year rule.

PWPA, NCCIA join forces to launch cyber patrolling unit

LAHORE (APP): In a significant step toward strengthening the digital safety of women in Punjab, the Punjab Women Protection Authority (PWPA) and the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) have agreed to establish a dedicated Cyber Patrolling Unit.

The decision was made during a high-level meeting chaired by PWPA Chairperson Hina Parvez Butt at the Authority's central office in Wahdat Colony, Lahore. The meeting was

attended by Additional Director NCCIA Lahore Zone Muhammad Sarfraz Chaudhry, along with senior officials from both institutions.

The meeting expressed serious concern over the rising incidents of online crimes against women and girls across Punjab. In response, it was decided to establish a joint Cyber Patrolling Unit and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalize this collaboration.

The collaboration aims to ensure more vigilant digital monitoring and timely legal

support for victims. The initiative follows the clear directives of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, who has declared that "crimes against women are absolutely intolerable."

Talking on the occasion, PWPA Chairperson Hina Parvez Butt said that the Cyber Patrolling Unit will actively monitor social media and other digital platforms to curb incidents of harassment, blackmailing, distribution of explicit content, and other forms of cyber-crimes targeting women.



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- Last Mile Connectivity and Modal Choice
- Mass Transit Systems and Cities
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RS. 25,000

2nd Prize
RS. 15,000

3rd Prize
RS. 10,000

Deadline for Submission

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How to Submit

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Submit hard copy to the following address:
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Eligibility

- Open to university students of all ages with an interest in urban mobility
- Participants can submit more than one entry if they wish

Submission Guidelines

- **Format:** A0 size – Poster (Hard copy and soft copy must be submitted in high-quality in PDF)
- **Content:** Content may include Images, infographics, illustrations, text, or anything that clarifies the idea
- **Originality:** All content must belong to the participants (No copyright violations)

ALL ENTRIES MUST BE SUBMITTED ALONG WITH SUBMISSION FORM

Top entries will be showcased at the Urban Mobility Conference 2025.

**The decision of the judges will be final, and no appeal will be accepted.*

Submission form can be downloaded from:
<https://transpeshawar.pk/resource-center/poster-submission-form-2/>



Kundi highlights role of private education in easing public sector burden



PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Saturday emphasized that private educational institutions are not merely centers of learning but are strong partners in national development. He added that they also help in reducing the burden on public educational institutions. The Governor said this while inaugurating the Zamarud Campus of Roots International Education in Hayatabad Peshawar. He attended the event as the chief guest.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Roots International Education's CEO Waleed Mushtaq, Head of Corporate Communication Sadia Batool, and other distinguished guests.

In his welcome address, CEO Waleed Mushtaq warmly greeted the Governor and other attendees, highlighting the institution's educational mission and objectives.

Speaking at the event, Governor Kundi praised

Roots International Education for its contributions to the country's education sector over the past 37 years. He acknowledged the organization's role in promoting high-quality and modern education across Pakistan, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that the newly inaugurated Zamarud Campus is a testament to modern educational facilities, international curricula, and a holistic approach to student development.

He expressed confidence

that the campus would be a significant addition to Peshawar's educational landscape.

Addressing the students, Governor Kundi urged them to aim high, dream big, and work hard.

He stressed that the future of the nation depends on educated and talented youth, calling them the "bright future of Pakistan."

He encouraged students to pursue education with passion and commitment, making their parents and country proud.

Tufail highlights importance of ASDP for tribal districts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Technical Education, Tufail Anjum, has emphasized that the Accelerated Skills Development Program (ASDP) is a significant and essential initiative of the Department of Industries, Commerce, and Technical Education. He stated that the program will be completed under the Accelerated Implementation Program (AIP) and is aimed at providing market-relevant technical education to students from the tribal districts.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting regarding ASDP. The meeting was attended by the Special Secretary, Project Director (ASDP), Additional Secretary, Director TEVTA, and other officials.

The primary objective of the initiative is to equip the youth from the merged tribal districts with market-driven skills to enhance livelihood opportunities. During the meeting, it was highlighted that the project will focus on bridging the existing skills gap by offering demand-based training in accordance with international standards.

As part of the program, 2,780 youth will be trained in demand-driven trades to meet market needs.

It was further informed that this initiative would create income-generating opportunities by promoting the development of employable skills, thereby increasing household income.

In addition, internship opportunities will be provided to the trained youth to connect them with the labor market in their respective fields.

A storm of ice: A message from Above

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE hailstorm that struck Islamabad on Wednesday was unlike anything seen before. It was not just a storm; it was a moment that shook hearts, awakened fears, and brought people to reflect on the might and majesty of the Creator. I have witnessed many hailstorms in my life, but never have I seen hailstones the size of golf balls raining down from the sky. The sheer sound of these icy rocks hitting the ground was terrifying - a roar that echoed through homes and hearts alike. The fear on people's faces said it all. Trees stood stripped and wounded, their leaves and branches torn off not gently, but as though severed by sharp blades. It was as if nature itself had been struck with divine force.

Those who have lived long, the elders among us, said they had never seen such a spectacle before. Some wept, some bowed their heads in prayer. Their trembling voices echoed a sentiment that many felt but could not express: "This is a warning from Almighty Allah, a glimpse of His wrath." The sight of broken windows in cars and houses, solar panels shattered as if hit by hammers, was nothing short of devastation.

When the windows of people's cars were shattered, the owners of these large and expensive vehicles appeared helpless. Persons who usually carry an air of power and control stood frozen, looking at their luxury vehicles with disbelief and shock. The reinforced glass of SUVs, the sleek designs of imported cars - all lay at the mercy of icy stones from the sky. Not even the most modern engineering could stand against the will of Allah. This scene was a reminder that wealth and material possessions can neither shield us from divine tests nor provide peace in moments of chaos. True protection comes only from the Almighty.

As if the hailstorm alone was not enough to stir the soul, tremors of an earthquake later that day made people run out of their homes in fear. Children screamed, women cried, and men looked to the sky, trying to make sense of what was happening. It felt like a direct message from the Lord of the worlds. A message that our disobedience, our arrogance, and our heedlessness must stop. A message that if we do not turn towards Him with repentance and humility, we will not be able to bear the wrath that may follow.

The Holy Quran reminds us, "And We sent not the signs except to warn" (Surah Al-Isra, 17:59). These are not just weather events. They are signs. They are divine communications meant to awaken the sleeping hearts of men. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "When you see such events, remember Allah, supplicate to Him, and seek His forgiveness." This is not merely a narration; it is a call to action, a way forward in times of calamity.

We live in times where materialism has become our god, where ego has overshadowed humility, and where injustice, corruption, and moral decay have become the norm. How can we expect Allah's mercy when our hearts are filled with hatred, our hands with sins, and our lives with forgetfulness of our Lord? Islamabad - our beautiful, proud capital - was brought to its knees not by ground power, not by enemies, but by a shower of ice from the sky.

Allah says in the Quran, "Do you feel secure that He who is in the heaven would not cause the earth to swallow you when it quakes?" (Surah Al-Mulk, 67:16). This verse came alive that day. The earthquake under our feet, the storm above our heads - what more do we need to realize our helplessness? What more must happen before we take our affairs back to the pleasure of the Lord?

This is the time to repent, to reflect, and to return. The chaos in our surroundings mirrors the chaos within us. The breakdown of society, the injustices, the vulgarity, the dishonesty - all are symptoms of a deeper disease; our detachment from our Creator. We fast but without reflection, we pray but without heart, we celebrate Eid but forget the poor, we seek degrees but lack wisdom. These natural calamities are more than warnings - they are mercy in disguise, for they offer a chance to wake up before it's too late.

Let this incident not pass like others, where we express momentary concern and then return to our heedlessness. Let us use this moment to change. Let every broken window remind us of the fragility of our comforts. Let every fallen branch remind us of the strength of Allah and the weakness of man. Let every trembling foot during the quake remind us to stand firmly in faith, not in arrogance.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) used to turn to prayer whenever there was thunder or strong winds. He would say, "O Allah, I ask You for its good and seek refuge in You from its evil." When will we begin to emulate this prophetic way, to seek refuge in Allah instead of relying solely on our means?

May Allah forgive us, guide us, and protect us. And may He not test us beyond our strength. But let it be clear; the signs have come. The message is loud. Now the choice is ours - to wake up or to be swept away.

Muzzammil questions delay in IMF tranche

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination, Muzzammil Aslam, has raised serious concerns over the federal government's handling of its dealings with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Aslam highlighted that while the IMF mission concluded its review on March 24, 2025, nearly three weeks have passed without any official announcement regarding the approval of the review by the IMF board or the disbursement of the next tranche of the loan. He questioned the reasons behind the delay, particularly in light of ongoing negotiations between the government and the IMF regarding a new climate resilience-related fund. Aslam also sought clarity on why the government is attempting to manage two separate loan arrangements simultaneously. The Advisor expressed apprehension that the government's reluctance to reduce fuel prices may be due to IMF concerns over revenue shortfalls. He speculated whether the IMF is awaiting the release of figures from the upcoming federal budget before making further commitments. In a sharp critique of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Aslam said the Prime Minister treats the acquisition of loans as a major achievement, terming it as disgraceful. He further criticized the practice of celebrating loan agreements, pointing out that several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed by the Prime Minister have yet to materialize.

Meeting held to discuss cheating prevention in BISEP exams

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting was held today at the Peshawar Board to curb the trend of cheating and ensure transparency in examinations. The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Peshawar Division and Chairman of the Peshawar Board, Mr. Riaz Khan Mehsud.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary of the Peshawar Board, the Controller of Examinations, the Deputy

Secretary, and other relevant officials. During the session, the Chairman emphasized that there would be zero tolerance for any compromise on the transparency of examinations.

All responsible authori-

ties were instructed to ensure the timely and secure delivery of examination materials to exam centers and to implement the strictest possible measures to prevent cheating.

The provincial government is also taking all nec-

essary steps in this regard to provide students with a fair and transparent examination environment.

Any negligence or misconduct during the examinations will not be tolerated under any circumstances.



Polio vaccination: A shield to protect children from a crippling disease

PESHAWAR (APP): Every evening, Sajjad Khan gently pushes his 13-year-old daughter Kashmala's wheelchair to a nearby playground in Dheri Ishaq village, Nowshera after she was paralyzed for life by the polio disease.

As she watches other children play Frisbee sports, and laugh freely, she too stretches out her hands, trying to join in the fun. But polio has robbed her of mobility — and a normal childhood.

"When she tries to catch the Frisbee and falls from her wheelchair, it breaks my heart," Sajjad shared, his eyes brimming with sorrow. "At the age of three, she had a high fever, vomiting, and pain in her limbs. Doctors at Government Hospital Nowshera confirmed it was polio and that since then, life changed forever."

A decade has passed, but Sajjad still carries the weight of regret of not vaccinating her. "We believed the rumors against polio drops. If only we hadn't, my daughter might have been healthy today."

Kashmala's story is not an isolated case. According to the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, one polio case has already been reported in 2025 from Dera Ismail Khan. In 2024, 73 children were paralyzed by the virus — a sharp rise compared to six cases in 2023 and 20 in 2022.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan remain the most vulnerable, with 22 and 27 cases respectively reported last year. Despite progress in previous years — including a hopeful report of just one case in 2021 — the resurgence underscores the need for continued vigilance.

"Polio is a highly contagious virus that attacks the nervous system, especially in malnourished children under five," explained Dr. Malik Riaz, head of the children's department at Government Hospital Pabbi Nowshera. "It spreads through the fecal-oral route and can lead to permanent paralysis or even death."

He emphasized that the anti-polio vaccine is a safe and effective tool, preventing 2 to 3 million deaths globally each year. "Improved vaccine coverage can save an additional two million children."

"One of the major challenges remains vaccine refusal, fueled by

misconceptions and illiteracy," said Ziaur Rehman, spokesperson for the Pakistan Polio Eradication Program, noting that while cases have risen, there has also been great progress in reducing the virus's genetic diversity.

"In 2020, there were 12 genetic clusters of poliovirus in Pakistan. Today, only two remain — YB3A4A and YB3A4B," he said. "We even eradicated the indigenous YB3C variant in 2023."

Out of 126 positive environmental samples collected in 2023, none showed signs of the YB3C cluster in the last 15 months — a sign that the fight against polio is advancing.

Encouraged by the Technical Advisory Group's acknowledgment in January 2025, Pakistan has intensified its immunization efforts.

A five-day anti-polio campaign in KP launched on Friday aims to vaccinate over 6.5 million children, deploying 35,460 trained teams with the support of 50,000 security personnel.

Health Advisor Ehtesham Ali praised the collaboration between the government departments and law enforcement, stating, "We are strength-

ening the immunization system not just for polio, but for 12 other preventable diseases.

He urged parents and guardians to welcome health workers into their homes and ensure their children receive polio drops. "This is about safeguarding our future," he added.

To further bolster healthcare access, the government, in collaboration with a local organization, has launched a project to upgrade 35 health centers across Bannu and D.I. Khan. These centers will offer immunization, maternal health care, and treatment for common illnesses.

With only Pakistan and Afghanistan remaining as polio-endemic countries, the world is watching the success of polio eradication efforts. The path to eradication is clear — but it requires collective will, community awareness, and above all, trust in polio vaccines being safe in all aspects.

For children like Kashmala, the battle is already lost. But for millions of others, the vaccine remains a powerful shield against a disease that should have been consigned to history long ago. Together, we can win the fight against polio.

SWAT (APP): Beneath the lush valleys and snow-capped peaks of Swat lies a legacy that spans millennia—one of empires, enlightenment, and the enduring spirit of Gandhara civilization.

For most, Swat is a paradise of rivers, snowfall, trout, orchards, lakes and adventure. But for those who delve deeper, it is a cradle of history whispering tales of ancient Buddhists, Greek invaders, medieval rulers, and resilient locals that inspired many visitors.

Often called the "Switzerland of the East," Swat Valley, nestled in the north of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has been home to one of the most diverse culture, hospitality and ancient civilizations of the South Asia.

"The Sangaro Cave excavations in village Mian Khan, Mardan, led by renowned archaeologists Ahmad Hasan Dani and Farid Khan in 1963, revealed remains from the Middle Paleolithic period—dating back 9,000 to 27,000 years - in KP including Swat," said Bakhtzada Muhammad, Deputy Director, Archaeology and

Museums, while speaking to APP.

He noted that excavations at Khanpur in Haripur and Sangaro Cave unearthed primitive tools and artifacts from the Mesolithic era (10,000 to 8,600 years ago), underscoring the presence of early human life in Swat and Dir districts of Malakand division.

"Evidence from ancient sites like Mehargarh in Balochistan, Rehman Dheri in D.I. Khan, and Sheri Khan Tarakai in Swabi shows that people were making stone and clay utensils and living in mud houses during the Neolithic era, around 8,000 years ago and Swat remained the centre point of archeologists," he said. The graves attributed to Aryan settlers from around 2000 BC were found in Aligrama (Swat), Sangota (Chitral), and Timergara (Lower Dir). Entering from present-day Afghanistan, these semi-nomadic Aryans settled along the Swat, Gomal, Kurram, and Kabul rivers before migrating further into India.

"Literacy and inscription practices in Swat, Dir, Mardan, Charsadda, Peshawar, and Malakand—

regions central to the Gandhara civilization—began under Persian rule, with stone-carved scripts as early evidence," he said.

"Swat became part of the Gandhara Kingdom after the Persians conquered it in the 6th century BC and integrated it into the Achaemenid Empire," Bakhtzada explained. "It grew under influences of Greek, Persian, and Central Asian."

With the spread of Buddhism, he said Swat flourished as a spiritual and artistic hub and ancient sites like Butkara Stupa, Udegram, and the Jehanabad Buddha are enduring symbols of this era, merging Hellenistic artistry with Buddhist symbolism and attracting scholars and pilgrims alike.

In 327 BC, he said Alexander the Great invaded through the Khyber Pass, meeting fierce resistance from the Yousafzai tribes around Swat and Kunar. The Indo-Greeks—around 39 rulers in total—later established a unique Greco-Buddhist culture in the region, traces of which still survive in local art and architecture.

In 1505, Zaheeruddin Babar, founder of the Mughal Empire, entered KP via Khyber Pass, capturing Kohat and Bannu before defeating the Lodhi dynasty and becoming Emperor of Delhi. "Islam gradually replaced Buddhism starting in the 11th century and Swat emerged as a center of Islamic scholarship and eventually became a princely state under Miangul Abdul Wadud in the early 20th century."

Despite external influences, he said that Swat retained considerable autonomy, with its own judicial and administrative systems until it merged with Pakistan in 1969.

Today, the region's historical legacy is preserved in places like the Swat Museum—a treasure trove built in 1959 by Wali of Swat Miangul Jehanzeb in collaboration with the Italian archaeological mission.

"The Buddhist sculptures and rare artifacts in the Swat Museum are fascinating," said Umar Khan, a tourist, adding, "Swat could draw global attention if its archeological heritage is promoted digitally."

Charsadda wins Inter-District Women Sports Festival

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Inter-District Women's Sports Festival concluded with District Charsadda emerging as the overall champion, thanks to an outstanding performance by its athletes. Mardan secured second position while Peshawar stood third. Deputy Commissioner Charsadda Qaiser Khan distributed prizes among the winning players.

He was accompanied by ADC Finance Kashif Khan, Additional Assistant Commissioner Charsadda Sajid Khan, Waqas ur Rehman, ADC Nisar Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Riaz Ahmad, District Sports Officer Charsadda Ms. Gul Rukh, District Sports Officer Peshawar Mishal Malik and female badminton coach from Directorate of Sports Bushra along with other dignitaries.



The two-day festival was organized by the district administration and District Sports Office Charsadda at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex.

Over 200 female athletes from Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera and Charsadda competed in ath-

letics, tug of war, hockey, volleyball, table tennis and badminton.

According to the results Peshawar claimed first place in badminton with Charsadda securing second.

In hockey, Charsadda defeated Mardan 3-0 in the final to lift the trophy.

Charsadda also dominated the volleyball final beating Nowshera in straight sets 25-19, 25-16, and 25-15.

Mardan secured first position in athletics while Charsadda came second. In tug of war Charsadda clinched first place with Swabi taking second.



In brief

Protests against Israel held F.P. Report

ATTOCK: In line with other parts of the country, children from all walks of life also lodged their strong protest against the brutalities of Israeli forces on arms less Philistian during a protest rally organized against the brutal Israeli bombing on Gaza under the banner of Maktab-e-Quran Ahl-e-Bayt and the Central Women Wing of Majlis-e-Wahdat-ul-Muslimeen (MWM), Attock. A large number of children participated in the rally, holding banners and placards with slogans such as "Martyrs of Palestine," "Hatred for Israel is part of our faith," and "Death to Israel." The children also chanted slogans of solidarity with the children martyred in Gaza, including "Death to Israel." On this occasion, the speakers strongly criticized the heads and governments of the 57 Islamic countries, saying they have become spineless and forgotten the teachings of Islam and Karbala. They said the insensitivity displayed by the leaders of Muslim countries is mournful for every believer in the Islamic world. The blood of innocent children, women, elders, and youth martyred in Palestine and Gaza will not go in vain. The rally began from Kamalpur Syedan, Attock Cantt, and concluded at the same spot after passing through its designated route.

Free medical camp concluded F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: A three day free heart screening camp concluded here in Darra Pezu town of Lakki Marwat district. The Lucky Cement Limited (LCKL) had organized the camp in partnership with Tabba Heart Institute, a renowned name in cardiac care, for the residents of Pezu town and surrounding areas. The free heart screening camp offered vital heart health services as part of the company's ongoing commitment to preventive healthcare. More than six hundred individuals suffering from heart ailment and other diseases were screened during the three-day initiative. Among the total beneficiaries, more than 130 echocardiograms (echos) and nearly 180 electrocardiograms (ECGs) were conducted, along with routine cholesterol screening, blood pressure monitoring and consultations with experienced cardiologists. An LCL official said that the impactful initiative was a reflection of Lucky Cement's dedication to creating healthier communities and ensuring access to quality medical services in underserved areas.

Mandarn AC enroll daughter F.P. Report

BUNER: The female assistant commissioner tehsil Mandarn Buner Maryam Bakhtawar has practically exercised the ancient proverb "there is a will there is a way" when she enrolled her sole girls baby in the nearest government primary school. While talking to media persons AC confirmed she herself was first enrolled in government school because her mother herself was a government school teacher. She further said her husband as a Judge was also in favour to enroll his daughter in government school as he himself was first enrolled in government school because his mother herself was a government school teacher. Madam Bakhtawar added all of public servants first enroll their own babies in government schools to set an example for others and to encourage them for enrollment their babies in government schools.

Massive push for universal school enrollment launched



Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: The Elementary and Secondary Education Department intensified the school enrollment campaign in Lower Dir, with the district administration and education department joining hands to ensure that no child is left out of the education system.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner Bashir Khan enrolled a child at a government school, symbolically marking the beginning of the district-wide initiative. A special program to commemorate the launch was held at Government Primary School Balambat in collaboration with the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD).

The event was attended by NCHD Assistant Director Asad Khan, District Registration Officer Syed Murad Bukhari, SDO Education Muhammad Tahir Khan, former tehsil nazim Imranullah Advocate, School Headmaster Dr Waheedullah, and a large number of primary schools head-teachers, teachers, and students.

Free school bags and textbooks were distributed among students, followed by an awareness walk in which participants held placards inscribed with slogans encouraging school enrollment. Speaking as chief guest, ADC Bashir Khan stated that the provincial government was committed to improving the quality of education and strengthening public schools through various reforms. He urged parents to take full advantage of these opportunities by enrolling their children in government schools where free books and quality education are available.

"A literate child contributes positively to society and plays a vital role in the

country's development. No child between the ages of four and sixteen should be left out of school," he said. Khan emphasized that the enrollment campaign would continue until April 30, with special focus on reaching every household through door-to-door efforts. He directed SDOs, ADEOs, DEOs, school heads, principals, teachers, PTC members, and village council secretaries and chairpersons to work collectively to ensure 100% enrollment.

In a parallel effort, District Education Officer Inayatullah earlier this week issued directives to all primary and secondary school heads to prepare detailed data of out-of-school children in their respective areas. He stressed that the campaign should be run with full dedication to make universal enrollment a reality.

Meanwhile, awareness activities under the Elementary Education Foundation (EEF) are also in full swing. A walk organized in Balambat, led by EEF District Programme Officer Jamshed Khan, drew participation from students, teachers, parents, and community members. Mr. Khan said the EEF is currently running 175 girls' community schools in Lower Dir, providing free education to over 12,000 students.

The foundation aims to enroll an additional 2,000 children by the end of April. NCHD also organized a similar awareness event and walk at Government Primary School Tazagram, where local social activists and education officials highlighted the importance of sending children to school. Speakers across all events urged parents to secure a better future for their children—and the country—by ensuring every child receives the gift of education.

Police incompetency in theft incident played

F.P. Report

THATTA: The Mirpur Sakro Police in Thatta district has displayed utter negligence by failing to trace the suspects involved in the theft of a power generator, cables, and other electric equipment stolen from a community center used by the Ismaili community for funeral prayers and other activities.

According to credible sources within the community, a group of thieves reportedly broke into the community center on the night of April 13-14 and stole a generator, cables, and electric equipment by breaking open the storage room door.

Local community leaders promptly lodged a report with the police station and met with SSP Thatta, Dr. Imran Khan, who directed the SHO of Mirpur Sakro Police Station to conduct a thorough investigation and apprehend the culprits.

However, despite the district police chief's directions, the local police remains clueless about the suspects involved in the incident. Noushad Ali, a local community member, lamented the utter negligence of the police and its

failure to maintain peace in the locality. Incidents of snatching and robbery are routine in the remote areas of Thatta district, mainly Mirpur Sakro Taluka.

Muhammad Iqbal disclosed that the vicinity where the theft was committed had been used for productive activities and community development, but the local police failed to provide protection to the people and their properties. A villager, Sikander Ali, claimed that they had extended their complete cooperation regarding the incident, yet the police seemed reluctant to make any progress.

When contacted, SHO Azhar Channa evaded sharing details about the matter. Furthermore, a police official, requesting anonymity, revealed that the group of thieves involved in such incidents had the backing of influential figures in the area, making it difficult for the police to apprehend them.

Social activist Ali Nawaz Badai disclosed that a police constable was deprived of his motorcycle a couple of days ago, but the, SHO-Station House Officer Mirpur Sakro had failed to take action against the culprits.

In another incident, two primary school teachers were beaten black and blue while resisting a robbery attempt. The organization of local traders has threatened to initiate a protest movement if peace is not restored in the rural areas of Thatta district.

Woman gangraped

ARIFWALA (INP): Armed men forcefully entered in the house of a woman and gangraped her and later cut off her hair in Arifwala. The incident happened in village 52EB Balochanwala of Arifwala.

The woman namely Fatima Bibi said that the accused tried to blackmail her to continue sexual relationship. Police sources said that the accused who was later identified as Allah Rakha with the help of his colleagues made a video of raping the woman and cutting off her hair. Saddar Police Station registered a case against five persons including two unidentified ones. A police team arrested the main accused in the case and started investigation.

Protest against setup of BISP distribution point held F.P. Report

MARDAN: Youngsters and youth of Hoti locality took to street against the established of Benazir Income Support program point in Hoti sports ground as they criticized alleged that they were deprived of sports and games related activities for long time owing to the BISP fund distribution on the said ground.

Led by the relevant union council chairman Yousaf Khan, a large number of youths held a protest rally that turned into a demonstration upon their arrival to the building of Mardan press club.

The protesters were carrying several play-cards and banners inscribed with their demands. They chanted slogans against the establishment of a BISP fund-distribution point at the Hoti sports ground that caused them to halt their sports activities for the last one-year.

Addressing, on the occasion, the UC chairman Yousaf Khan alleged that the BISP distribution point on the premises of sports ground had badly affected the games and other recreational activities of youth, children and youngsters of the areas concerned.

He said that the affected youths had filed complaints and applications to relevant officials time and again regarding their sports difficulties and problems but to no avail. Other key members among the youths also spoke on the occasion. They demanded the quarters concerned to remove the BISP fund- distribution point from the sports ground and transfer it to another suitable place.

They feared that the youths could fall prey to bad hands of anti-social elements as well as to indulge into negative activities if they were kept away from positive activities. They warned that they would themselves enter the Hoti sports ground to forcibly get it empty from the BISP fund distribution activities if the officials did not take the matter as serious as well as fail to take steps for transferring the said activities from sports ground to another appropriate place.

They made it clear that the district administration would be responsible for any untoward incident if it happened, owing to their inaction and not taking the matter as seriously.

RPO visits Toba Tek Singh F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Faisalabad Zeeshan Asghar paid an official visit to Toba Tek Singh, during which he held a Khuli Katchery at City Police Station Kamalia to address public grievances.

District Police Officer (DPO) Toba Tek Singh Ibadat Nisar and other senior police officials were present. Citizens presented their complaints directly to the RPO, who issued on the spot orders for their resolution. He emphasized prompt service delivery and effective grievance redressal as key priorities for the police.

The RPO also conducted a formal inspection of the Special Initiative Police Station at City Kamalia, reviewing cleanliness, infrastructure the front desk, maal khana (evidence room), lockups and case registers.

Electricity issues of Kohat discussed

F.P. Report

KOHAT: In order to overcome the issues of unscheduled loadshedding and overbilling of electricity in Kohat district, an important meeting was held at the Deputy Commissioner House, Kohat, which besides the former Federal Interior Minister and Member National Assembly Shehryar Afridi, Provincial Minister on Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Advocate and Member Provincial Assembly Daud Shah Afridi Advocate, was also attended by the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, XEN PESCO and authorities concerned of the relevant departments and institutions.

The meeting reviewed in detail the electricity problems particularly the unscheduled loadshedding and over billing in the entire Kohat district and certain important decisions were taken to this effect. The PESCO authorities were directed to avoid unscheduled loadshedding,

reduce the duration of the existing loadshedding and ensure electricity supply to the public so that the public does not have to face any kind of hardships.

The PESCO authorities assured that all possible relief will be provided to the people of Kohat district, however, the public should also cooperate in paying the PESCO dues on time.

Chairman DDAC Kohat inaugurates enrollment campaign: Chairman of the District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Kohat Shafi Jan MPA has formally inaugurated the Enrollment Campaign in Government High School No. 2 Kohat in a simple but impressive ceremony today.

The ceremony besides the District Monitoring Officer Tahir Ali and DEO Education was also attended by the teachers and people of different walks of life. The aim of this campaign was to raise educational awareness in the district and encourage the maximum children to get admitted to school.

Chairman DDAC Shafi Jan, in his speech while highlighting the importance of education, said that the secret of the development of nations lies in education. Education is the basic path to progress and prosperity.

Addressing the youth, he stressed them to take the education as a mission because education is the power that makes any individual dignified, skilled and independent. Shafi Jan MPA appealed the parents to keep their children connected to school, keep a constant eye on their education and guide them on the path of awareness and consciousness. Stressing the need for organizing such programs, he said that it play an important role in promoting education and improving the quality of education adding that this process should continue. Chairman DDAC said, let us together bring about an educational revolution so that our tomorrow is better than today. Education is the fundamental right of every child and also our responsibility, he concluded.

Administration, police uproots camp of FLJ

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Administration with collaboration of police uprooted camp initiated by FATA Yoya Jirga (FLJ) in Landi Kotal on Saturday to collect signs of tribesmen to revise the decision of the merging of tribal regions into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It is to be mentioned here that the FLJ has filed writ petition 2019 against the merging in the Supreme Court of Pakistan has asked the appellate Court to form a larger bench to hear the case. Chairman of FATA Loya Jirga Bismillah Khan Afridi said that their lawyer asked them to collect evidence to prove it in the court that the decision of merging had been taken out without approval of the

majority of tribesmen.

For this purpose they started the drive to collect signs and to develop public consensus from across the ex-tribal region against the merging, he added. He said that the hearing in the case was expected next week. He went on that the administrations sabotaged their camp in Jamrud last day and in Landi Kotal on Saturday, which was a violation of their basic rights.

In an emergency press conference held in the District Press Club, Landi Kotal Bismillah Khan Afridi, Hazrat Ali Afridi and others categorically condemned the uprooting of their camp and said through unfair means their voice could not be suppressed. They further added that their drive would continue

and they would visit every shop and house of the tribesmen to seek his public regarding revision of merging of ex-tribal agencies into KP.

In the name of merging, the tribal had been deceived, they added and said in spite of awarding advantages of merging, all incentives being enjoyed by various sections of tribal society in pre-era were withdrawn and that was injustice to them, they opined. They expressed their reservation over the kachehri and police system and said it was against the norms and traditions of the tribe. They demanded revision of the merging former FATA and restoration of the previous system that guaranteed prosperity of the tribesmen.

Tribesmen flays law & order situation in Wana

F.P. Report

WANA: Once considered a relatively stable zone in the tribal belt, Wana—the administrative hub of Lower South Waziristan—is now grappling with a rapidly deteriorating law and order situation. The escalating wave of violence and criminal activities has not only shattered the sense of security among residents but also exposed the alarming inefficiency of the local administration and police force. As fear and frustration mount, calls for immediate governmental intervention are growing louder from all corners of society.

Locals claim that the district administration and police have failed miserably in their fundamental duty to ensure the safety and security of the public. According to sources, rather than focusing on law enforcement, elements within the local police and administration are allegedly engaged in extortion, especially through dealings involving non-custom paid vehicles and other illicit activities.

Shopkeepers in the bustling Wana Bazaar have leveled serious allegations,

stating that police personnel and administrative officers regularly demand bribes. Many traders complain of being harassed under various pretexts, while tribal citizens say they are subjected to unnecessary difficulties even in minor administrative matters such as domicile verification.

The worsening situation has triggered strong reactions from civil society, political activists, and tribal elders, who have collectively condemned what they term as a "governance collapse" in the region. They have urged the provincial and federal governments to take urgent action, including the immediate removal of incompetent and corrupt officials. There is a growing demand for the appointment of honest, dutiful, and courageous officers who can restore public confidence and help re-establish peace and order in the troubled district.

With Wana being a strategically and socially significant region, the ongoing instability poses not only a threat to local communities but also to the broader efforts toward peacebuilding and devel-

opment in South Waziristan. Citizens are calling on higher authorities to intervene before the situation spirals further out of control.

Bugti for promotion of patriotism F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti held a detailed meeting with social media influencers in Quetta on Saturday. Addressing participants of the meeting, CM Sarfaraz Bugti said that young generation is being guided wrongly through social media.

He said that identity of State's weakness and positive criticism is a laudable step. The Chief Minister went on to saying that "we will accept positive criticism and introduce reforms on that prescribed field". Sarfaraz Bugti said that youngsters of Balochistan will be provided employment, education and other benefits.

PPP demands immediate withdrawal of controversial canal projects on river indus: Shazia Marri

FP Report

KARACHI:Spokesperson for Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Shazia Marri, has issued a strong statement calling on the federal government to immediately withdraw its controversial plan to construct six new canals on the River Indus.

She warned that the federal government should take serious note of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's recent warning, otherwise it risks collapsing at any moment.

"Yesterday, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto addressed a massive public rally in Hyderabad where the people outright rejected the federal government's canal project,"

said Shazia Marri. "The public is already suffering from an acute water shortage—there is no justification whatsoever for carving out new canals."

Shazia Marri emphasized Chairman Bilawal's unwavering stance with the people. "Chairman Bilawal has made it clear—if it comes to choosing between the government and the people, he will always stand with the people," she said.

She reiterated that the strength of the Pakistan Peoples Party lies solely in the people, not in ministries or positions of power. "At yesterday's rally, the crowd could be heard chanting in unison: 'No to canals!'—a clear and resounding message to the federal government."

Highlighting the historical context of this struggle, Marri added, "The fight for water rights is part of Chairman Bilawal's legacy—Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto also fiercely opposed the Kalabagh Dam. When she raised her voice against that controversial project, PPP supporters from across the nation came out in protest. Bilawal Bhutto is now following in his mother's footsteps."

She emphasized that PPP does not oppose for the sake of opposition. "We reject this canal project because it poses a real threat to the federation. No project that is rejected by the people of the provinces can ever be in favor of the federation," she said.

Chairman Bilawal also raised concerns about the broader implications of such policies. "The country is already facing a serious threat from terrorism, and yet a divisive issue has been introduced that could pit brother against brother," Shazia Marri quoted him as saying.

She concluded by reiterating PPP's stance: "We do not seek ministries. But when it comes to the issue of canals, we will not back down. Water scarcity is already a grave problem in the country—what is the logic of building new canals under these circumstances?"

"To those who think they can intimidate the PPP with threats—they are mistaken. The Pakistan Peoples Party has

never backed down, and it never will," she said. "Our movement is not for personal or political gains. We are fighting to protect the River Indus and to

safeguard the federation."

She said, next public rally of the Pakistan Peoples Party will be held in Sukkur on April 25, 2025.

Jamiat Al-Falah's literary activities for promotion of Urdu

KARACHI, April 19 (PPI) The activities of Jamiat Al-Falah in promoting the Urdu language, literature, and Islamic thought have been deemed important. This was stated by renowned poet Sajid Rizvi at Jamiat Al-Falah's Eid Milad and Literary Night event.

Jamiat Al-Falah is an academic center in Karachi, associated with numerous well-known personalities. The event featured special guest Professor Dr. Shadab Ehsani and honorary guest poet Khalid Irfan. In his address, Sajid Rizvi stated that the future of the Urdu language is bright, and poetry gatherings reflect our culture. Attendees of the event appreciated the work of young poets.

Special guest Dr. Shadab Ehsani remarked that the art of Urdu poetry and literature is nurtured through scholarly gatherings.



GAZA STRIP: Palestinians inspecting a damaged area after an Israeli air strike targeting tents sheltering displaced people.

Career diplomat becomes face of Trump’s ‘America First’ agenda

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The highest-ranking US representative now at the United Nations told Congress two years ago that Russia's invasion of Ukraine was "unprovoked" and "unjustified," urging UN members to condemn Moscow's aggression and demand an end to the war.

In February, it was the same career diplomat, Dorothy Shea, who voiced the Trump administration's extraordinary decision to split with European allies and refuse to back a UN resolution blaming Russia for its invasion on the third anniversary of the war.

While it is typical for diplomats to stay on as US presidents - and their political parties - change, Shea's interim role has unexpectedly made her a face of the stunning US transition on the world stage, with President Donald Trump's "America First" approach increasingly upending the post-World War II international order. Shea will be in place longer than expected after Trump's unusual decision last month to withdraw his nominee for UN ambassador, Rep. Elise Stefanik, from consideration because of a slim Republican House majority.

"I would say (Shea's) position is unique. It is probably particularly unique in that because of the extraordinary change, not just from one administration to another, but really an era of US foreign policy, even when there were nuanced differences," said Phillip Reeker, the former acting assistant secretary of state

for Europe. "The change in the vote that took place at the UN on the Russia-Ukraine war was really an inflection point in US policy." On Feb. 24, the US joined Russia in voting against a European-backed Ukrainian resolution demanding an immediate withdrawal of Moscow's forces. A dueling US resolution noted "a swift end to the conflict," but it didn't mention Moscow's aggression as the Trump administration opened negotiations with Russia on a ceasefire.

"Continuing to engage in rhetorical rivalries in New York may make diplomats feel vindicated, but it will not save souls on the battlefield," Shea, 59, said at the time. "Let us prove to ourselves and to our citizens that we can come together and agree on the most basic principles. Let us show one another that the bold vision of peace that once pulled us out of hell can prevail." The message was a shocking retreat for the US in the 193-member UN General Assembly, whose resolutions are not legally binding but are seen as a barometer of world opinion. It also reinforced the fears of some allies about what a second Trump presidency could mean for longstanding transatlantic partnerships - and whether the US could remain a bulwark against aggressors like Russia.

For Shea, it was another day at work. She has spent the last 30-plus years serving as a diplomat under

both Republican and Democratic presidents - from Bill Clinton to Trump - carrying out their policies even if they were a departure from longstanding US positions. "I don't know what her personal views are on things. But administrations change, policies change. And your job as a diplomat is to advocate for those policies," said a former colleague and deputy US ambassador, Robert Wood, who recently retired. The US mission to the UN declined to comment. The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Shea's work has included stints in South Africa, where she witnessed Nelson Mandela become the first democratically elected president, and Israel, where she worked on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Shea grew up in the suburbs of Washington - her father a World War II veteran and her mother active in the local Japanese American friendship society. The experience of Japanese exchange students staying with her family over several summers and wanting to understand world events propelled her into international relations at the University of Virginia. After graduation, she scored a job offer with the US Foreign Service. She worked her way up and in 2019 was tapped to be Trump's ambassador to Lebanon, where the soft-spoken diplomat made headlines for her criticism of the Hezbollah militant group.

New attacks target France prison guard cars, home

PARIS (AFP): Assaults targeted cars and a building lobby linked to prison staff in France overnight, the authorities said, the latest in a series of coordinated attacks that have put the government on edge. Unknown assailants have hit several jails and facilities across France, torching cars, spraying the entrance of one prison with automatic gunfire, and leaving mysterious inscriptions.

The national anti-terrorist prosecutor's office is leading a probe into the attacks, and Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin accused people linked to drug trafficking of being responsible. "Clearly people are trying to destabilise the state by intimidating it," he told the CNews/Europe

1 broadcaster. "They are doing it because we are taking measures against the permissiveness that has existed until now in jails," he said.

Darmanin and Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau have in recent months vowed to intensify the fight against narcotics and drug-related crime. Darmanin is leading what he calls a "prison revolution" that aims to lock up 200 of France's 700 most dangerous drug traffickers in two top-security prisons from this summer. A bill against drug-related crime, which includes these prisons, is set to go to a vote in parliament at the end of the month. Assaults set fire to three cars -- including one belonging to a prison guard

-- in the car park of a jail in the southern town of Tarascon, its prosecutor said.

The car of another guard working at a jail outside Aix-en-Provence, also in the south, was torched outside his home, a representative from a prison workers' union and the anti-terrorist prosecutor's office said. In the Seine-et-Marne region near Paris, someone scrawled the letters "DDPF" -- standing for "Rights of French Prisoners" -- and tried to start a fire in the entrance of a building where a woman prison guard lives, a police source said.

Several prison guards, who did not give their names out of fear for their safety, said they were worried. "It's the first time in my career that I look back as I leave work and check what is going on in the parking lot," a 47-year-old woman, who has worked as a prison guard for 22 years, told AFP.

She said she now locks the door as soon as she gets home. Another guard, 34, said what was happening was "scary". "Tracking down a guard, following them home requires preparation and premeditation," he said. Before the current wave of attacks, in September three masked assailants broke into the home of a prison guard in Montreuil just outside Paris, beating him and his partner and issuing threats linked to his work, the local prosecutor's office said.

Syrians have more freedom after Assad, but could they soon lose it?

DAMASCUS (BBC): On the morning of 8 December 2024, I waited anxiously at the Lebanese border, hoping to get into Syria as soon as the crossing opened, not knowing what to expect. Bashar al-Assad, the president of 24 years, was gone. Opposition fighters had advanced towards Damascus, taking major cities including Aleppo. I couldn't believe what I was seeing: Syria was free.

Like many Syrians, I'd only ever known the country under the rule of Assad and his father Hafez, who had been in power from 1971 until 2000. Life under the Assads had meant more than 50 years of disappearances, incarceration - and the civil war that began in 2011 had claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Syrians. I'd been detained at the start of the uprising that year, and several times afterwards; I witnessed men lined up to be beaten and heard screams of torture. Even after I left the country in 2013, I learnt that security forces had broken into my apartment in Damascus and vandalised it. I assumed I'd lost my home country for good, then suddenly last year the dictatorship was toppled in just over a week. As I crossed the border into the country without fear of arrest, and watched rebel fighters shoot celebratory gunfire, while people rejoiced on the streets, I felt like laughing and crying at once.

For weeks, Damascus's main Umayyad Square became a hub of celebrations. Young and old talked freely about politics and everywhere

Syria's future was debated openly; among street vendors and taxi drivers, boys cleaning shoes. All of this was unthinkable under Assad, as Syrians could never protest freely for fear of reprisals. Only now, four months on, the situation is more complex. Though great strides have been made in gaining some social freedoms, there are growing concerns around what democracy will look like but also around the role of Islam in the new regime. So, how long might these social freedoms remain - or could, as some fear, the newly won liberties be short-lived?

At Rawda Café in central Damascus, just across the road from Parliament, intellectuals gather around long tables to smoke shisha and discuss culture. Under Assad, political activists were picked up and arrested there. Rumour had it that some waiters were regime informants. Today, it's a very different picture. The café hosts talks and music plays. Prominent figures who once fled the country have returned too - many are greeted by a band playing traditional songs with a giant drum. Syrian journalist Mohammad Ghannam is one of them. He tells me that he spent months in prisons during Assad's regime and later moved to France; his euphoria at returning is palpable.

"I think everyone who can come back, should come back to rebuild the country," he declares. "There is a window to do whatever you want now compared with before 8 December

2024." Reflecting on the past, he adds: "Even preachers in the mosques needed to get approval and know what they were going to preach. [Now] it's completely free. [At] prayers the Imam was talking about how your personal freedom shouldn't step on other people's freedom." Odai al-Zobi has also recently returned to Syria after 14 years - he left to study but says he was unable to come back before now because he was outspoken about the regime.

"My books were banned here," he tells me. "Now there is no censorship, you can read whatever you want. I was very surprised that a lot of people want to read and want to know more." "This is a big change," agrees Ali al-Atassi, a Syrian documentary-maker and son of former Syrian President Noureddine al-Atassi. (His father was deposed in a coup by Hafez al-Assad.) "It changed the rules of the game, and opened a lot of perspectives for the country."

Syria's vibrant arts and culture scene has long been a source of the country's pride: the Assads supported it, wanting to present a rich culture to the world yet some artists and writers were killed for their views on the regime. Even carrying certain books was once cause for arrest. Today, however, all kinds of books are on display in shops around the capital - even political titles. Cinema clubs screen films that were previously banned too. For weeks after Assad's fall, the caretaker government didn't

New Estonian legislation warns Baltic shipping security

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Estonia's adoption of legal amendments allowing the country's navy to use force against foreign vessels was a provocative action that poses risks to shipping and security in the Baltic Sea. Zakharova said that Russia would react proportionately to instances of aggression against its vessels.

Last week Estonia seized the Kiwala, which has been under EU sanctions since February as part of Russia's so-called "shadow fleet", a term Western countries use for ships they say Moscow deploys to circumvent international sanctions. The ships are typically not regulated or insured by conventional Western providers.

‘War has taken everything’

KHARTOUM (AFP): It had been nearly two years since AFP journalist Abdelmoneim Abu Idris Ali set foot in his home in war-torn Khartoum, after the sound of children playing in the street gave way to the fearsome fire of machine guns. Sudan's once-peaceful capital awoke to the sound of bombs and gunfire on April 15, 2023 as war broke out between its two most powerful generals -- army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Bombs tore through homes, fighters took over the streets and hundreds of thousands scrambled to escape -- among them Abdelmoneim, his wife, his son and three daughters. Since then they have been displaced five times -- fleeing each time the front line closed in. Eventually the 59-year-old journalist sent his family to safety in another African country while he settled down to work alone from Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

Then last month he was able to briefly return to his home in Khartoum North during a reporting trip escorted by the army after it recaptured the city. He found his beloved neighbourhood, known as Bahri, abandoned. "The whole place is cloaked in silence, no grocery store chit-chats, no boisterous games of football on the corner, nothing," he said. "The last time I was here, the neighbours were all in the street saying goodbye, praying for each other's safety, promising we would meet again soon."

Now their doors hung ajar, beds dragged out onto the street, apparently by RSF fighters who used them to sleep in the open air. Since the war broke out, the paramilitaries have been notorious for taking over and looting homes, selling the contents or taking it for themselves. When he got to his landing, Abdelmoneim braced himself for what he would find inside. "It was like an earthquake had hit.

Zelensky urges US and Europe to ‘pressure’ Russia

PARIS (BBC): Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and top diplomat Marco Rubio have met with their European and Ukrainian counterparts in Paris to discuss efforts to end the war in Ukraine.

The talks, hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron, formed the highest level of transatlantic engagement about the war since February. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged those at the meeting to put "pressure" on Russia to agree to a ceasefire, as "Russia uses every day and every night to kill".

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed the talks, claiming European leaders were focused on "continuing the war".

The day of talks began with a lunchtime meeting at Elysée Palace between Macron, Witkoff and US Secretary of State Rubio. The US delegation then met Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, as well as the national security advisors for Germany and the UK, the French presidency said. Separate meetings between the respective nations' foreign ministers and defence ministers also took place.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said

they had "discussed the paths to a fair and lasting peace, including full ceasefire, multinational contingent, and security guarantees for Ukraine". Ahead of the talks, European diplomats had said they would urge the US to pressure Russia to agree to an unconditional ceasefire. "We want the US to use a bit more stick," one official said. The US State Department had said the focus would be on how to end the fighting in Ukraine, and that Witkoff would report on his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin that took place last week. Macron's office had said the purpose of the talks was to "review progress on peace negotiations aimed at ending the Russian aggression in Ukraine".

Ongoing efforts to secure a ceasefire come days after a Russian missile attack killed at least 35 people and injured 117 in the Ukrainian city of Sumy. Earlier this month, at least 18 people died in a strike on a residential area in Kryvyi Rih. Overnight, Ukrainian authorities said a Russian drone attack on the city of Dnipro killed three people, including a young girl. Following the meeting last week between Witkoff and Putin in St Petersburg, the US envoy

said the Russian president was open to "permanent peace". The statement comes after Moscow rejected a proposal for a full and unconditional ceasefire that had been agreed by the US and Ukraine last month. In May 2023, prior to returning to the White House, Trump said he would be able to settle the war between Russia and Ukraine "in 24 hours".

His administration has taken action to drastically improve relations with Moscow, while seeking to broker a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. Russia's top economic negotiator claimed that some countries were trying to "derail" Moscow's talks with Washington. "There are a lot of people, structures, countries trying to disrupt our dialogue with the United States," Kirill Dmitriev said. Zelensky had previously warned Ukraine would not accept a peace deal if his country was not involved in negotiations for any such agreement. Tensions between Trump and Zelensky have been high since a heated confrontation at the White House in February, where the US leader chided Ukraine's president for not starting peace talks with Russia earlier.

US Senator meets wrongly deported man in El Salvador

El SALVADOR (Reuters): Democratic US Senator Chris Van Hollen met with Kilmar Abrego Garcia, the man wrongly deported to El Salvador in a case that has pitted a defiant Trump administration against the courts and fanned the prospect of a constitutional conflict.

The senator posted on X an image of himself in El Salvador with Abrego Garcia, dressed in a collared shirt, jeans and a baseball cap, a day after being denied access to the notorious prison for gang members where he has been held. "I said my main goal of this trip (to El Salvador) was to meet with Kilmar. Tonight I had that chance," the senator wrote in his post, but giving no indication of Abrego Garcia's health or state of mind.

"I have called his wife, Jennifer, to pass along his message of love," Van Hollen added. "I look forward to providing a full update upon my return." The US Supreme Court has directed the administration of President Donald Trump to facilitate Abrego Garcia's return after Washington acknowledged he was deported because of an administrative error. In a statement apart from the ruling, liberal Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the government had cited no basis for what she called Abrego Garcia's "warrantless arrest," nor for

his deportation or imprisonment in El Salvador.

Abrego Garcia's lawyers say he has never been charged with, nor convicted of, any crime, and deny the Justice Department's accusation that he belongs to the criminal gang MS-13. But the government has given no indication it plans to seek his return and said it had no authority to release a man from a foreign prison, raising the potential for a constitutional conflict should Trump defy the highest court. In a statement after the meeting, White House Deputy Press Secretary Kush Desai repeated the unproven accusation that Abrego Garcia was a member of MS-13.

Chris Van Hollen has firmly established Democrats as the party whose top priority is the welfare of an illegal alien MS-13 terrorist," Desai said. "It is truly disgusting. President Trump will continue to stand on the side of law-abiding Americans." Trump's border czar, Tom Homan, told CNN the man belonged in prison, despite the Supreme Court directive. "He's a citizen of El Salvador and he's in El Salvador. He's home," Homan said.

"I think we did the right thing. I think he is where he should be. Even if he came back ... he's going to be detained and he's going to be removed as per the order of removal." Along with

Abrego Garcia, the Trump administration has deported to El Salvador hundreds of people, mostly Venezuelans, whom it says are gang members, under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, without presenting evidence and without a trial. A US district judge, James Boasberg, has already threatened administration officials with criminal contempt charges over the deportations. Boasberg said the administration demonstrated "willful disregard" for his March 15 order barring the deportations to El Salvador under the 1798 act.

Salvadoran officials have also shown no interest in releasing Abrego Garcia. During a meeting with Trump at the White House, El Salvador's president, Nayib Bukele, said he had no plans to return Abrego Garcia. Bukele also posted pictures of the encounter with Van Hollen on social media, followed by a post saying he would remain in the custody of the Central American. "Now that he's been confirmed healthy, he gets the honor of staying in El Salvador's custody," Bukele said. Van Hollen, the US senator from Maryland, where Abrego Garcia lived, arrived in El Salvador to meet senior officials and advocate for his release, but was told by Vice President Felix Ulloa he could not authorize a visit or a telephone call with Abrego Garcia.

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US-China ‘decoupling’ would be a messy divorce

EVEN if the writing has been on the wall for years, breaking up is never easy. China and the US don't often see eye to eye, but for decades, they have broadly agreed that it is better to be trade partners than trade enemies. That alliance is now hanging by a thread. And the real-world collateral damage is already piling up. The presidents of the world's two biggest economies don't appear ready to talk turkey. China indicated Wednesday that it would be open to negotiations only if talks are based on "respect," and greater "consistency and reciprocity" from the Trump administration, a person familiar with the matter told my CNN colleagues. (I, for one, am not holding my breath.)

Without some kind of retrenchment, US-China trade is expected to fall by more than 80% - a magnitude "tantamount to a decoupling," said Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, the director general of the World Trade Organization, which issued a similarly grim report on global trade Wednesday. (The upshot: Pre-Trump tariffs, global trade was penciled in to grow 2.7% this year. Now, it's expected to shrink 0.2%.) US stocks tumbled on Wednesday - dragged down by Nvidia's China shut-out, the grim forecast from the WTO, and comments from Fed Chair Jerome Powell, who warned of a "challenging scenario" in which tariffs lead to a triple whammy of weaker economic growth, higher unemployment and faster inflation, all at the same time. "There isn't a modern experience for how to think about this," Powell said at an event hosted by the Economic Club of Chicago on Wednesday. You might think the "Art of the Deal" president would be eager to hash out some kind of pact with China. But if Trump has taught the world anything, it's to expect the unexpected. "There may be another game plan here," Ed Yardeni, a veteran investor and president of Yardeni Research, told investor Louis Navellier on a podcast this week. "It's conceivable that he's got no interest in doing a deal with China. It's conceivable that the US has come to the conclusion that China is a geopolitical threat... and what we're trying to do is ruin their economy."

Some new reporting from Bloomberg is lending weight to that theory. According to the news outlet, which cited unnamed sources, the Trump administration is "preparing to pressure nations to curb trade with China." One option on the table, Bloomberg said, is essentially a monetary sanction in which the US would ask other nations to impose tariffs on certain countries with close ties to China. China's halt on Boeing deliveries and its restrictions on rare-earth exports show that the country "has learned how to weaponize its imports in a new way," Mary E. Lovely, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said in an interview. "China still wants to look like a respectable stakeholder" to trading partners like Australia, the EU and Southeast Asia, where President Xi Jinping visited this week, Lovely notes. "They want to say, 'The door is open. We're reasonable, we're just combating US aggression.' And they are doing it now with a much bigger set of tools."

Trump's decimation

CHINA is the only other country in the world that pushes science frontiers in a way that competes with the US And right now, we are losing the science race. I'm a professor of mechanical engineering, materials science, and chemistry at Duke University. I spent the past year at the State Department's Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation as a science fellow. My office at the State Department monitored scientific advances across the globe and coordinated with allies to ensure the protection of new technologies.

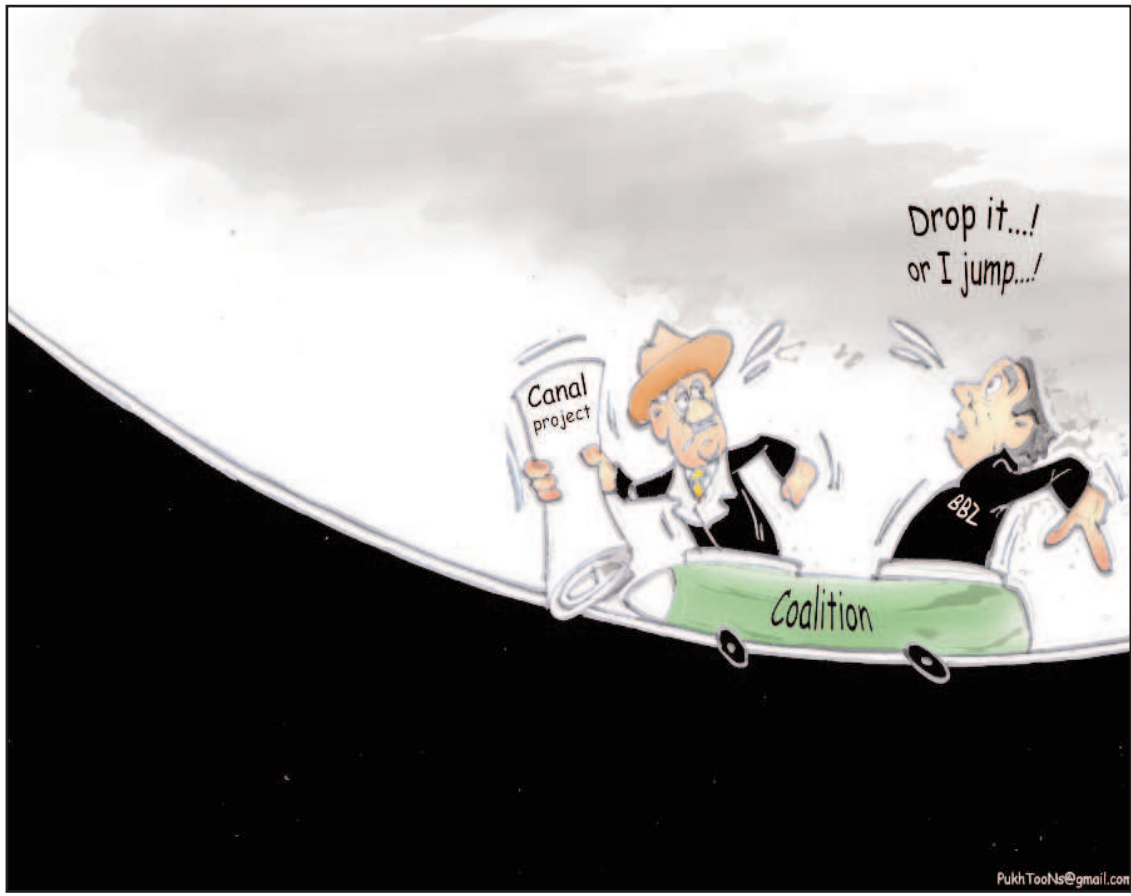
Why is it important that the US "wins" at science? I'll use an example from my own field of nanoscience. You might know someone whose cancer was treated with Abraxane, a nanoparticle-based chemotherapy. Let's now imagine that China develops a new treatment for cancer and decides not to share it with us. Or consider current developments in AI, quantum computing, and brain-machine interfaces. These all have military applications. I would certainly prefer that the US, not China, has the most advanced military technologies.

I'm not sure whether Trump voters were voting to stop the development of new technologies in the US I doubt they were voting to support the Chinese Communist Party, but that's the situation we are in now. We need a democracy that protects human rights to be the leader in science. The science being produced by scientists in China is outstanding. The training of young scientists in China is better than the US Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party have prioritized science, and it shows. But our threat isn't what China is doing to promote science. Our threat is coming from within the country - the Trump administration is destroying American science. Even if China weren't moving ahead, the US would still be moving backwards. Since returning to office, President Trump has done everything possible to destroy US science dominance and hand leadership in science and technology to the Chinese Communist Party. He is attacking US science on all fronts - people, funding, and institutions. He is shutting down the training of scientists in the US and the recruitment of top international scientists. He has stopped research at top universities and cancelled federally-funded projects he doesn't agree with. He has attacked flagship federal science agencies like the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health.

The attack on people is most concerning as this will have fallout for years. This year is the first in my career that many universities are not able to admit new PhD students for training due to the many actions taken by the Trump administration. China is certainly continuing to train PhD scientists while the US is heading towards a future where our country no longer produces new scientists and engineers. The US doesn't have enough scientists to keep up in the race for better computer chips or new treatments for disease. Most importantly, science thrives on people from different backgrounds coming together to forge new frontiers. Until now, we have recruited the best and brightest young scientists from around the world and encouraged them to stay in the United States. Ideally, we would recruit the top students from China and provide pathways for them to become citizens. But now, top international students fear coming to the US because of ICE arrests and travel bans. And even if they did want to come to the US, we might no longer have research institutions to take advantage of their ambitions. The US has the top universities in the world, but nearly all of these universities are now implementing hiring freezes and significant budget cuts as China pushes ahead. My colleagues and friends at the State Department work incredibly hard to protect US science through careful coordination with allies and partners. Their work, which happens behind the scenes, allows the US to capitalize on the advances of scientists and engineers. But if Trump continues his attack on science, it's not clear there will be any American science worth protecting.

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How to work toward a lasting peace in Ukraine

Luke Coffey

AS the war in Ukraine enters its fourth summer, there appears to be no end in sight despite US President Donald Trump's repeated pledges to broker a negotiated settlement. This is not for lack of trying. Since returning to the Oval Office he has met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky once and held numerous phone calls with him.

Meanwhile Trump's top national security officials have met their Ukrainian counterparts in Jeddah to discuss a ceasefire. His top envoy, Steve Witkoff, has traveled to Russia at least twice in recent weeks and has emerged as Trump's primary intermediary with the Kremlin.

The prospects for a firm, lasting peace remain slim, at least for now, but much of the real diplomacy is probably happening behind the scenes. The White House is almost certainly engaged in quiet talks with both Kyiv and Moscow, as well as key European capitals. Both sides want to end the war. Russia's economy is struggling, and estimates suggest that about 800,000 Russian troops have been killed or wounded since the 2022 invasion. Ukraine, meanwhile, suffers nightly airstrikes targeting civilians and infrastructure. Two major ports remain closed, eastern cities are devastated, and millions of Ukrainians have fled.

Only Trump really knows what his plan is. But for any lasting peace to emerge, two key components must be present: a fair and just settlement for Ukraine, and credible long-term security guarantees that prevent renewed conflict. To achieve a fair settlement, several priorities must be addressed. Most pressing for Ukraine is the need to prevent any formal international recognition of Russia's sovereignty over territory it has seized since 2014. While Ukrainians may privately accept that they won't recover Crimea or parts of eastern Ukraine militarily any time soon, they are united in insisting that no recognition be granted to Russia. A precedent already exists: Iran has had de facto control of the Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa islands in the Gulf, but they are still

internationally recognized as part of the UAE.

Another critical issue is the exchange of prisoners of war and the release of political prisoners and abducted Ukrainian children. Thousands of prisoners remain on both sides, and exchanging them should be a politically feasible and mutually beneficial step. But the return of the estimated 19,000

Security guarantees will also be essential to ensure the durability of any agreement. NATO membership remains the most direct path to safeguarding Ukraine, but for now that path is closed. Trump has publicly opposed it, and several European allies share that view privately. But preventing a future war is in everyone's interest, so new forms of security

ing, comprising Ukraine's partners, should consider deploying troops inside Ukraine. These would not be combat forces, but their presence would serve as a vital deterrent. Ukrainians are unlikely to feel secure unless British, French, Turkish, and other European forces are physically present, even if not under the NATO flag.

The US must also play a role in Ukraine's future security, even if indirect. While Trump has ruled out deploying American troops, the US can still provide critical support. This includes continued weapons transfers, assistance in rebuilding Ukraine's defense industry, and vital enablers for European forces such as intelligence sharing, logistics, and air-to-air refueling for jet patrols.

Whatever the outcome of these talks, Ukraine's sovereignty must remain intact. The country must retain the right to hold its own elections, choose its own allies, and decide which international institutions to join. Allowing Moscow any say over Ukraine's internal political direction would set a dangerous precedent. The same is true of how the international community recognizes the Russian controlled regions of Ukraine. In the 21st century, one country should not get away with using military force to annex a part of its neighbor. In fact, the last time this happened was 1990 when Saddam Hussein invaded and annexed Kuwait.

Trump's efforts to end the war deserve serious consideration. If successful, a peace agreement would be a major foreign policy achievement. But it must be a peace that upholds Ukraine's independence and lays the foundation for long-term stability. Even countries far from the battlefield, such as those in the Gulf, can have important roles to play in supporting diplomacy, reconstruction, and postwar security. Now is the time for bold, creative thinking. If the war in Ukraine is to end, it must end in a way that is just, secure, and lasting — for both the Ukrainian people and the international order they are fighting to defend.

Arab News

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Ukrainian children forcibly taken to Russia is a humanitarian imperative that cannot be ignored in any serious peace effort.

Additionally, Ukraine will require significant international support for reconstruction. After more than three years of full-scale warfare, infrastructure across the south and east of the country has been shattered. Transport systems, energy grids, and housing have all been badly damaged. Rebuilding these areas will be a monumental task. While Trump will expect European nations to take the lead on funding reconstruction, failure to address this issue could result in long-term instability in Ukraine.

cooperation must be explored.

One important step would be the deployment of a credible international monitoring mission along the current line of contact. This could be either civilian or military, but it must be composed of actors trusted by both sides. One creative solution would be to involve the GCC's Peninsula Shield Force. Though unconventional, this would raise the Gulf states' global profile and offer a neutral peacekeeping presence trusted by both Moscow and Kyiv.

Beyond monitoring, Ukraine will need a credible deterrence force to guard against future aggression. A coalition of the will-

Japan should value common security

Liu Jiangyong

HISTORY shows Europe's struggle for hegemony has directly or indirectly affected Asia. For example, Japan's involvement in many previous global hegemony wars damaged peace and security in East Asia.

True, Japan has been peaceful since the end of World War II. But it seems to be getting restless again amid the turbulent global changes, with some Japanese politicians making attempts to revive the old Meiji Restoration dream. Nevertheless, Japan's policy of promoting a "free and open Indo-Pacific" with China as its "biggest strategic challenge" is doomed to failure, because peaceful development and cooperation between China and Japan are in the fundamental interests of the two countries and their peoples.

The construction of a community with a shared future for mankind requires a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and global synergy. Such a community is naturally opposed to and resists closed and exclusive "violent multilateralism", and instead advocates for open, equal and win-win "peaceful multilateralism".

The four principles of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security are dependent on the advancement of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in the new era, with both sets of principles being equally important to the world. The four principles are not only a guideline for improving global security governance, but also a set of international moral codes. That's why they call for ending the current conflicts in the Middle East and Europe, and preventing the European conflict from spreading to East Asia.

Sustainable security is the goal, and value orientation is in line with the security interests of all countries, while common, comprehensive and cooperative security is the method. Only when people think the goal and value orientation are in line with their own sustainable security interests will they choose the path of common, comprehensive and cooperative security.

It is very difficult to make people who are engaged in a conflict to accept "common security". Therefore, only by first making people realize the importance of their own "sustainable security" can we prompt them to recognize the importance of "common security" in order to safeguard their vital interests, and advance "cooperative security" and achieve sustainable security for all.

To achieve sustainable security, the world should abandon power politics and traditional geopolitical thinking, and strive to achieve "peace and cooperation through sea and land", that is, peaceful cooperation between maritime and non-maritime countries.

Building a community with sustainable security, sustainable development and a culturally rich community in East Asia is in line with the spirit of the Global Security Initiative, the Global Development Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, as well as ASEAN's goal of better safeguarding security, and promoting economic development and social and cultural advancement. Not to

mention it is also in the best interest of the people in East Asian countries.

One of the common factors between the two world wars and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts is the struggle for territorial control. Japan's three documents, including the new National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy and the Defense Buildup Program, formulated by the Fumio Kishida government before it exited office on Oct 1 last year, are based on so-called neo-realism. The documents, which mention the Diaoyu Islands issue many times, have changed Japan's post-war peaceful development model and its China policy, and thus posed a real threat to China's national security.

Whether incumbent Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba will make efforts to improve Sino-Japanese relations depends on five key factors: whether he abides by the four political documents signed by China and Japan; whether he abides by the 1995 statement by former prime minister Tomiichi Murayama on historical issues; whether he adheres to the one-China principle on the Taiwan question and opposes "Taiwan independence"; whether he properly handles the Diaoyu Islands dispute through dialogue and consultation; and whether he follows the liberal-oriented views advocated by former Japanese prime minister Tanzan Ishibashi.

If he does so, China and Japan can follow a new security vision that is common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable, which suits the requirements of the new era.

If China and Japan want to avoid conflict and reduce security costs, they should properly manage their maritime differences, and abide by the principles of the four political documents. The documents refer to the China-Japan Joint Statement inked in 1972, the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1978, the China-Japan Joint Declaration of 1998, and a joint statement on advancing strategic and mutually beneficial relations in a comprehensive way that was signed in 2008. As for Asian countries, they need to advocate for "peace and cooperation through sea and land", which will help them achieve common, sustainable development and ensure the security of all countries through peaceful cooperation between maritime and non-maritime countries. This model is based on equality, mutual benefit, inclusiveness and openness, and promotes peaceful coexistence. An apt example of this model is the Belt and Road Initiative.

The initiative is the inevitable choice for China to deepen reform and promote further opening-up, while developing bilateral relations and multilateral cooperation, in order to share the fruits of economic development.

If the BRI countries make common security their guideline, comprehensive security their strategy and cooperative security their method, and seek to establish a common security community while promoting interconnectivity and win-win cooperation, it is possible to build the world's largest sustainable security zone by the middle of this century.

Is NATO peacekeeping likely in Ukraine?

Christopher M. Schnaubelt

IT has become clear that a Ukrainian "victory" that results in recovery of the territory lost to Russia since 2014 is unlikely. As the conflict in Ukraine drags on, with negotiations for even a cease-fire at a virtual standstill, peacekeeping is being touted as a solution to this conflict.

Senior allied defense officials met in the U.K. on March 20 to discuss the possibility of forming a "coalition of the willing" for peacekeeping. Yet as Bence Németh of King's College London has noted: "European leaders say they will only send troops if there is a lasting peace in Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin has so far ruled out signing a peace deal that includes Western forces in Ukraine."

The reason peacekeeping cannot be a panacea is that its success depends on the existence of a treaty or other agreement that establishes a peace to be kept. The

prospect of a peacekeeping mission might build confidence to increase the likelihood of a peace agreement between warring parties, but peacekeeping follows an agreement. It cannot compel an agreement. Defending NATO territory through deterrence by force posture in Europe and NATO nuclear policy is possible, and quite likely to succeed, under current actions and planning. But this essentially defensive approach should not be confused with offensive (or counteroffensive, if one prefers) actions to regain Ukrainian territory seized by Russia. Unless members of NATO are willing to impose their will upon Russia with the full application of all elements of national power - an extremely risky endeavor given Russian nuclear capability - the decision to stop the war against Ukraine remains primarily with Putin.

If a peace agreement in the current war between Russia and Ukraine comes to fruition, could, should, or would NATO provide a peacekeeping force? A peacekeeping force might make a mutually acceptable agreement between Ukraine and Russia more likely, and an agreement might be concluded before both countries suffer tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, more casualties in exchange for only minor changes in the front lines.

Some allies have implied that NATO members would provide the bulk of the hypothetical 30,000 soldier peacekeeping force. Using the 1,165-member Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai as an example, a force this size to monitor compliance with a Russia-Ukraine peace agreement is theoretically plausible. Employing troops from 13 nations, it covers a boundary zone approximately 200 kilometers long and 40 kilometers in depth. Sources vary and the

conflict is dynamic, but for purposes of comparison, the front between Russia and Ukraine is between 1,000 and 1,600 kilometers. Yet it is worth noting Egypt and Israel have no desire to change the status quo of their border following their 1979 peace treaty, so the Sinai observers need not enforce it.

There are some realities to consider regarding proposals for a NATO peacekeeping force. First, one should recognize that NATO is not a party to the conflict. Individual member states are providing assistance to Ukraine. NATO is not doing so as an organization, although it does provide a forum for members to coordinate national support. It would be astonishing if all 32 members agreed to collectively assume a NATO peacekeeping mission.

Second, it would be even more astonishing if Russia would agree. One of Putin's excuses for invading Ukraine

again has been to create a buffer zone between Russia and NATO members. Allowing NATO members to put a sizable number of military troops inside Ukraine would seem directly contrary to Putin's image of Russian security. Why would he accept this condition when he apparently believes he now holds the "winning hand" and feels no urgency to reach a peace agreement?

Third, assuming a requirement for 30,000 peacekeeping troops and Putin's acquiescence, where would these forces come from? It does not seem likely the allies could produce this number in the near-term in addition to those already committed to deterring Russia from within NATO member boundaries. (Note that peacekeeping forces must remain neutral. Lightly armed only for self-defense, they could not provide effective deterrence other than the possibility of serving as a "tripwire" to initiate the commitment of addi-

tional NATO forces.)

Although NATO might be the best organized and most experienced entity for leading a peacekeeping mission of this size and complexity, for the reasons described above, that is not a feasible solution. Approaches more likely to be acceptable to Putin could be a UN peacekeeping mission or an organization specifically created for the purpose of maintaining an agreement between Russia and Ukraine. China and/or India might be significant force contributors.

Some NATO members apparently desire to be involved in a peacekeeping mission. Nonetheless, remaining outside of an agreement between Russia and Ukraine could have a positive aspect for NATO. Tactically and strategically, it may be wiser to employ additional troops to beef up the defense of the NATO members near to Russia instead of using them to perform peacekeeping within Ukraine.

Military courts: The front line of Uganda’s war on dissent

UGANDA is gearing up for general elections in January 2026 – the seventh since President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986. As in the lead-up to previous polls, repression is on the rise. This time, however, it has extended beyond Uganda’s own borders.

On November 16, 2024, opposition politician Kizza Besigye and his aide Obeid Lutale were abducted in Nairobi, Kenya. Four days later, they resurfaced in Uganda’s capital Kampala arraigned in a military court on security charges. Rendered to Uganda, in clear violation of international laws prohibiting extraordinary rendition and due process, the two civilians faced military justice.

Outraged by this militarisation of justice, Besigye and Lutale attracted a 40-strong defence team led by Martha Karua, Kenya’s former minister of justice. If the state antics were intended to silence dissenting voices, they have done just the opposite. Far from dissuading others from speaking up, these trials have sparked a national conversation on human rights and the role of the military.

Uganda’s Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Museveni’s son, has regularly commented on Besigye’s case on X. Widely seen as a potential successor to his ageing father, Kainerugaba heads a political pressure group, the Patriotic League of Uganda (PLU), despite legislation currently prohibiting serving military officers from involvement in partisan politics.

Since 2016, Uganda’s Supreme Court had delayed ruling on a case, brought by Michael Kabaziguruka, a former member of parliament, challenging the trial of civilians before military courts. Kabaziguruka, who was accused of treason, argued that his trial in a military tribunal violated fair trial rights. As a civilian, he contended he was not subject to military law. Besigye and Lutale’s case gave renewed impetus to this.

On January 31, 2025, the Supreme Court ruled that trying

civilians in military courts is unconstitutional, ordering that all ongoing or pending criminal trials involving civilians must immediately stop and be transferred to ordinary courts. Despite this ruling, President Museveni and his son have vowed to continue using military courts in civilian trials.

On January 31, 2025, the Supreme Court ruled that trying civilians in military courts is unconstitutional, ordering that all ongoing or pending criminal trials involving civilians must immediately stop and be transferred to ordinary courts. Despite this ruling, President Museveni and his son have vowed to continue using military courts in civilian trials. Besigye went on hunger strike for 10 days in protest against delays in transferring his case to an ordinary court. The case has now become a litmus test for Uganda’s military justice system ahead of the 2026 elections. Besigye and Lutale are not the only opposition politicians to face military justice. Tens of supporters of the National Unity Platform (NUP), led by Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, have been convicted by military courts for various offences.

Besigye went on hunger strike for 10 days in protest against delays in transferring his case to an ordinary court. The case has now become a litmus test for Uganda’s military justice system ahead of the 2026 elections.

Besigye and Lutale are not the only opposition politicians to face military justice. Tens of supporters of the National Unity Platform (NUP), led by Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, have been convicted by military

courts for various offences. These include wearing NUP’s trademark red berets and other party attire that authorities claimed resembled military uniforms, despite their distinct differences. Numerous lesser-known political activists are facing charges in military courts, too.

Over 1,000 civilians have been

prosecuted in Uganda’s military courts since 2002 for offences such as murder and armed robbery. For context, in 2005, the state amended the UPDF Act to create a legal framework which allowed the military to try civilians in military courts. It was no coincidence that these amendments happened as the military was trying civilians arrested between 2001 and 2004, including Kizza Besigye.

Military trials of civilians flout international and regional stan-

dards. They open possibilities of a flurry of human rights violations, including coerced confessions, opaque processes, unfair trials and executions. Trying civilians in military courts violates Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the 2001 Principles and Guidelines on Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the region’s premier human rights body, has long condemned their practice in Uganda.

Opposition to military justice has not just come from the usual quarters. Religious leaders expressed concern about Besigye’s continued detention after the Supreme Court ruling, as did Anita Among, speaker of Uganda’s Parliament and member of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM), who remarked: “Injustice to anyone is injustice to everybody. Today it is happening to Dr Besigye, tomorrow it will happen to any one of us”.

Following the court order and widespread outcry, Besigye and Lutale were transferred to a civilian court on February 21. Besigye called off his hunger strike. They remain in detention, as does their lawyer. However, their transfer without release, in a process begun by an illegality, remains flawed. Despite the transfer of their case, scores of more civilians have their cases still pending before military courts, with little hope that they will be transferred to civilian courts.

For this reason, 11 groups including Amnesty Kenya, the Pan-African Lawyers Union, the Law Society of Kenya, the Kenya Human Rights Commission and Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists, and Dentists Union (KMPDU) call for their immediate release. As Uganda approaches elections, it is evident that the military courts are now a tool in President Museveni’s shed for use to silence dissent. It is time for Uganda to heed the Supreme Court ruling – for now though, military justice is on trial, too.

Aljazeera

Türkiye’s new opportunities in Europe’s security architecture

Zoltan Egeresi

SINCE the leadership transition in the United States on January 20, international politics has become increasingly volatile and unpredictable, and deepening mistrust is casting a shadow over transatlantic relations.

The Trump administration’s strong rhetoric regarding the necessity of increased European military expenditure, coupled with its unilateral approach to managing the war in Ukraine without consulting European partners, raised alarm in numerous capitals across the continent. This apprehension was further exacerbated by the unsuccessful and ill-fated meeting between the American and Ukrainian presidents at the White House in late February.

The potential resurgence of classical power politics and spheres of influence, dominated by great and middle powers, accompanied by a more reluctant US engagement, has left European states in a precarious position as the war in Ukraine continues with no clear end in sight. While Russia continues its military offensive against Ukraine despite American efforts to broker peace, the reliability of US commitments to its European allies has come under scrutiny. Consequently, European countries have been compelled to enhance military cooperation and increasingly rely on their own resources. In recent weeks, several high-level meetings have taken place in France and the United Kingdom, attended by a range of European leaders. In early March, Türkiye also took part in the London Summit, indicating its readiness to support European security initiatives. This evolving geopolitical vacuum -- often described as "European strategic loneliness," has elevated Türkiye’s importance, creating new opportunities on the international stage.

Türkiye, which possesses the second-largest standing army in NATO and a rapidly expanding defense industry, has emerged as a key player in European security. The country has gained significant prominence in the global defense market due to its advancements in drone technology. Moreover, the Turkish military has undergone significant modernization and capability enhancement,

particularly in the areas of cross-border operations and the establishment of overseas military bases in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. In addition to land-based capabilities, recent years have witnessed notable advancements in Turkish naval power, including the commissioning of the TCG Anadolu, a short-runway carrier that enhances the country’s force projection capacity.

Beyond its military capabilities, Türkiye’s geopolitical alignment with

tions, the negotiation process could gain momentum. Nevertheless, several EU member states are likely to capitalize on the current geopolitical environment to strengthen their own defense industries and establish a dominant position within the European market, making Turkish participation in joint projects plausible but not guaranteed. However, the Turkish defense industry is in a significantly stronger position than it was a decade ago. In recent years, several Central European countries, including Poland

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Europe has further solidified its relevance in the evolving security landscape. As a staunch supporter of Ukraine’s territorial integrity, Türkiye has actively positioned itself as a mediator between Kyiv and Moscow. Its role was instrumental in facilitating initial negotiations between the conflicting parties in the early stages of the war, and it served as a key intermediary for the Black Sea Grain Initiative, ensuring the safe transit of grain exports from designated ports.

Furthermore, Türkiye’s strategic position in the Middle East and its crucial role in controlling irregular migration flows that could impact the European continent underscore its significance as an indispensable partner. However, divergent interests between Türkiye and several EU member states continue to pose challenges to cooperation.

Additionally, the shifting geopolitical dynamics may provide renewed impetus for Türkiye’s EU accession process, which has remained stalled for years. If domestic political developments in Türkiye align with European expecta-

and Hungary, have procured Turkish military products, thereby securing a foothold for Turkish defense exports within the EU.

The evolving geopolitical landscape and persistent instability may enhance Türkiye’s bargaining power in its relations with the European Union. Key issues such as visa liberalization and the modernization of the EU-Türkiye Customs Union Agreement (in force since 1996) will require reassessment within the broader context of European-Turkish relations. The Turkish government has remained steadfast in its pursuit of full EU membership and remains committed to this objective as part of its long-term strategic vision. In sum, Türkiye plays an increasingly pivotal role in Europe’s emerging security architecture amid the ongoing transformation of the international order. The current geopolitical shifts present an opportunity to reinvigorate cooperation between Türkiye and the European Union, offering a renewed chance to deepen ties and reestablish mutual trust.

Citizenship and naturalization under attack

Lucia Martel Dow

THE Trump administration is wasting no time making American citizenship harder to access and easier to deny. Just weeks into the new term, the Trump administration has proposed alarming changes to multiple immigration forms, including the naturalization application.

These changes include requiring immigrants to disclose all of their social media usernames and provide personal information about family members, even if those relatives are undocumented and the information is irrelevant to the merit of a naturalization application.

The government is also forcing permanent residents to choose between disclosing personal information about people they care about, possibly risking their deportation, and accessing naturalization.

In another blow, the Department of Homeland Security terminated the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program. These essential grants, started in 2009, have enjoyed bipartisan support and allowed trusted local organizations to help lawful permanent residents become US citizens.

Community-based nonprofits with long and successful track records have relied on this support to provide legal assistance and civic and English instruction. The decision to cancel the grants - which are funded through congressional appropriations - cuts off critical infrastructure and undermines efforts that have helped thousands of immigrants learn English and complete the naturalization process.

When the Asian Counseling and Referral Service, an organization in Seattle that provides naturalization services, learned that their DHS grant had been terminated, they

shared that the grant "constitutes 27 percent of the total annual funding for our citizenship program, so this cut will have a significant impact on our community, our programming, and our team. Many lawful permanent residents now feel unsafe and uncertain about their future, leading to an all-time high demand for citizenship and naturalization services."

Despite these challenges, organizations like Asian Counseling and Referral Service are committed to promoting naturalization and helping aspiring immigrants achieve their American Dream.

Unfortunately, more barriers are likely coming, such as increased application fees, a revised naturalization test designed to lower the passing rate and potential delays in processing times, especially if the application becomes more burdensome. Even immigrants who meet all the legal requirements for naturalization are being made to jump through unnecessary hoops to slow down their path to US citizenship.

Collecting social media histories and investigating family background are not about public safety but about surveillance. Eliminating funding for citizenship preparation is not about efficiency, it is about dismantling a system that works. These threats matter because more than 10 million lawful permanent residents in the US are potentially eligible to apply for citizenship. That's 10 million people who are already part of our communities. They are working, raising families and paying taxes. These people are simply trying to complete the final step in the immigration process to become American citizens.

Citizenship provides

legal protection, opens doors to better jobs and protects from deportation. According to the Migration Policy Institute, naturalized citizens tend to earn higher incomes and experience lower poverty rates. These contributions benefit US citizens too, by boosting the economy through higher tax revenue, economic growth and increased civic engagement. And yet, instead of supporting lawful permanent residents, the Trump administration is erecting barriers designed to dissuade them from trying. Naturalization is the final step in a long and rigorous process that immigrants approach with seriousness and a deep respect for the law and the Constitution. My organization has worked with countless naturalized citizens who speak powerfully about why they became Americans. Many come from countries where dissent is punished and free speech is curtailed. They don't take democratic freedoms for granted. On the contrary, they value those freedoms precisely because they've seen what happens in their absence.

I know this firsthand. I was born in Venezuela, a country where democracy has been gutted and civil liberties stripped away. I became a proud American citizen because I believe in what this country stands for: the rule of law, freedom of speech and the power of civic participation. The absence of these are at the core of everything that has crumbled in my country of birth.

Creating new and unnecessary barriers for immigrants who value American institutions and contribute to our economy is unnecessary. It politicizes what has historically been a nonpartisan issue within our immigration system. It affects us all.

Language and identity: The emotional politics of mother tongues

Waheed Shahzad

THE moment my child flawlessly recited an English poem but hesitated to name a guava in our mother tongue, I felt the weight of an unspoken loss. This dissonance between the fluency we celebrate and the fluency we neglect reveals a quiet crisis unfolding in Pakistani homes.

Our native languages, from Punjabi’s earthy proverbs to Sindhi’s lyrical cadences, are not being erased by decree but abandoned by default. In our pursuit of modernity, we risk severing the very threads that weave us into the tapestry of our history. Language is never merely functional. It is the vessel of ancestral wisdom, the rhythm of lullabies, the texture of humor and grief. When a mother tongue fades, it takes with it irreplaceable ways of seeing the world the Balochi metaphors for resilience, the Seraiki idioms for community, the Pashto proverbs that distill centuries of pastoral wisdom.

Yet today, these linguistic treasures are often dismissed as relics, their value overshadowed by the utilitarian dominance of Urdu and the aspirational glow of English. UNESCO’s grim prognosis 27 Pakistani languages endangered; some critically is not just a linguistic statistic but a cultural obituary in the making.

The numbers paint a stark picture. Punjabi, the language of over 100 million Pakistanis, remains conspicuously absent from Lahore’s elite schools and government corridors. Pashto, spoken by nearly 40 million, is increasingly confined to rural hearths as urban youth code-switch to Urdu-inflect-

ed English. Even Sindhi and Balochi, despite provincial protections, face generational attrition in cities where parents prioritize "marketable" languages over heritage. This shift is neither natural nor neutral.

It reflects a hierarchy etched by colonialism and perpetuated by policy one where English crowns the socioeconomic pyramid, Urdu serves as the national adhesive, and mother tongues are relegated to the realm of nostalgia. The consequences transcend vocabulary. Linguistic dislocation breeds identity fractures. Children who cannot access their heritage language lose more than words—they lose the intimacy of grandparents’ stories, the nuance of cultural humor, the embodied memory of place. Consider how Punjabi’s "mayen" carries a warmth untranslatable to Urdu’s "amma," or how Balochi’s "hal-o-ahwal" encapsulates communal care beyond English’s clinical "how are you." When these nuances vanish, we don’t just forget terms; we forget ways of being.

Compounding this erosion is the insidious stigma attached to native languages. In drawing rooms from Karachi to Peshawar, parents whisper approvingly of toddlers who greet guests in English, while regional dialects are dismissed as "gaon ki boli" (village speech). This linguistic shame manifests in classrooms where students suppress their mother tongues to avoid mockery, and in corporate offices where accent neutralization workshops promise to erase the "taint" of regional inflection. The message is clear: fluency in colonial lan-

guages buys admission to power, while mother tongues are souvenirs of an unchosen past. Yet even as systemic neglect persists, grassroots resistance is rewriting the narrative.

In Lahore’s underground poetry circles, young Punjabis are reclaiming their linguistic birthright through verse that blends tradition with contemporary angst. Karachi’s Sindhi millennials flood TikTok with comedic skits that revitalize ancestral idioms for digital natives. Quetta’s Baloch musicians fuse traditional zarbeet rhythms with indie rock, their lyrics a defiant ode to endangered lexicons. These efforts, though fragmented, prove that language revival is not about rejecting modernity but about claiming agency over how we modernize.

The state’s role in this reclamation is pivotal yet underplayed. While Article 251 of the Constitution pays lip service to regional languages, implementation remains lethargic. Contrast this with India’s 2003 Language Revival Act, which funds digital archives for endangered dialects, or Wales’ mandate for bilingual education. Pakistan’s policymakers could take cues from such models by introducing mother-tongue literacy programs in early education, subsidizing regional-language publishing, or requiring public media to allocate airtime for linguistic diversity.

Technology, too, offers untapped potential: imagine a national app crowdsourcing oral histories in Shina or Brahui, or AI tools that transcribe vanishing

Saraiki folktales. Ultimately, linguistic justice begins at home. Parents who code-switch to English at the dinner table might reconsider the subliminal message this sends—that love, too, has a preferred language. Educators can champion translanguaging pedagogies that honor students’ native fluency while building additional language skills. Even urban elites, often the worst offenders in linguistic elitism, might rediscover the cognitive and cultural advantages of multilingualism studies from the University of Edinburgh confirm that bilingual children exhibit stronger problem-solving skills and cultural adaptability. This is not a call to abandon Urdu’s unifying role or English’s global utility, but to reject the false binary between utility and heritage.

A child fluent in Punjabi poetry is no less equipped for a tech career than one drilled solely in English grammar in fact, they may carry creative advantages rooted in layered linguistic cognition. As the writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o observed, "Language is not just a means of communication; it is the very condition of our humanity." To let our mother tongues wither is to surrender the stories that tell us who we are.

The guava my child couldn’t name in our language is more than fruit, it’s a metaphor for the rootedness we’re sacrificing at the altar of progress. Pakistan’s linguistic diversity, if nurtured, could be its greatest cultural export. But first, we must relearn the vocabulary of belonging one that holds "hello" and "salaam," "computer" and "chaapaal," not as rivals but as companions in the untranslatable journey of being Pakistani.

To defend democracy, Democrats must listen to red state voters

Roger Myerson

IT should be easy to defend constitutional democracy against a would-be authoritarian leader - shouldn't it? After all, people everywhere should rally to defend democracy if they understand that they benefit from competition among parties to offer better public service, just as consumers can benefit from competition among suppliers in any market.

But when large groups of voters have become convinced that only one party really cares about them, then they may feel no stake in democracy itself, and instead, they may support their leader in shaking off its inconvenient constitutional constraints. With such mass support, an unprincipled president could subvert democracy while portraying his actions as its ultimate fulfillment.

Our constitutional democracy can survive a determined attack by a sitting president only if Americans in every part of the country see how they can benefit from competition between two parties that care about their local concerns. Sen. Chuck Schumer's (D-N.Y.) hope for

Republican senators to help curb the president will fail if their constituents think that only President Trump understands them. An effective defense against presidential authoritarianism would require some offensive moves to challenge the president's hold on his base in red states.

Many leading Democrats have struggled to find the right response to an authoritarian challenge because the standard playbook for winning national elections generally demands a strategic focus on purple states and swing districts. But when the mission is to preserve American democracy, Democrats need to reach out to the reddest states.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, who has gone to town hall meetings in red states, was one of the first leading Democrats to show some real understanding of this vital point. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) have also recognized the importance of including red states in their "Fighting Oligarchy" tour.

The need for new outreach may be greatest in the 12 states with no Democratic representatives in the 119th Congress.

Voters in these states know that there is no voice representing their priorities in the congressional Democratic caucuses, where the Democrats' national political agenda is largely determined. People cannot be expected to trust a party that has no effective mechanism for communicating their local concerns to its national leaders. When democracy in America is at risk, it is vital that local Democratic parties in every state should be able to assure local voters that their concerns can be heard by national Democratic Party leaders who care enough to listen. Public meetings of local voters with Walz and other Democratic leaders should be seen as an urgent first step.

Then, for a continuing commitment to hear people's concerns even in the states that lack Democratic representation, the House Democratic Caucus could invite these states' Democratic parties to

designate a recent congressional candidate to serve as their liaison with the House Democrats. As Kael Weston and I suggested in a recent article, the House Democratic Caucus already includes nonvoting members from Washington, D.C. and the Virgin Islands, so perhaps it could add a few more to represent people in states like Iowa and Utah, where over a million Americans voted for Democratic congressional candidates last year.

Thus, while many have argued about what Democratic leaders should be saying to Americans in this time of constitutional crisis, the real question may be how Democratic leaders should be listening. The reason for listening more to red-state voters now is not just to make them want to vote Democratic in the next election. The essential goal is to remind them that their hopes for better public service, even from a Republican-led government, depend crucially on their ability to vote for competitive Democratic candidates in the American system of constitutional democracy we are trying to preserve.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan addressing at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI).

Dy Governor SBP inaugurates ‘Go Cashless’ campaign

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Deputy Governor SBP Mr. Saleemullah inaugurated 'Go Cashless' campaign in a local mall on April 19, 2025 at Clifton, Karachi. The campaign was organized in collaboration with 12 leading financial institutions.

This initiative was aimed to educate both vendors and customers about the use and benefits of digital payment solutions, promoting a shift towards a cashless economy.

Mr. Saleemullah outlined that this 'Go Cashless' campaign is not just an event-it is part of a broader vision to accelerate Pakistan's transition towards a digital economy. Elaborating the key digital payments statistics Mr. Saleemullah highlighted that the SBP's flagship platform, Raast handled 795.7 million transactions worth PKR 6.4 trillion in Q2 of 2025.

He observed that a staggering 62% growth in the number of transactions through mobile and inter-

net banking has been witnessed.

Raast has processed over 892 million transactions amounting to PKR 20 trillion since its launch. He also expressed that the digital transactions grew by 35% in FY24, with volume increasing from Rs.4.7 billion to Rs.6.4 billion, and their value reaching Rs 547 trillion.

Furthermore, to promote the SBP's broader agenda to enhance financial inclusion and accelerate digital adoption in Pakistan, this 'Go

Cashless' activity was organized.

The campaign reflected the future of digital payments in Pakistan that is all about inclusivity, innovation, and integration.

SBP goal is a cash-lite economy where digital payments are not just an alternative, but the preferred choice for everyone- from a small vendor in a mandi to a large retail store in a mall. With campaigns like this at a local mall, SBP is showing people that going cashless is easy, secure, and empowering.

Pakistan Financial Literacy Week 2025

BankIslami drives financial empowerment

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan, BankIslami participated in Financial Literacy Week 2025. Through various initiatives, BankIslami promoted financial literacy and raised awareness about financial inclusion and its significance, while reinforcing its mission to advance Islamic banking in the country and save humanity from riba.

The week began with financial literacy camps across the country, including Lahore, Multan, Sahiwal, and Abbottabad. During these camps, the

teams engaged with the general public to raise awareness about the critical need for financial independence and promote understanding of key financial concepts, banking products, and services to all consumer segments.

Moreover, BankIslami conducted awareness sessions at over 30 educational institutes and non-profit organizations across Pakistan, including Mashal-e-Rah and Fehmida Begum Foundation. Members and students from these institutions were also invited to BankIslami branches across Pakistan to provide a first-hand experi-

ence of the financial products and services offered, and a peek into the efforts made by financial institutions.

These on-ground efforts were further amplified through print and digital media to reach a broader audience and engage diverse segments of society.

Sharing his thoughts on the initiative, Rizwan Ata, President & Chief Executive Officer of BankIslami, commented: "At BankIslami, our commitment extends beyond merely providing financial products. We aim to equip individuals with the essen-

tial knowledge and tools to make informed financial decisions. Through this initiative, we are dedicated to fostering a culture of financial understanding, enabling our customers to build a secure and prosperous future."

Furthermore, the week concluded with a Financial Literacy Walk held across multiple locations, bringing together participants from universities, women's organizations, NGOs, and civil society, reinforcing the importance of financial awareness and encouraging continued dialogue around inclusion, empowerment, and financial well-being.

Buick finally had cars Americans wanted to buy - then came tariffs

DETROIT (Reuters): General Motors' (GM.N) opens new tab Buick was on a roll. Sales for the once-stodgy brand were up 39% in the first quarter with a refreshed lineup of compact SUVs including the Envision, Encore GX, and the Envista, its top-selling SUV for under \$30,000.

Then President Trump's tariffs hit.

Buick's three most popular models are made outside the U.S. The Envista and Encore GX are both built in South Korea, while the Envision SUV is made in China.

That means all three are now subject to stiff tariffs that could add thousands to sticker prices on dealer lots

in the U.S. Buick's South Korea-made models face a 27.5% tariff and the Envision out of China faces a steep 47.5% fee with a 25% auto tariff, a 20% China fantanyl tariff and a previously existing 2.5% auto tax, according to a Barclays analysis.

It's bad news for Buick dealers, which have been thrilled by recent models by the brand that has for years struggled to shake off a stereotype that may no longer apply.

Analysts believe higher prices could stall Buick's momentum, and even threaten its survival.

"The latest wave of Buick vehicles is affordable, are good quality, are

decent vehicles, and ruining that with a cost disadvantage could upset Buick as a going entity in the U.S.," said Sam Fiorani, vice president of research firm AutoForecast Solutions.

Buick declined to comment for this story.

Trump's tariffs are pushing auto executives to analyze their portfolios and evaluate if the costs are worth it in the long term to keep importing some foreign-made models. The tariffs, enacted earlier this month, have already led to some changes.

GM moved to increase truck output at an Indiana plant and Stellantis (STLAM.MI), opens new tab, maker of Ram trucks

and Jeeps, temporarily halted production at two plants in Mexico and in Canada.

In a Tuesday, April 15 note, Barclays said it's assuming automakers "will no longer sell vehicles that cannot be sold profitably," including vehicles imported from China and Korea as a result of auto tariffs.

For GM specifically, Barclays expects the automaker will cease imports out of Korea and China of about 450,000 vehicles because of tariffs.

Barclays is cutting its 2025 GM earnings before interest and taxes estimates by 40% based on lower volume and the gross tariff impact of about \$9.5 billion.

Pakistan's economic revival gains global acknowledgment: Jam

SLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Saturday said that Pakistan's economy is on a path of consistent improvement, owing to recent structural reforms, international recognition of economic measures and the unwavering support of the business community.

He was addressing at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), said a release issued here.

LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad presented his welcome address, while SAARC Chamber Vice President Mian Anjum Nisar, former LCCI President Muhammad Ali Mian, former Senior Vice President Ali Hussam Asghar, Former Vice President Faheem ur Rehman Saigol, TDAP Chief Executive Officer Faiz Ahmed Chadhar, Director General Rafia Syed and LCCI Executive Committee also spoke on the occasion.

The commerce minister said that although the country faced significant economic challenges until a few months ago, the past 18 months have seen noticeable improvements.

He said that even global institutions like the IMF acknowledge Pakistan's economic reforms and recovery efforts. The large-scale participation of foreign delegates in events like the HEMS Expo and Mineral Expo is a strong indication of growing international confidence in Pakistan, he added.

The minister said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's personal involvement and focus have led to the resolution of many key

issues, while the collaborative approach of the business community during difficult times has been commendable.

Jam Kamal Khan said that the Export Finance Scheme (EFS) program is being tailored to benefit the business sector and reforms are being shaped through constant consultation with stakeholders. He appreciated the Lahore Chamber's proactive liaison with the government, calling it a positive sign for future policymaking.

The minister revealed that the Prime Minister personally participated in B2B meetings during international visits, reflecting the government's commitment to promoting trade. He said the Export Development Fund (EDF) is being restructured and TDAP has undergone considerable institutional improvements. He acknowledged that exports are still largely confined to a few products and regions. There is immense untapped potential in areas like East Africa and other emerging markets.

He shared that his meeting with the Afghan Commerce Minister helped resolve key trade-related matters and underlined that Afghanistan is a crucial corridor for gaining overland access to Central Asia. A new trade policy is also being formulated and for the first time, sector-specific meetings have been held regarding tariffs, which will be taken up with the Tariff Board.

In his address, LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad welcomed the government's economic revival efforts but pointed out the continuing chal-

lenges. Despite several positive indicators, he revealed that Pakistan witnessed a trade deficit of \$17.9 billion during the first nine months (July-March) of the current fiscal year 2024-25, which is five percent higher than the same period last year.

Mian Abuzar stressed that exports cannot increase unless the problems of the industrial sector are resolved.

He identified several pressing issues facing the industry, including the devaluation of the rupee, high energy tariffs, the imposition of Maximum Demand Indicator (MDI) charges on closed industries, exorbitant land prices in industrial estates and heavy duties and taxes on raw materials and intermediate goods. These factors have significantly increased the cost of doing business.

He further said that Pakistan's export revenue has not seen substantial growth due to the lack of diversification into value-added products over time. If the goal is to boost exports, support industrialization and attract investment, then the government must provide cheaper electricity and gas to industries, ensure single-digit financing rates and urgently improve the tariff structure. Such measures, he said, are essential to improve the Ease of Doing Business in the country.

Mian Abuzar also pointed out that 68 percent of Pakistan's exports are limited to textile, leather and rice sectors, while the country holds immense potential in halal food, pharmaceuticals, informa-

tion technology, engineering goods, surgical instruments and sports goods. He reiterated that the LCCI has consistently advocated exploring new markets. At present, 58 percent of Pakistan's exports are restricted to just 10 countries.

He highlighted the significant untapped trade potential in Africa, ASEAN nations and the Central Asian republics. Africa, for instance, imports goods worth \$700 billion annually, but Pakistan's share is only \$1.8 billion. ASEAN countries import goods worth \$1.7 trillion, while Pakistan's share stands at a mere \$1.7 billion. Similarly, Central Asia's total imports amount to \$111 billion and Pakistan's share is just around \$226 million.

Mian Abuzar urged the Ministry of Commerce to ensure that Pakistan's Commercial Counselors, posted in high-potential trade destinations, prepare market intelligence reports every six months and share them with all chambers of commerce across the country.

SAARC CCI Vice President and former President of the Lahore Chamber, Mian Anjum Nisar, said that ongoing global tariff wars offer a significant opportunity for Pakistan's exporters and the country must focus on capitalizing on these developments.

He urged policymakers to implement swift measures to reduce operational costs, including energy tariffs and other overheads, in order to enhance the competitiveness of Pakistani products in the global market.

In US Chinatowns, merchants ‘don’t want the trade war to be a war’

NEW YORK (Reuters): Last week, a pack of rice crackers at Sun Vin Grocery store on Mulberry Street in New York City's Chinatown cost \$4.99.

But this week, after President Donald Trump's tariffs on items imported from China took effect, the same crackers have a new price: \$6.99.

Chinatowns across the U.S. are feeling the effects of the escalating tariff war, as prices of household goods imported from China, including traditional Chinese medicine, dried noodles and jade jewelry have already started to rise.

While Trump paused his tariffs on most of the world for 90 days, his tit-for-tat trade war with China has resulted in a steep 145% tariff on Chinese goods, and that's hitting mostly family-owned small businesses in Chinatown hard. Many immigrant Chinese communities rely on businesses in local Chinatowns across the country for goods that are central to Chinese culture, for which there are few, if any, alternatives.

"It will impact a lot," said Jasmine Bai, the manager of Sun Vin Grocery, a small store stocked mostly with products imported from China, including ingredients that are rarely found in American grocery stores, like bean thread noodles and lotus seed

paste. "In the future, maybe we have less clients and they will buy less food."

Chinatown residents in Lower Manhattan spend \$1.15 billion each year on retail goods and services, and about 80% of local businesses in the neighborhood directly serve the Chinese community, according to New York City's Small Business Services.

Trump has said that he believes the United States could make a deal with China, but maintains that Beijing has "really taken advantage" of the U.S. for a long time.

"Every Nation, including China, wants to meet!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social on Thursday, although Beijing officials have not yet indicated that they are planning to meet with the White House. China has retaliated with tariffs of up to 125% on U.S. imports.

On Thursday, China's commerce ministry urged the U.S. to stop putting "extreme pressure" on the country and said the two sides remained at an impasse over who should start trade talks.

That back-and-forth has injected a sense of chaos into Chinatown businesses, said Eva Sam, the owner of Popular Jewelry in New York City, a family business known for chains and

pendants with ornate gemstones popular with hip hop artists.

"The sudden changes and escalating tariffs make it nearly impossible to stabilize prices or offer consistent quotes to our clients," she said.

Popular Jewelry sources its 24-karat gold as well as cut and polished jade stones from China. The store has already had to raise prices by 10% on imported jewelry, Sam said.

"It's very hard to make long-term and short-term decisions, because you don't know if the tariffs are going to be permanent or where he's going to put the tariffs, or if he's going to take them off," said William Wong, Sam's son who also works at Popular Jewelry.

Most Chinatown stores in New York City only have one or two months of supplies stockpiled, according to Welcome to Chinatown, a local non-profit aimed at supporting businesses in the neighborhood. That includes Villy KX Pharmacy, which doesn't "keep a lot of stuff" on hand, said Daniel Dellaratna, a pharmacist who has been working in Chinatown for 30 years.

"We are expecting, within the next 90 days, to see significant increases on most of the generic products," he said.

Eliz Digital Inc, a photo shop in New York City's Chinatown, has also seen the prices of supplies, like paper and chemicals sourced in China and used for developing photographs, increase.

Although the store has not raised prices "for a long, long time," the tariffs could force their hand, said the store's owner, who asked only to be referred to by her last name, Kesh.

"I think eventually we might have to do something, because, as you see, everything has gone up a lot, and our supply has definitely gone up so much," she said.

San Francisco's Chinatown is also experiencing uncertainty among its businesses as owners hope for productive negotiations between the U.S. and China, said Edward Siu, chairman of the Chinatown Merchants United Association of San Francisco.

"A lot of people don't know what will be next. They are so worried and frustrated right now," said Siu, who has been operating a travel agency in the neighborhood for 40 years.

The neighborhood, which spans 30 densely populated blocks, constitutes the oldest Chinese American community in the United States, according to the city's planning department.

70% of young Pakistanis obese, majority at risk of early heart attacks, says landmark study by PAK-SEHAT

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Alarmingly high levels of obesity, low-density lipoprotein (LDL or "bad" cholesterol), and low levels of protective high-density lipoprotein (HDL or "good" cholesterol) are the leading causes of premature coronary atherosclerosis - early plaque formation in the arteries of young Pakistani men and women - driving a surge in heart attacks among the country's youth.

These are the preliminary findings from the PAK-SEHAT study, Pakistan's first-of-its-kind longitudinal cohort research led by renowned interventional cardiologist and Managing

Director of a leading heart institute in Karachi, Prof. Bashir Hanif.

Dubbed as a "Mini Framingham Heart Study" for Pakistan, the 10-year project is being conducted by the Getz Pharma with nearly Rs1.4 billion (USD 5 million) in funding. It aims to determine why heart attacks are now occurring in Pakistanis as young as their 30s and 40s - decades earlier than in the West, where such events are typically seen in the 60s and beyond.

The PAK-SEHAT (PAKistan Study of prEmature coronary atherosclerosis in young AdulTs) cohort includes over 2,000 asymptomatic adults

from all provinces and regions of Pakistan - men aged 35 to 60 and women aged 35 to 65. Participants are undergoing detailed medical evaluations to uncover risk factors linked to early-onset cardiovascular disease, including lifestyle, genetic predisposition, and environmental influences.

Presenting the initial findings at the Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine (PSIM) Conference in Karachi, Prof. Bashir Hanif described the results as deeply troubling.

He reported that 70 percent of participants are obese, with the rate rising to 80 percent among women.

More than 70 percent have elevated LDL cholesterol,

while half have alarmingly low levels of HDL. He warned that these risk levels are unprecedented in such a young population and signal a looming public health disaster.

"We are now seeing heart attacks in people in their late 30s and 40s - even as young as 19 or 20," Prof. Hanif said. "This isn't happening anywhere else in the world. It's a uniquely Pakistani crisis."

Dr. Bashir maintained that many participants were unaware of their health risks, with 42 percent found to have undiagnosed hypertension and 23 percent undiagnosed diabetes.

The study goes beyond traditional risk factors like

smoking and poor diet. Prof. Hanif explained that researchers are examining environmental and demographic contributors, including air and water quality, pollution levels, and regional dietary habits. The study also includes coronary CT angiography (CCTA), blood profiling for inflammatory markers, and full genome sequencing to assess genetic vulnerabilities in South Asians.

Prof. Hanif stressed the need for developing a Pakistani-specific cardiovascular risk score, as current U.S. models are designed for older populations and fail to account for those under 40. "People here are dying well before that age. We need

our own data and our own solutions," he said.

Dr. Khurram Hussein, Managing Director of Getz Pharma, said the PAK-SEHAT study is part of the company's transition toward a patient-centric model focused on health rights, informed care, and local research.

Speaking at the Connect Conclave held alongside the PSIM conference, Dr. Hussein said the study will transform how South Asian doctors approach diagnosis and treatment, moving away from reliance on Western protocols that don't reflect the unique risks of the Pakistani population. Former Punjab Health Minister and senior physician

Prof. Javed Akram praised Getz Pharma's investment in scientific research, noting that no significant progress in healthcare is possible without industry support. He also acknowledged CEO Khalid Mehmood's commitment to supporting clinical studies and professional medical societies, including the landmark PROTECT Study during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Wajihah Javed, Project Director and Co-Investigator of the study, said that Getz Pharma has pledged to invest in indigenous and locally conducted research for the betterment of patients, rather than spending resources on unnecessary travel and unproductive medical society events.

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Muhammad Sohail Senior Civil Judge Kohat, Suit no. 172/1 Date of hearing: 28-04-2025, Titled:- Khayal Hameed Vs Provincial Government, Notice against:- (4/5) Usman (4/6) Lugman Hakeem (4/7) Armaan Hakeem (4/8) Musa Sons of Ismail Khan (4/10) Maryam Bibi (4/16) Fatima Bibi Daughters of Ismail Khan R/o (now in Abroad Mauthier Home Building Number 82 Zone 55 Street 943 Doha Qatar) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants in which date of hearing 28-04-2025 is fixed for your appearance (Since your intimation/ service is not possible through ordinary means/ mode therefore you Defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 28-04-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law. order Issued on: 14-04-2025 (Court of C-J-III Kohat)



In brief

Swiatek knocked out of Stuttgart Open

BERLIN (AFP/APP): Polish world number two Iga Swiatek was knocked out of the Stuttgart Open quarter-finals by Jelena Ostapenko on Saturday, after third-ranked Jessica Pegula was eliminated earlier in the day. Ostapenko, ranked 24 in the world, won 6-3, 3-6, 6-2. Swiatek has now lost a remarkable six times to the Latvian in six attempts, with Saturday's loss the first on clay. Swiatek, a two-time winner of the tournament, came into the match with an 11-1 record on the Stuttgart clay. But Ostapenko won the first four games and broke Swiatek's serve three times to win the opening set. Swiatek fought back to send the match to a final set, but Ostapenko regained control, winning 12 of the opening 15 points on the way to victory. Ostapenko will face Russian Ekaterina Alexandrova in the semi-finals on Sunday, with the final on Monday. Earlier on Saturday, Alexandrova continued her underdog run by dumping out Pegula in straight sets. Alexandrova, who knocked out rising star Mirra Andrejeva on Thursday in the last 16, beat the American 6-0, 6-4. Pegula reached the final at the Miami Open in March and won the Charleston Open earlier in April but did not have an answer against her opponent, who is ranked 22nd in the world.

Heat make history by reaching NBA play-offs

NEW YORK (Agencies): The Miami Heat became the first 10th-seeded team to reach the NBA play-offs through the play-in tournament as they scored an over-time success against the Atlanta Hawks. The Heat began the four-team Eastern Conference qualification tournament needing to win consecutive road games to advance. After beating the Chicago Bulls on Wednesday, they followed up with a 123-114 overtime success over the Hawks to set up a first-round meeting with conference top seeds the Cleveland Cavaliers. In the Western Conference, the Memphis Grizzlies defeated the Dallas Mavericks 120-106 and will face the Oklahoma City Thunder in round one, with play-off games in both conferences beginning on Saturday. Defeat marks the end of a miserable campaign for the Mavericks, which included their star Luka Doncic being traded to the Los Angeles Lakers and Kyrie Irving sustaining a season-ending anterior cruciate ligament injury. Anthony Davis, who moved to Dallas as part of the Doncic trade, received medical treatment for groin and lower back injury problems throughout Friday's game but still led his side with 40 points and nine rebounds. The Heat had bounced back from a 10-game losing streak last month to reach the post-season tournament and dominated the opening half against the Hawks, leading by 17 points at one stage before taking a 62-53 lead into the break. However, the Hawks stormed back and were 98-92 up with five minutes and six seconds remaining. A Tyler Herro free throw edged the Heat 106-104 up with 12 seconds left, only for Trae Young to score a late lay-up and send the game to over-time. The Heat found their range from the perimeter in the extra period with Davion Mitchell sinking three three-pointers and Herro adding two more to secure the win.

Pak Women saunter to victory against Bangladesh



LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Women beat Bangladesh with ease by seven wickets as they overhauled a small target of 179 in 39.4 overs in the last match of the ICC Women's World Cup 2025 Qualifiers at the LCCA Ground here on Saturday afternoon. Pak-W maintained their unbeaten run in the competition with five wins in as many matches. Pakistan Women have already qualified for the ICC Women's World Cup 2025 to be played in India between September and October later this year.

Chasing a below-par total of 178-10 by Bangladesh, Muneeba Ali and Aliya Riaz powered Pak-W to victory

with 62 balls to spare. Muneeba Ali played yet another responsible knock to anchor the Pakistan innings while Aliya Riaz returned unbeaten as she hit third half-century of the event. Sidra Amin played a comparatively brisk knock as compared with her last four innings in the event as she hit 33 runs off 52 runs including five boundaries. Opener Muneeba Ali 66 (93) was involved in two partnerships of 80 and 74 runs with Sidra Amin 33 (52) and Aliya Riaz 56 not out respectively and adjudged player of the match for her match winning knock. The Bangladesh bowlers could

not make inroads into the Pakistan batting line-up and struggled against the batters who looked in command except for the opener Shawaal Zulfiqar who failed for the second time in as many matches.

Marufa Akter, Nahida Akter and Rabeya Khan were the only successful bowlers for Bangladesh and shared one wicket each for 27, 36 and 25 runs. Fahima Khatun, Ritu Moni and Jannatul Ferdus remained wicketless for Bangladesh.

Earlier, Bangladesh Women won the toss and elected to bat first to put pressure on Pakistan in the second innings chase. Bangladesh Women could not find the desired results as their batters failed to post a big total on the board. Ritu Moni was the highest scorer for Bangladesh with 48 (76) while Sharmin Akhter 24 (47), Nahida Akter 19 (51) and Dilara Akter 13 (14) contributed to the low-scoring total. Fahima Khatun returned unbeaten with 44 runs off 53 balls.

Captain Fatima Sana Khan gabbled the prized wickets of in-form batters Fargana Hoque 0 (7) and captain Nigar Sultana 1 (6) as she conceded 45 runs in her quota of 10 overs. Sadia Iqbal was the most successful bowler for Pak-W as she claimed three wickets for 28 runs, Rameen Shamim bowled a miserly spell and conceded 25 runs for one wicket. Nashra Sandhu also snared one wicket for 31 runs, Diana Baig bagged two wickets for 45 runs.

Pakistan women's cricket team won't travel to India for world cup, says Naqvi

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Raza Naqvi has praised the women's unity and consistent performance, which saw them remain unbeaten in the ICC Women Cricket World Cup Qualifiers.

Speaking to the media in Lahore after meeting with the national team, he clarified that under the existing agreement with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Pakistan's women will not travel to India. "We have a hybrid model in place, and it is up to India to decide the neutral venue for Pakistan's matches," he said. "No matter which venue they choose, our team will participate, but not on Indian soil," he asserted.

After remaining unbeaten in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier, Pakistan has already booked their spot for the World Cup to be held later this year in India.

Praising the unity of Pakistan's women in the tournament, he said, "Victory and defeat are part of the game, but what matters is playing as one unit. When the team unites, the results speak for themselves." He also announced that the national women's cricket team will be rewarded for qualifying for the ICC Women's World Cup 2025, acknowledging their achievement as their rightful due.

"The players would receive performance-based rewards, recognizing their contribution to the nation's cricketing success,"

The PCB chief highlighted that the recent victories are not a stroke of luck but the result of strategic planning and behind-the-scenes hard work.

"Small changes have been made over time, and the positive results are now visible. We believe our men's senior team, the Under-19 squad, and

Pakistan Shaheens will also begin to produce consistent results," he added.

Looking ahead, Naqvi shared ambitious plans for the development of women's cricket in Pakistan. He revealed that the PCB is actively working on organizing a women's edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Additionally, he announced the establishment of specialized power-hitting camps for the women's team to enhance their skills and competitiveness on the global stage.

On the subject of the men's national team, Naqvi said a final decision regarding the appointment of the permanent head coach would be made in the coming days. When asked about the behavior of star batter Mohammad Rizwan, who has recently been perceived as agitated, Naqvi declined to comment but emphasized, "Whoever performs will have good news waiting."

Liga leaders Barca make stunning comeback to beat Celta Vigo

BARCELONA (AFP): Barcelona pulled off a stunning comeback from two goals down to beat Celta Vigo 4-3 on Saturday and move seven points clear of Real Madrid in the La Liga title race.

The Catalans trailed 3-1 inside the final half-hour after a Borja Iglesias hat-trick for the visitors but Dani Olmo scored and then Raphinha struck twice, including a 98th minute penalty, to snatch three essential points for the leaders. Champions Real Madrid, second, host Athletic Bilbao on Sunday, with a Clasico showdown still to come in May. "This attitude, this mentality of not giving up, is really great to see... we tried everything to get the three points and we did it," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick told reporters.

However Flick said striker Robert Lewandowski needed tests after coming off with an apparent hamstring problem, making him a doubt for the Copa del Rey final next weekend against rivals Real Madrid. "From my experience we wait until tomorrow (and the tests)," said Flick, who did not want to rule out the club's top scorer too quickly.

The coach, who rallied against his team's intense schedule on Friday, rested teenage star Lamine Yamal for the first time in 2025, although he was later needed from the bench after Iglesias' treble. The Catalans took the lead after 12 minutes when Ferran Torres, starting in place of the 17-year-old, stroled into space and with the defence standing off, drilled past Vicente Guaita from the edge of the box. Celta Vigo swiftly hit back, skewering Barcelona's high defensive line three minutes later.

Pablo Duran escaped on the right with the defence stranded and his cross was turned home by Iglesias into an empty net, after goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny dived fruitlessly to try to intercept the ball.

Celta, seventh in La Liga and in contention for European football next season, were finding plenty of joy going forward. Claudio Giraldez's team took the lead early in the second half after a mistake by Frenkie de Jong, who ceded possession sloppily in a dangerous area.



RAWALPINDI: Mohammad Haris and Tom Kohler-Cadmore put on 79 off 33 balls for the third wicket.

PSL 10: Peshawar Zalmi thump Multan Sultans by 120 runs

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): Peshawar Zalmi thumped Multan Sultans by 120 runs in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10, thanks to a brilliant batting display of their middle order, followed by a four-fer by young Ali Raza here at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Chasing a formidable 228-run target, Muhammad Rizwan's side were bundled out at 107 as none of their batters, except Usman Khan who made 44 off 22 deliveries, looked in touch.

The pace and spin combination of Peshawar Zalmi was too much for the rest of the batting order to handle, even with Usman Khan's valiant effort. Ali Raza, a young star, was brilliant with the ball and took four wickets for 21 runs in a four-over quota, which put

the Multan Sultans out of the game. Asif Yaqoob also picked up three wickets for 20 runs.

Batting first, Peshawar Zalmi posted 227-7 on the scoreboard in the stipulated 20 overs as Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Muhammad Haris, and Abdul Samad remained heroes with the bat.

Tom Kohler-Cadmore struck a half-century, scoring 52 runs off 30 deliveries as he hammered five sixes and two fours.

Muhammad Haris played a lightning-fast knock of 45 runs off 21 balls while youngster Abdul Samad scored 40 runs off just 14 balls, hitting three sixes and four fours.

For Multan Sultans, Michael Bracewell, David Willey and Ubaid Shah took two wickets each.

Peshawar Zalmi suffered two one-sided defeats by 102 and 80 runs against Quetta Gladiators and Islamabad United respectively.

Multan Sultans also failed to open their account as they were defeated by Karachi Kings and then by Islamabad United.

Multan Sultans Playing XI: Mohammad Rizwan (c & wk), Shai Hope, Usman Khan, Kamran Ghulam, Ashton Turner, Michael Bracewell, Iftikhar Ahmed, David Willey, Usama Mir, Akif Javed, Ubaid Shah

Peshawar Zalmi Playing XI: Babar Azam (c), Saim Ayub, Mohammad Haris (wk), Tom-Kohler Cadmore, Hussain Talat, Mitch Owen, Abdul Samad, Luke Wood, Alzari Joseph, Arif Yaqoob, Ali Raza.

Alcaraz and Rune race into Barcelona final



BARCELONA (AFP): Carlos Alcaraz cruised into his third Barcelona Open final with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Arthur Fils on a breezy Saturday and will face Holger Rune, who demolished Karen Khachanov.

Eight days earlier, in the Monte Carlo quarterfinals, Frenchman Fils had won the first set and forced Alcaraz to fight for victory.

On Saturday, the Spaniard took control from the start, breaking serve in the third and fifth games of the opening set as Fils struggled with the swirling conditions. "I started the match really focused on my game and being in a good position every time to hit the right shots," Alcaraz said after the win.

Alcaraz broke again in

the third game of the second set and only stuttered when he squandered his first two match points with a double fault and a wild drive, before clinching victory. "The wind was really tough," Alcaraz said. "It wasn't about playing fantastic tennis, brilliant, brilliant shots. It was about making the shots you had to do and no more than that. I did it pretty well."

After winning in Monte Carlo last week, Alcaraz remains perfect on clay this season. He has not lost in Barcelona since 2021. He won the tournament in 2022 and 2023 before missing last year's event with an arm injury. "Being in a final in Barcelona again means a lot in front of my people, in front of my friends,"

Alcaraz said. "It has been really fun and a great week. Let's see if tomorrow we'll end with a trophy. It's going to be really tough. I'm super excited." Earlier, world number 13 Rune outclassed Khachanov 6-3, 6-2.

The 21-year-old Dane did not face a break point in the first set, but broke to love in the seventh game and broke again in the ninth. Khachanov, ranked 27th, suffered another break in the second game of the second set, with Rune consolidating for a 3-0 lead.

The Russian, 28, saved two break points in the sixth game but Rune broke again in the ninth, wrapping up his victory with a passing shot to reach the final for the first time.

"It was definitely a very good match from my side, I played very smart I think and put him under lots of pressure," said Rune.

The Dane offered huge variety in his shots and hit 20 winners to 13 unforced errors. "I knew I had to play well again, I was keeping my pace on my shots well, mixing it up well and doing most things right today, so I'm very happy," continued Rune.

Verstappen claims Saudi GP pole after Norris crash

JEDDAH (Agencies): Championship leader Lando Norris crashed out of qualifying at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix and will start 10th as Max Verstappen beat the Briton's McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri to pole position. Verstappen in his Red Bull pipped Piastri by 0.01 seconds to take his second pole position of the year in scintillating style.

Mercedes' George Russell was third, split from team-mate Andrea Kimi Antonelli by Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. Williams' Carlos Sainz beat Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton to sixth place, ahead of Red Bull's Yuki Tsunoda and Alpine's Pierre Gasly. Norris' crash interrupted the first runs of all his rivals in Q3 apart from Piastri, who laid down a marker just before his team-mate lost control over the kerb at Turn Five and slid sideways into the wall.

When the session resumed, Verstappen went out on his semi-used tyres and took over top spot in his Red Bull from Piastri by just 0.001secs. The four-time world champion came straight back in to switch to fresh tyres and, while he warmed up, first Russell - and then Piastri - took top spot. But Verstappen signalled his intent with a blistering first sector, 0.123secs quicker than Piastri. Although the Australian was quicker in both the second and third sectors, the Dutchman had done enough to grab pole.



In brief

IRSA releases 101,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 101,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 145,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1424.47 feet which was 22.47 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 44,500 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1116.00 feet, which was 66.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 45,100 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 52,400, 34,000, 29,000 and 6,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 29,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 20,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

676 drug peddlers arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested 676 drug peddlers and 846 suspects involved in possessing drugs as part of its intensified campaign "Nasha Ab Nahi" during the current year. An official told APP that the police recovered 249 kilograms of heroin, 121 kilograms of hashish, 371 kilograms of ice (crystal meth), 100 kilograms of opium, 50 grams of cocaine, and 3,263 bottles of liquor from the arrested drug dealers. He said that in separate operations against illegal arms, the police confiscated 959 pistols of various bores, 35 Kalashnikovs, 680 rifles and carbines, 78 knuckle-dusters and daggers, and 27,232 bullets. He said multiple targeted operations were conducted during the ongoing campaign against drugs and illegal weapons, ensuring enhanced security for the citizens. He said the Islamabad Police remains committed to ensuring public safety and continues to take firm action against elements involved in narcotics smuggling networks. "The crackdown will continue against those poisoning the veins of our youth with drugs," said DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq.

Police nab 6 drug suppliers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Saturday continued operations against drug suppliers and arrested six accused recovering more than 4.5 kg charas from them. According to the police spokesman, the City Police nabbed accused Hassan Ali with 1.42 kg charas, while the Waris Khan Police recovered 850 grams of the contraband item from accused Mobeen. Similarly, the R A Bazaar Police held two accused Aman Thomas and Nabil Shahzad on the recovery of 700 grams and 800 grams charas from their possession respectively. Likewise, the Race Course and Wah Saddar Police also recovered 520 grams and 500 grams charas from accused Dilawar and Noman respectively. Meanwhile, six accused were netted from different areas for having illegal arms and ammunition. The Sadiqabad and Saddar Berooni Police captured accused Maysam and Yasir respectively recovering a 30-bore pistol each from them. The Gujar Khan Police also recovered a 30-bore pistol each from two accused Ehsan and Bilal.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal addressing during the "Iqbal Day" at PNCA. —APP Photo

Polio vaccination drive targets nationwide coverage starting Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dedicated to a polio-free Pakistan, the government is launching a new seven-day immunization drive this Monday on the directives of Shehbaz Sharif, aiming to reach every child nationwide as part of its relentless efforts to defeat polio. Federal Minister for Health, Mustafa Kamal talking to a private news channel said the nationwide initiative aims to immunize children against the debilitating disease, with healthcare workers reaching out to vulnerable populations in a concerted effort to halt polio transmission and secure a healthier future for Pakistan's children. Every child under five years old needs to be vaccinated repeatedly to increase their protection against the virus, he added. Health Minister emphasized the

government's commitment to polio eradication, stating, "We are resolute in our fight against polio and this campaign is a crucial step towards protecting our children's future and ensuring a polio-free Pakistan." During the campaign, polio workers will administer polio drops to over 45 million children under the age of five across the country. "We urge responsible parents to prioritize their children's health by ensuring they receive polio vaccination and complete immunization during every campaign, thereby safeguarding them against polio and other life-threatening diseases," minister added. "Parents are advised to take proactive steps to protect their children's future by bringing them to vaccination centers during every polio

campaign, ensuring they receive all necessary doses and remain safe from the debilitating effects of polio and other vaccine-preventable diseases," he added. The minister appealed to all stakeholders, including parents, community leaders, and healthcare workers, to unite in the battle against polio. By working together, he said, the country can overcome the challenges posed by polio and ensure a healthier future for its children. Polio vaccination is crucial in preventing the spread of the disease, which can cause paralysis or even death in children under five years old, he warned. Repeated immunizations have protected millions of children worldwide from polio, and Pakistan aims to join the list of polio-free countries, he mentioned.

Kohistani commends PML-N leadership for economic resilience

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State Kheal Das Kohistani Saturday credited the PML-N leadership for successfully navigating the country out of economic default headed by PM Shehbaz Sharif, who prioritized state affairs over political considerations. In an interview with PTV news, Kohistani lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, stating that his wise decisions and commitment to prioritizing the country's interests over politics have been pivotal in steering the nation forward. While criticizing the PTI, Minister of State said that they have been creating hurdles in the country's progress and playing an irresponsible opposition role. He contrasted this with the PML-N leadership's commitment to prioritizing state affairs and making

wise decisions for the nation's overall interests. Kheal Das also extended his appreciation to overseas Pakistanis for their significant contribution to the country's economy. He highlighted that their remittances, amounting to \$4.1 billion, have contributed enormously in stabilizing the economy and supporting the nation's development. Kohistani praised the overseas Pakistanis for their unwavering support and commitment to their homeland, recognizing their efforts as a crucial component of Pakistan's economic progress. Minister also highlighted the government's efforts to modernize the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) by transforming its outdated system into a digitalized one. This move aims to enhance efficiency, reduce

corruption, and increase tax collection, he added. By leveraging technology, the FBR can streamline tax processes, improve taxpayer services and reduce compliance costs, he added. Kohistani emphasized that the government is committed to broadening the tax base and increasing taxation in a way that minimizes the burden on the salaried class. By implementing reforms and improving tax collection mechanisms, the government aims to reduce the tax burden on ordinary citizens while ensuring that large corporations and high-net-worth individuals contribute their fair share, he added. This approach will help promote economic growth, reduce inequality, and ensure that the tax system is more equitable and efficient, he concluded.

WASAs directed to complete monsoon preparations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Water and Sanitation Authority (PWSA) Director General Tayyab Farid on Saturday directed all five WASAs to expedite their preparations for the monsoon season and complete all arrangements before May 15. Cleaning of sewer lines and drains, repair of heavy machinery, timely installation of monsoon camps, as well as training exercises and identification of low-lying areas should be carried out expeditiously so that all arrangements were in place well before the pre-monsoon season which started on June 15, he added. The PWSA director general was presiding over a meeting to review the performance of all Water and Sanitation Agencies (WASAs) and their preparations for the monsoon season. The meeting was attended by the managing directors and officers of all five WASAs, a WASA Rawalpindi news release said. Tayyab Farid also reviewed the revenue recovery of all WASAs in detail.

He said the performance of WASAs depended on revenue recovery. They needed to pay special attention to the revenue recovery so that water and sewerage facilities could be provided to the citizens together, he stressed. WASA Rawalpindi Managing Director Muhammad Saleem Ashraf, in his briefing, said the WASA Rawalpindi was working rapidly on cleaning sewer lines in preparation for the monsoon, which would be completed before May 31. The Agency had heavy machinery such as sucker and jetting machines, and dewatering pumps to deal with the flood situation, which were in functional condition, he added. He said the Punjab Government had been requested for funds for cleaning the Leh Nullah and 15 other major 15 drains of the city. He further said that the WASA Rawalpindi had completed the identification of low-lying areas in collaboration with the district administration and trained staff would be deployed at those

points with heavy machinery during the rains. Like every year before the monsoon, he said, a training exercise plan had been prepared with Rescue 1122 and other organizations, under which mock exercises would be conducted at Leh Nullah and Rawal Dam. Moreover, he added, five monsoon camps would be set up across the city where staff would be present with heavy machinery round the clock during the rains, he added. A control room was being established at the WASA head-office from where city-wide monitoring as well as the process of registering citizens' complaints would be carried out, he said. As regards the revenue recovery, the WASA Rawalpindi MD said that the Agency had recovered Rs 1.7 billion against the target of Rs 1.57 billion last year. The revenue recovery for the ongoing year had been estimated at Rs 2.3 billion, while keeping in view the current recovery position, they were expecting a surplus recovery, he added.

Minister chairs meeting to review Hajj arrangements

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Saturday chaired a review meeting on Hajj arrangements assessing the provision of vaccines and other facilities at various Hajj Camps across the country. Secretary Religious Affairs, Dr. Syed Ata-ur-Rehman, along with other senior officials, briefed the minister on the ongoing preparations. Sardar Yousaf said all Hajj Camps are fully prepared to serve the guests of Allah (Ziyuf-ur-Rehman) during the upcoming Hajj season. He urged pilgrims to visit their designated Hajj Camps according to the schedules provided in the "Pak Hajj App" to avoid any inconvenience. According to the briefing, vaccine administration for pilgrims will commence on April 21 in Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, and Multan. Meanwhile, in Karachi, Rahim Yar Khan, Sukkur, Faisalabad, and Sialkot, the vaccination drive will start from April 22. In Quetta, vaccination for intending pilgrims will begin on April 23. A temporary Hajj Camp will operate in Rahim Yar Khan from April 22 to April 24 to facilitate pilgrims from the region. Pilgrims are required to receive mandatory vaccinations, collect packed medicines, and Hajj gifts from their respective Hajj Camps. Additionally, two days prior to their departure, pilgrims must obtain their tickets, visas, identification locks, stickers, and mobile SIM cards from the concerned Hajj Camps.

Three robbers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Three 'robbers', one in injured condition, were arrested with the looted amount and two others escaped after a shootout with the Waris Khan Police late Friday night. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman on Saturday, the Waris Khan Police received a report of the robbery of Rs 1 million from a citizen in their jurisdiction through the Helpline 15. Five suspects, who had committed the robbery, were fleeing on a motorcycle when they were signalled by a Waris Khan Police team to stop during a snap check. The suspects, however, started firing on the police. The police retaliated and managed to take three suspects, one of them in injured condition, into custody, while two made their escape good. The entire amount of Rs 1 million and mobile phones snatched from the citizen shortly ago were also recovered from the suspects. The police also seized the motorcycle which the accused had snatched from a citizen at gunpoint in the area of Waris Khan and the weapons used in the robbery incidents. A search operation was underway to arrest the fleeing suspects. The arrested suspects including Arsalan, Qasim and the injured Kashif were wanted in dozens of cases of robbery, motorcycle snatching and theft registered at various police stations in the twin cities, the spokesman said.

Govt warns of foreign plots to destabilize Pakistan like Palestine

ISLAMABAD (DNA): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has said that there are efforts, backed by foreign funding, to weaken Pakistan in the same manner as Palestine, Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. However, the government is committed to eliminating internal and external terrorism and ensuring economic development. He emphasized that it is essential to convey Allama Iqbal's message of "khudi" (selfhood) to the youth to shape their character. At present, it is vital that we adopt Iqbal's concept of selfhood and intellectual courage to wisely confront the challenges facing the nation, such as economic crises, educational decline, and the misguidance of youth. He expressed these views while addressing a grand intellectual and cultural event as the chief guest, organized in Islamabad to commemorate the death anniversary of Allama Muhammad Iqbal. The event was jointly organized by the Nazaria-e-Pakistan Foundation, Pakistan Cultural Forum, and Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). The event was presided over by Federal Minister for Culture,

Heritage and Tourism Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, and hosted by Chairman of Pakistan Cultural Forum Zafar Bakhtawari and Chairman of Clean and Green Islamabad Movement Ahsan Bakhtawari. The event was also attended by Head of Foreign Affairs for Jamaat-e-Islami Asif Luqman Qazi, Secretary General of CDA Union Chaudhry Yaseen, former Chief Commissioner of Islamabad Tariq Pirzada, and others. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said that the solutions to today's problems can be found in Iqbal's poetry. He criticized those who level allegations against institutions for cheap fame, stressing that no country can progress without strong institutions. He added that the government will bring youth into the national mainstream by spreading Iqbal's message. Aurangzeb Khan Khichi said that Quaid-e-Azam and Iqbal are national heroes and their message and philosophy must reach all educational institutions and students. He stated that Pakistan's armed forces are alert and ready to counter any kind of aggression and terrorism. All internal and external enemies will be given a befitting response.

He declared that the government, people, and armed forces stand united like a rock. Anyone who casts an evil eye on Pakistan will have their eyes gouged out. Each verse of Iqbal's poetry is worthy of a book, and we must benefit from his message. The years 2026 and 2027 mark the 150th birth anniversaries of Quaid-e-Azam and Iqbal, and they will be celebrated in a grand manner. The ministry and its institutions will always be available for such events. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the purpose of today's event is to familiarize the youth with the philosophy and ideology of Iqbal, which, under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam, led to the creation of the great nation of Pakistan. He said we must confront the negative propaganda against Pakistan with a positive mindset. To overcome today's difficulties, we need to reignite the same spirit among our youth, civil society, and business community that once led to the creation of Pakistan. He praised the efforts of the Prime Minister and the Army Chief in this regard and emphasized the need for the nation to stand with the government and armed forces like an iron wall.

3 lanes on GT road like motorways: Aleem Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a high-level review meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan held to assess the repair and expansion of the country wide GT Road (N-5). It was decided that the project will be executed in two phases and the GT Road will be upgraded to a uniform, 3-lane carriage-way, modeled on the standards of the Motorways, said a press release issued here on Saturday. Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan said the objective of this mega project is to ensure a consistent and high-quality road infrastructure across the entire length of the GT Road. Senior officials from the Ministry of Communications, Planning Department and Economic Affairs Division, along with the Chairman of the National Highway

Authority (NHA) and other key stakeholders, presented effective recommendations for the restoration and extension of the N-5. Speaking in the meeting, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized the significance of timely expansion and rehabilitation of the GT Road to maintain its optimal condition. He stressed that the available funds must be utilized judiciously and effectively. Federal Minister directed all concerned departments to work on all feasible proposals for the improvement of this historic and vital National Highway. He mentioned that financially unviable projects in the past had caused losses to the national exchequer whereas the current focus on Motorways will prove economically beneficial in the long run. Abdul Aleem Khan stated that the rehabilitation and expansion of

the N-5 is a top priority and a well-coordinated two-phase strategy has been evolved for its execution. He also announced that he would personally inspect the project sites along the N-5 and instructed the NHA Chairman and senior officers of the department to conduct field visits at various stages to ensure on-ground progress. During the meeting, senior officials shared proposals based on the currently available funds for the restoration of the GT Road. Federal Minister Communications Abdul Aleem Khan reiterated the need to rehabilitate this key national artery on a district-to-district basis in order to minimize travel difficulties for the general public. It was further assured that the first phase of the rehabilitation and expansion work on the N-5 would be completed by the end of the current fiscal year.

ITP issues traffic plan for PSL teams' movement

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Saturday issued a special traffic plan in view of the movement of Pakistan Super League (PSL) teams, ensuring extraordinary security arrangements and temporary diversions on key city roads. An ITP official told APP that the special security measures have been enforced today at various times on Faizabad, Express Highway, Club Road, 9th Avenue, and Srinagar Highway. He said a security route will be placed from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., while additional measures will be taken between 12:30 a.m. and 1:30 a.m. tonight. He said traffic flow may be temporarily affected due

to the route, and commuters might experience delays. Citizens have been advised to use the service roads linked to Express Highway and Srinagar Highway during this period. He said travelers heading towards Blue Area, Sector F-6, and F-7 should use the H-8 underpass, while those going to the Red Zone and Serena Hotel are advised to use Margalla Road, Jinnah Avenue, Aabpara Chowk, and Nadra Chowk. He said commuters heading towards Bari Imam should use Nadra Chowk, and those traveling to sectors I and H should take Rawalpindi Peshawar Road and IJP Road via the service roads. He said heavy traffic will not be allowed to enter

Islamabad during the movement of PSL teams. He said Murree Road from Serena to Faizabad via Rawal Dam will remain closed during team movement. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider said that traffic officers have been deployed at various points in the capital to assist citizens and ensure smooth flow. He urged citizens to plan their travel with an additional 20-minute margin to avoid inconvenience and contact the ITP helpline 1915 in case of any assistance. He added that the ITP's social media platforms are also providing real-time updates about traffic routes for the public's convenience.



ISLAMABAD: Daily-wage laborers wait for customers with their tools at Khanna Pul. —APP Photo

Afghanistan's exports hit over \$100m mark last month

KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghanistan exported goods worth 100.1 million US dollars and imported goods worth 1003.1 million during the past one month, the National Statistics and Information Authority said on Saturday. In a statement, NSIA wrote Afghanistan made trade transactions worth \$1103.2 million with a number of countries last month of 1403 solar year. It said the value of Afghanistan's imports from January 20 to February 18 reached \$1,076.2 million.

Kapisa man guns down spouse, two others

MAHMOOD RAQI (Pajhwok): A man has shot dead three people, including his wife, in the Ala Sai district of central Kapisa province, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred late in the Bahadurkheil village of the district on Friday, the police headquarters said in a statement. It identified the killer as Kifayatullah, who shot dead a man named Mehraban and his son before killing his wife with a Kalashnikov rifle.

Azizi: Islamic Emirate's visit to Pakistan was fruitful

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate's delegation said its recent visit to Pakistan yielded positive results in addressing trade and transit challenges.

Nooruddin Azizi, acting minister of industry and commerce, said upon his return that during meetings with Pakistani officials, emphasis was placed on resolving trade issues and facilitating the issuance of business visas by Pakistan.

Azizi stated: "Our trade and transit issues have truly suffered and faced difficulties for years. We held discussions with Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, and God willing, we've achieved some progress in transit and trade matters."



This visit comes as Afghanistan-Pakistan trade relations have significantly declined in recent years due to multiple ongoing challenges. Some economic experts view diplomatic

Pakistan has declined. Pakistan may have benefited in the short term, but in the long run, when they wish to export goods to Central Asia or import energy, they cannot do so without cooperation from Afghanistan."

Mir Shakeeb Mir, another economic analyst, said: "To strengthen Afghanistan's trade ties with regional countries, it is essential to address transit and trade problems through dialogue."

Meanwhile, due to persistent trade issues with Pakistan, Afghan traders have continually urged the Islamic Emirate to create alternative markets to reduce dependency on Pakistan.

UN again urges that Afghan girls be allowed access to education

KABUL (Amu tv): United Nations, New York — The United Nations on Saturday renewed its call for Afghan girls to be allowed access to education, urging an end to the ban that has kept millions out of school.

In a statement posted on X, the UN said: "Access to education is a human right. Yet millions of girls in Afghanistan are currently denied the chance to attend school. They must be allowed to learn, to realize their full potential, and to contribute to the future of their country."

According to UNESCO, 1.5 million girls in Afghanistan have been barred from attending school under Taliban rule.

The United Nations and other international organizations have repeatedly urged the Taliban to lift restrictions on girls' and women's education, but the bans have remained in place.

More than 1,300 days have passed since girls above the sixth grade were last permitted to attend school in Afghanistan. The Taliban have also prohibited women from attending universities and pursuing medical education.

Taliban bans media from filming key summit

KABUL (Amu tv): The Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV) has barred journalists from bringing cameras or video recording equipment to a major summit scheduled for Sunday in Kabul, further tightening restrictions on media freedom.

In a press invitation issued ahead of the meeting, the ministry instructed outlets not to film or record the session, which will be held in the ministry's conference hall near Darul Aman Palace. The main agenda is to review strategies for implementing the latest decree from the Taliban's reclusive leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada.

The ban on media coverage comes amid mounting concern from international press freedom organizations, which warn that Taliban-imposed restrictions are obstructing transparency and limiting public access to information.

The move follows reports that Taliban authorities in several provinces have begun enforcing a nationwide ban on publishing images of living beings. According to Taliban officials, the prohibition, already in place in 14 provinces, will soon be expanded to all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

Journalists and media advocates say such restrictions are obstructing journalism, compounding the risks faced by reporters working under Taliban rule.

Afghanistan qualify for ICC U-19 World Cup

KABUL (Pajhwok): With three triumphs on the trot, Afghanistan have qualified for the ICC Men's U-19 World Cup 2026.

The ICC World Cup Qualifiers, which got under way on 13 April, concluded today. Afghanistan defeated Oman, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in their first three matches. Afghanistan were due to play their final encounter against Nepal today (Saturday), but the game was rained off.

With three wins, Afghanistan topped the group and booked their place in the U-19 World Cup, thanks to a higher points tally and superior net run rate. The U-19 World

Cup is scheduled to be co-hosted in early 2026 by Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Support for women players: No cut in ACB funding: The International Cricket Council (ICC) will not reduce funding to Afghanistan, says a media report. The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) would continue to receive its funds, which would neither be slashed nor diverted to exiled women players.

Following its board meeting in Zimbabwe last weekend, the ICC unveiled a landmark initiative to support the displaced Afghan women cricketers. The BBC, citing an ESPN Cricinfo report, said the global governing body

would not cut or divert funds earmarked for the ACB.

It added the ACB would continue to receive about £13 million annually from the ICC, Afghan women would be supported through a separate funding mechanism.

The ICC fund for Afghanistan's women cricketers is supported by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Cricket Australia and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

As part of the ICC initiative, Afghan women will enjoy a high-performance programme offering "advanced coaching, world-class facilities and tailored mentorship."

Sergei Naryshkin: West seeking to aid anti-govt forces in Afghanistan



KABUL (Ariana News): Russia's foreign spy service chief, Sergei Naryshkin, has claimed that Western intelligence agencies are looking for ways to help anti-government forces in Afghanistan in hopes of keeping the country in a state of disarray.

Naryshkin visited Baku on April 17-18 to participate in the conference "Afghanistan: Regional Interconnectivity, Security and Development."

According to him, the West is trying to maintain instability in Afghanistan in order to advance its own geopolitical interests. "It is the Westerners who continue to block Afghan assets and maintain sanctions against Kabul, while Western intelligence agencies are looking for ways to support anti-government forces in this country," the statement said, TASS news agency reported. He emphasized that

Afghanistan "occupies an important place in geopolitics, and it is in the common interest of our states to promote reconstruction and prosperity on the Afghan land."

The Russian foreign spy chief "noted the positive dynamics of Russian-Afghan relations and reported that Russia has started the process of removing the Taliban movement (IEA) from the list of terrorist organizations." Naryshkin "positively assessed the activities of the current Afghan authorities in the sphere of state-building and expressed confidence in the inevitability of the prospect of their international recognition."

"The primary obstacle to this scenario, in his opinion, is the West's desire to maintain instability in Afghanistan to further its own geopolitical interests," he said.

Hanafi says madrasa graduates should not be looked down upon

KABUL (Amu tv): Khalid Hanafi, the Taliban's vice and virtue minister, said that university graduates should not view madrasa students with "humiliation and contempt."

In an audio recording released by the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue, Hanafi stated: "Graduates of Kabul University, doctors, engineers, and specialists should not look down on a scholar who has graduated from a madrasa." He added that students of Islamic seminaries, in turn, should not look down on those with higher education degrees.

His comments come as Afghanistan's professional and academic community continues to grapple with



the Taliban's policies. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, many professionals and educated Afghans have fled the country, citing political repression, shrinking work opportunities, and ideological conflicts with the group.

Meanwhile, about two weeks ago, local sources

confirmed to Amu TV that the Taliban had dismissed at least 16 university professors from Islamic faculties in the provinces of Ghazni, Bamyan, Logar, Panjshir, and Paktika. An official Taliban document obtained by Amu stated: "These changes have been made with the aim of improving and clarifying processes in educational institutions."

Over the past three years, the Taliban have established thousands of religious and jihadist madrasas across Afghanistan. Documents obtained by Amu TV also revealed that the Taliban have distributed thousands of master's degree certificates to madrasa graduates from Pakistan.

Reduction in aid to Afghanistan forces major cuts, NRC says

KABUL (Amu tv): The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) warned on Saturday that sharp reductions in humanitarian funding for Afghanistan by major donors are forcing the organization — along with others — to drastically scale back vital assistance to some of the country's most vulnerable communities.

In western Afghanistan, women, men, and children living in makeshift settlements are already bearing the brunt of the world's neglect, the NRC said in a statement. Many of the displaced — forced from their homes by conflict, drought, and poverty — lack the resources to secure permits or transportation needed to seek safety or opportunity in neighboring countries.

"Instead, many end up in slum-like informal settlements on the outskirts of larger cities," the NRC said. "Life in these areas is a daily struggle for survival, with many children collecting plastic for recycling, and entire families surviving on stale bread and tea."

NRC staff who recently visited informal settlements reported meeting families left destitute after aid was slashed by governments that had once pledged not to abandon Afghanistan.

The NRC emphasized that its legal aid and information teams provide critical support to internally displaced and returning Afghans, helping with access to housing, food, legal assistance, and healthcare referrals.

"This support is especially important for Afghan women who have become heads of their households after their husbands have died or migrated," the NRC noted, highlighting that cultural and religious norms often require female-to-female assistance.

Afghan-Uzbek Business forum held in Dubai to boost trade ties

KABUL (TOLONews): A joint meeting titled the Afghan-Uzbek Business Forum was held in Dubai, and was initiated by the Afghan Business Council in the United Arab Emirates.

During the forum, discussions focused on joint investment opportunities, resolving challenges related to business visas, and Uzbekistan's decision to eliminate customs tariffs on Afghan goods.

Haji Obaidullah Sader Khail, head of the Afghan Business Council in the UAE, stated that the Uzbek side committed to exempting Afghan produce—both dried and fresh fruits—from tariffs.

Sader Khail said: "As you know, Uzbekistan announced last week that it will reduce customs duties by 40% on food items exported from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. They also declared that Afghans residing in the UAE with valid residency and visa can travel to Uzbekistan visa-free for up to one month."

Meanwhile, the military attaché of the Islamic Emirate's embassy in Abu Dhabi assured Uzbekistan of expanding cooperation in various areas.

Mahbubur Rahman, military attaché of the Islamic Emirate in Abu Dhabi, said: "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has assured

them that, God willing, it is ready to cooperate in any sector and will provide all necessary facilities."

Abdul Ghafar Nezami, an economic affairs expert, stated: "Afghanistan is a good consumer market for Uzbekistan, while Uzbekistan serves as a suitable destination for Afghanistan's agricultural products, handicrafts, industrial goods, dried and wild fruits."

This forum was held shortly after a high-level delegation from the Islamic Emirate, led by the acting minister of agriculture, irrigation and livestock, visited Uzbekistan to strengthen economic and trade relations.

Residents in Paktia district struggle with basic services



PAKTIA (TOLONews): Residents of several remote areas in Dand Patan district of Paktia province said they have limited access to the basic necessities of life.

They call on local authorities to address the challenges faced by people in the far-flung parts of the district. One such area is the hard-to-reach Sery Kas region in Dand Patan district. Although the road to this area was recently built through efforts by the provincial administration, due to intertribal conflicts, residents are still unable to use it, and for over three

decades, people have had to travel on foot.

Niaz Omar, a resident of Dand Patan, said: "I face many problems because I am blind. It's not just me—everyone in the village is affected, especially our patients. We transport the sick using animals."

Lal Marjan, another resident, said: "The land dispute began 28 years ago, during the previous Islamic Emirate. That's why we have mobility issues and no facilities have been provided here."

Around 300 families live in Sery Kas, where trans-

porting patients and essential goods remains a serious challenge. Due to the absence of a girls' school, no girls in the area attend school. A Dand Patan resident, Ikhlas Mohammad, said: "Our biggest problem is the lack of a clinic. We don't have a health center in our area. There are other issues as well—we also need a school."

However, local officials say development projects are underway to address the district's challenges.

Ziauddin Asim, deputy district governor of Dand Patan, told TOLONews: "The approved budget addresses many of the challenges. A clean drinking water project has been surveyed and, God willing, will be implemented. A mosque is also planned and will be built for the residents."

Besides Sery Kas, many other remote areas in Dand Patan district also have only limited access to healthcare, clean drinking water, telecommunications, and proper roads.

7,000 Kunduz families gain access to potable water

KUNDUZ CITY (Pajhwok): The Department of Rural, Rehabilitation and Development in northern Kunduz says 11 water supply projects were executed in the province last year, benefiting 7,000 families.

Hamid Khan Momand, an official of the department, told Pajhwok Afghan News they had planned a total of 15 water supply projects for the solar year 1403. Out of these projects, 11 have been completed so far.

He assured work on the remaining four schemes would be completed soon, which would further improve access to safe drinking water for hundreds of families.

The projects, costing 66 million afghanis, were funded by the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACCAR), Momand explained.

He also announced plans to initiate work on five new water supply networks in remote and underdeveloped areas of Khanabad, Dasht-i-Archi, Qala-i-Zal and Gul Tepa districts in the near future.

Meanwhile, families getting access to safe drinking water voiced satisfaction with the execution of the much-needed projects.



Ghulam Nabi, a resident of Imam Sahib district, said: "Previously, we had no access to clean drinking water, and many people suffered from waterborne diseases. Thankfully, with community efforts and DACCAR's support, we now have access to safe water."

Nek Mohammad, an inhabitant of Dasht-i-Archi, also welcomed the schemes but pointed to ongoing issues: "Some parts of the district are located at high elevations with deep water tables, so certain families still face water shortages." Residents of remote areas in Khanabad, Aliabad and other parts of Kunduz also complain about a lack of clean water and want authorities to pay more attention to their needs.

Thanks to Pajhwok; Nimroz villagers find access to clean water: After Pajhwok Afghan News report about drought in northwestern Nimroz province, which had forced some families to migrate—a philanthropist has stepped in to address the drinking water shortage in a village, saving residents from a two-hour walk to fetch water.

On March 31, Pajhwok published a report titled "Recent drought in Nimroz have led to forced migration of some residents." In that report, locals from Zaranj city, the provincial capital, and several districts complained about drought and a lack of access to safe drinking water.

Based on the report, residents of

Molana village in Zaranj—home to 80 families—voiced concern over the long distance to water sources, saying the drought had made life increasingly difficult. Now, a kind-hearted individual named Mir Ahmad Baloch has once again come to the aid of the people in the area by cleaning and deepening a seven-metre well he had previously dug, thus solving the villagers' water shortage problem.

Baloch, who originally dug the well three years ago to address water scarcity in the area, said: "Pajhwok is a media outlet that truly echoes the voice of the people. I always follow it and I'm grateful. I thought the well I dug three years ago was still in use, but after reading Pajhwok's report, I realised it had dried up and people were walking two hours to fetch water. That's why I decided to clean and deepen the well."

He added: "I am really happy that I could do something small, but meaningful, to ease the suffering of the people. Pajhwok informs me and hundreds of others about the public's situation. I hope government officials will also take action to address these issues."

Petrol, gas prices fall, gold, diesel surge in Kabul

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of petrol and liquefied gas declined, but that of sugar, diesel and gold increased during the outgoing week in Kabul, market sources said on Saturday.

Food items
Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders' Association, said the price of a 49-kilogram bag of Indian sugar went up from 2,500afis to 2,550afis.

The price of a 49-kilogram sack of Kazakh flour cost 1,350afis, a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice stayed stable at 2,600afis, a 16-litre bottle of Malaysian cooking oil remained unchanged at 1,700afis, a kilogram of African black tea at 400afis and the same amount of Indonesian green tea at 350afis.

Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh market, put the retail price of a 49-kg bag of Kazakh flour at 1,400afis, a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice at 2,650afis and a 49-kg sack of Indian sugar at 2,600afis.

A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil accounted for 1,750afis, one kilogram of black tea for 400afis and the same quantity of green tea for 450afis, he added.

Fuel prices
A worker at the Ahmadyar pump station told Pajhwok the price of one litre of petrol fell from 62afis to 61afis and liquefied gas from 52afis to 50afis.

He also said the price of one kilogram of diesel surged from 57afis to 58afis.

Gold prices up
Mohammad Fawad, a

jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold went up from 5,900afis to 6,250afis and the same amount of the Russian variety surged from 4800afis to 5,100afis.

Afghani vs dollar
Haji Mohammad Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said the local currency strengthened during the week as one US dollar was traded at 71.50afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 250afis.

During the previous week, one US dollar consumed 73.30afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees 255afis. The spike in the afghani value is essentially linked to periodic dollar auctions by the central bank.



LAHORE: Patients suffering due to closure of OPD and other departments due to protest of grand health alliance.

Tehran seeks a deal to steady a troubled economy

Iran and US conclude second round of negotiations over Tehran’s nuclear program in Rome

ROME (AP): Iran and the United States will begin having experts meet to discuss details of a possible deal over Tehran’s rapidly advancing nuclear program, the top Iranian diplomat said Saturday after a second round of negotiations in Rome.

The comments by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who met with US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff for several hours, suggest movement in the talks. The experts will meet in Oman before Araghchi and Witkoff meet again in Oman on April 26, Araghchi said. There was no immediate readout from the US side after the meeting at the Omani Embassy in Rome’s Camilluccia neighborhood. However, President Donald Trump has been pushing for a rapid deal with Iran while threatening military action against it.

“The talks were held in a constructive environment and I can say that is moving forward,” Araghchi told Iranian state television. “I hope that we will be in a better position after the technical talks.” He added: “This time, we succeeded to reach a better understanding about a sort of principles and aims.” Iranian officials described the talks as indirect, like those last weekend in Muscat, Oman, with Omani Foreign Minister Badr Al-Busaidi shuttling between them in different rooms.

That talks are even happening represents a historic moment, given the decades of enmity between the two countries since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the US Embassy hostage crisis. Trump, in his first term, unilaterally withdrew from Iran’s nuclear deal with world powers in 2018, setting off years of attacks and negotiations that failed to restore the accord that drastically limited Tehran’s enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. At risk is a possible American or Israeli military strike on Iran’s nuclear sites, or the Iranians following through on their threats to

pursue an atomic weapon. Meanwhile, tensions in the Middle East have spiked over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and after US airstrikes targeting Yemen’s Iranian-backed Houthi rebels killed more than 70 people and wounded dozens more.

“I’m for stopping Iran, very simply, from having a nuclear weapon,” Trump said Friday. “I want Iran to be great and prosperous and terrific.” Araghchi met Saturday morning with Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani ahead of the talks with Witkoff. Rafael Mariano Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog, also met Tajani on Saturday. Grossi’s agency would likely be key in verifying compliance by Iran should a deal be reached, as it did with the 2015 accord Iran reached with world powers.

Tajani said Italy was ready “to facilitate the continuation of the talks even for sessions at the technical level.” A diplomat deal “is built patiently, day after day, with dialogue and mutual respect,” he said in a statement. Both men have been traveling in recent days. Witkoff had been in Paris for talks about Ukraine as Russia’s full-scale war there grinds on. Araghchi paid a visit to Moscow, where he met with officials, including Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Russia, one of the world powers involved in Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal, could be a key participant in any future deal reached between Tehran and Washington. Analysts suggest Moscow could potentially take custody of Iran’s uranium enriched to 60 percent purity — a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90 percent. Oman’s capital, Muscat, hosted the first round of negotiations between Araghchi and Witkoff last weekend, which saw the two men meet face to face after indirect talks. Oman, a sultanate on the eastern edge of the Arabian

Peninsula, has long served as an interlocutor between Iran and the West.

Ahead of the talks, however, Iran seized on comments by Witkoff first suggesting Iran could enrich uranium at 3.67 percent, then later saying that all enrichment must stop. Ali Shamkhani, an adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, wrote on X before the talks that Iran would not accept giving up its enrichment program like Libya, or agreeing to using uranium enriched abroad for its nuclear program. “Iran has come for a balanced agreement, not a surrender,” he wrote. Iran’s internal politics are still inflamed over the mandatory hijab, or headscarf, with women still ignoring the law on the streets of Tehran. Rumors also persist over the government potentially increasing the cost of subsidized gasoline in the country, which has sparked nationwide protests in the past.

Iran’s rial currency plunged to over 1 million to a US dollar earlier this month. The currency has improved with the talks, however, something Tehran hopes will continue. Meanwhile, two used Airbus A330-200 long sought by Iran’s flag carrier, Iran Air, arrived at Tehran’s Mehrabad International Airport on Thursday, flight-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press showed. The planes, formerly of China’s Hainan Airlines, had been in Muscat and re-registered to Iran.

The aircraft have Rolls-Royce engines, which include significant American parts and servicing. Such a transaction would need approval from the US Treasury given sanctions on Iran. The State Department and Treasury did not respond to requests for comment. Under the 2015 deal, Iran could purchase new aircraft and had lined up tens of billions of dollars in deals with Airbus and Boeing Co. However, the manufacturers backed away from the deals over Trump’s threats to the nuclear accord.

Saif welcomes Centre’s decision

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Adviser Barrister Saif on Saturday welcomed the federal government’s decision to initiate dialogue with Afghanistan, adding that although the decision has come late, it is a positive step in the spirit of “better late than never.”

In his statement, Saif said that the KP government had repeatedly urged the federal government to start negotiations with Afghanistan in order to take effective steps toward ending terrorism and bringing peace to the region. He emphasised that KP was on the front line in the fight against terrorism and that it was the most affected province. Therefore, ignoring the province in this sensitive process reflects a lack of seriousness.

“The KP government had sent ‘Terms of Reference’ (TORs) to the federal government three months ago for initiating dialogue with Afghanistan. These TORs stressed including tribal elders and all stakeholders in the process,” he added. According to him, the TORs could help make the negotiation process meaningful and successful.

He clarified that without taking all stakeholders into confidence, the dialogue process could not be fruitful. “If the government genuinely wants lasting peace in the region, it must seriously include the KP government and other affected parties in the consultation process. I hope that the federal government will now adopt a more serious approach and work with all relevant parties to develop a comprehensive strategy.

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill more than 90 people

DEIR AL-BALAH (AP): Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed more than 90 people in the last 48 hours, Gaza’s Health Ministry said Saturday, as Israeli troops ramp up attacks to pressure Hamas to release its hostages and disarm.

The dead include 15 people who were killed overnight, among them women and children, some of who were sheltering in a designated humanitarian zone, according to hospital staff. At least 11 people were killed in the southern city of Khan Younis, several of them in a tent in the Mwasi area where hundreds of thousands of displaced people are living, hospital worker said. Israel has designated it as a humanitarian zone.

Four other people were killed in separate strikes in Rafah city, including a mother and her daughter, according to the European Hospital, where the bodies were brought. Israel has vowed to intensify attacks across Gaza and occupy large “security zones” inside the strip. For six weeks Israel also has blockaded Gaza, barring the entry of food and other goods.

This week, aid groups raised alarm saying that thousands of children have become malnourished, and most people are barely eating one meal a day as stocks dwindle, according to the United Nations. On Friday, Dr. Hanan Balkhy, the head of the World Health Organization’s eastern Mediterranean office, urged the new US ambassador in Israel, Mike Huckabee, to push the country to lift Gaza’s blockade so medicines and other aid can enter the strip.

“I would wish for him to go in and see the situation firsthand,” she said. In his first appearance as ambassador on Friday, Huckabee visited the Western Wall, the holiest Jewish prayer site in Jerusalem’s Old City. He inserted a prayer into the wall, which he said was handwritten by US President Donald Trump. Huckabee said every effort was being made to bring home the remaining hostages held by Hamas. The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Most of the hostages have since been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Israel’s offensive has since killed over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish

between civilians and combatants. The war has destroyed vast parts of Gaza and most of its food production capabilities. The war has displaced around 90 percent of the population, with hundreds of thousands of people living in tent camps and bombed-out buildings. Meanwhile, with food scarce in the besieged and war-battered Gaza Strip, some desperate families have turned to eating sea turtles as a rare source of protein.

Once the shell has been removed, the meat is cut up, boiled and cooked in a mix of onion, pepper, tomato and spices. “The children were afraid of the turtle, and we told them it tasted as delicious as veal,” said Majida Qanan, keeping an eye on the chunks of red meat simmering in a pot over a wood fire. “Some of them ate it, but others refused.” For lack of a better alternative, this is the third time 61-year-old Qanan has prepared a turtle-based meal for her family who were displaced and now live in a tent in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza largest city. After 18 months of devastating war and an Israeli blockade on aid since March 2, the United Nations has warned of a dire humanitarian situation for the 2.4 million inhabitants of the Palestinian territory. Israel has accused Hamas of diverting aid, which the Palestinian militant group denies.

The heads of 12 major aid organizations warned on Thursday that “famine is not just a risk, but likely rapidly unfolding in almost all parts” of the territory. “There are no open crossings and there is nothing in the market,” said Qanan. “When I buy two small bags (of vegetables) for 80 shekels (\$22), there is no meat,” she added. Sea turtles are internationally protected as an endangered species, but those caught in Gaza fishermen’s nets are used for food. Qanan mixes the meat with flour and vinegar to wash it, before rinsing and boiling it in an old metal pot. “We never expected to eat a turtle,” fisherman Abdel Halim Qanan said.

“When the war started, there was a food shortage. There is no food. So (turtle meat) is an alternative for other sources of protein. There is no meat, poultry or vegetables.” The UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has warned that Gaza is facing its most severe humanitarian crisis since the war began on October 7, 2023, triggered by Hamas’s attack on Israel.

PHC dismisses 350 petitions

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has dismissed petitions seeking cancellation of bail for around 350 PTI workers and office bearers out of 451 who were nominated in cases related to the violent incidents of 9 and 10 May.

According to Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shah Faisal Utmankhel, the court dismissed the petitions due to lack of evidence against the accused. The court observed that no identification parades were conducted and no records were available.

The Advocate General stated that the cases were registered on political grounds, with hundreds of cases filed against PTI workers and office bearers after the May 9 and 10 protests. He added that the lower courts, including anti-terrorism courts, had granted bail to the accused due to lack of evidence.

The Peshawar High Court dismissed the petitions on merit, stating that the prosecution had failed to provide sufficient evidence. The court’s decision has been seen as a significant development in the cases registered against PTI workers and office bearers.

The Advocate General emphasized that the Peshawar High Court’s decision proves that the cases registered after the regime change were based on malice and false allegations. He added that the prosecution should not have filed cases without sufficient evidence, as per the prosecution act and CRPC.

The court’s decision is likely to have significant implications for the PTI workers and office bearers who were nominated in the cases. It also raises questions about the role of the prosecution and the registration of cases on political grounds.

Crackdown on cheating mafia

F.P. Report

HANGU: The district administration of Hangu has launched a series of surprise raids on examination centers to curb cheating, following the directives of the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Deputy Commissioner Hangu, Gohar Zaman Wazir, told this correspondent that all district officials are actively working to eliminate the cheating mafia. He confirmed that operations are underway in multiple areas to ensure transparent examinations.

In one such operation at Doaba Higher Secondary School, Additional Assistant Commissioner Sajjad Ahmad Jamal seized a laptop and a photocopy machine, arresting two individuals on the spot for their involvement in facilitating cheating.

Similarly, on Saturday, Additional Assistant Commissioner Thall, Syed Ihsan Ali Shah, conducted a raid at a hujra near the examination center of Dar Samand Higher Secondary School. During the raid, a secret setup was uncovered where the alleged mastermind behind the cheating network, along with two accomplices, was arrested. A laptop and photocopy machine were also confiscated.

“The provincial government has issued clear instructions—there will be zero tolerance for the cheating mafia,” said DC Gohar Zaman, reaffirming the administration’s commitment to fair and transparent examinations.

5 terrorists killed in Dukki

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Counter Terrorism Department, in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, conducted a successful operation in Balochistan’s Dukki.

As per details, the operation killing five terrorists was carried out at Dukki’s Dabar mountain, targeting members of a banned organization involved in attacks on coal mines, security forces, and civilians. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti expressed satisfaction with the security forces’ efforts, emphasizing that state institutions are fully mobilized to combat terrorism.

CJP will head delegation to SCO moot in China

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, will head a distinguished delegation to the 20th Conference of Chief Justices of the Supreme Courts of SCO Member States, scheduled in Hangzhou, China, from April 22 to 26, 2025.

Accompanying the Chief Justice will be Mr. Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Mr. Justice Shahid Waheed, and two judges of the district judiciary: Mr. Zafar Jan, District and Sessions Judge Gwadar, the remotest district of Balochistan, and Ms. Nadia Gul Wazir, Senior Civil Judge District Lakhi Marwat, a remote district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said a press release here on Saturday. Their participation underscores Justice Yahya Afridi’s commitment of inclusivity within the judicial system as well as ownership of judicial officers performing duty at way off places.

During this significant event, an important Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is expected to be signed between the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Supreme People’s Court of China. This MoU aims to significantly enhance bilateral judicial cooperation by establishing institutional linkages, facilitating capacity-building initiatives, and promoting knowledge exchange in critical areas, including international commercial law, arbitration, cybercrime, financial crime, climate change litigation, and judicial technology integration.

Moreover, the MoU seeks to deepen collaboration in dispute resolution, recognition and enforcement of judicial decisions, and mutual legal assistance in civil matters, reaffirming the shared commitment of both nations towards judicial independence, sovereignty, and adherence to the rule of law.

Mr. Justice Shahid Waheed will deliver a keynote speech titled “Judicial Application of Artificial Intelligence,” highlighting AI’s transformative potential to enhance judicial efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. Justice Waheed will discuss Pakistan’s ongoing initiatives, including AI-driven legal drafting in collaboration with global institutions such as ETH Zurich, advanced AI-based legal research tools, digitization of court records, and predictive analytics for ensuring consistent judicial outcomes.

He will underscore the ethical framework necessary for AI integration, focusing on transparency, human oversight, bias mitigation, data protection, judicial training, accountability and establishing an AI Ethics Committee within Supreme Court of Pakistan to oversee the responsible and transparent application of AI technologies. Additionally, on the sidelines of the SCO Conference, Chief Justice Yahya Afridi will hold bilateral discussions with the Chief Justice of Iran, exploring ways to deepen judicial exchanges and collaborative engagements. This interaction underscores Pakistan’s dedication to strengthening international judicial cooperation.

Following the SCO conference, Chief Justice Afridi will proceed to Istanbul at the special invitation of Mr. Kadir Özkaya, President of the Constitutional Court of Türkiye, to attend the 63rd Anniversary celebrations of the Turkish Constitutional Court from April 24 to 27, 2025. This visit is expected to enhance judicial cooperation and deepen the ties between the judicial institutions of Pakistan and Türkiye.

Putin declares unilateral Easter ceasefire in Ukraine

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin declared a unilateral 30-hour Easter ceasefire in Ukraine on Saturday, after Washington said it could abandon peace talks within days unless Moscow and Kyiv show they are ready to stop the war. Putin ordered fighting to stop as of 6pm Moscow time (1500 GMT) on Saturday until midnight on Sunday night.

“Based on humanitarian considerations ... the Russian side announces an Easter truce. I order a stop to all military activities for this period,” Putin told Valery Gerasimov, Chief of Russia’s General Staff, at a meeting televised on Saturday. “We assume that Ukraine will follow our example. At the same time, our troops should be prepared to repel possible violations of the truce and provocations by the enemy, any aggressive actions,” Putin added.

But shortly after the announcement, around an hour before it was due to take effect, air raid sirens rang out in Kyiv. Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed the proposal as “yet another attempt by Putin to play

with human lives”. As of 45 minutes before the truce was meant to start, Ukrainian planes were repelling Russian air strikes, Zelensky said in a post on X. “Shahed drones in our skies reveal Putin’s true attitude toward Easter and toward human life,” he said, referring to Iranian-made attack drones used widely by Russia in the war to attack Ukrainian cities far from the front.

The Russian Defence Ministry said its troops had been instructed about the ceasefire and would adhere to it, provided it was “mutually respected” by Ukraine. US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio had said on Friday that the United States would walk away from efforts to broker a Russia-Ukraine peace deal unless there were clear signs of progress soon. Kirill Dmitriev, an envoy for Putin who travelled to Washington this month, posted news of the ceasefire on X, adding: “One step closer to peace” and an emoji of a dove.

Trump has vowed to bring a swift end to the war, while shifting US policy from firmly supporting

Kyiv towards accepting Moscow’s account of the conflict. Last month, Ukraine accepted a proposal from Trump for a 30-day truce, which Moscow rejected; the sides agreed only to limited pauses of attacks on energy targets and at sea, which both accuse the other of breaking. Putin’s announcement comes a week after a Russian missile attack killed 35 people and wounded nearly 120 in the Ukrainian city of Sumy, including Christians heading to celebrate Palm Sunday.

That attack, the deadliest against civilians of the year so far, spurred Kyiv and its European allies to press Washington to take a tougher line towards Moscow.

Putin has proclaimed unilateral pauses in fighting in the past with little impact on the battlefield, including a 36-hour proposed truce for Orthodox Christmas in January 2023, which Kyiv rejected. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said this week that some progress on a peace settlement had already been made but that contacts with Washington were difficult.

PM vows agricultural revival

(Continued from Page 1)

They also emphasized on improving soil fertility and encouraging research to promote nutritious, high-yield crop production. Public-private training programs were proposed to enhance farmers’ skills, whereas the participants stressed upgrading existing agricultural markets, developing new infrastructure, and ensuring widespread availability of modern equipment to enhance productivity.

The meeting highlighted the need to increase both domestic and foreign investment in the agri-sector, while also strengthening the role of financial institutions and facilitating agricultural loans. The participants called for a transparent regulatory framework with increased involvement of experts, farmers, and relevant stakeholders in policymaking processes to ensure long-term success.

The experts highlighted that Pakistan’s per-acre agricultural yield especially for wheat, sugarcane, and cotton lagged behind global benchmarks due to poor seed quality, inefficient water use, and substandard agricultural practices.

Federal Minister for Climate Change Dr. Musadik Malik, IT and Telecom Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja, and Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar also attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister has said that Pakistan offers a highly

conductive environment for both domestic and foreign investment, with vast potential for economic growth and employment generation through the use of modern technology.

Speaking at the Health Engineering and Minerals Show at the Expo Center on Saturday, the Prime Minister highlighted the government’s commitment to creating investment opportunities across various sectors, including mining, information technology, and artificial intelligence. “Pakistan is rich in talent, especially in IT and AI sectors. We are extending investment opportunities to friendly nations and inviting them to initiate joint ventures, particularly in the mining and minerals sector,” he said. The event was attended by Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal, Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Chief Executive of TDAP Faiz Ahmed, FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh, business leaders, foreign delegates, and economic experts.

Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that over 60% of Pakistan’s population comprises youths, who are intelligent, capable, and equipping themselves with modern skills and professional training. “Our young generation is our asset, and with the right direction and innovation, they can drive Pakistan’s economic success,” he added. The Prime Minister pointed out the government’s achievements in stabilizing the economy. “Inflation has dropped from 38% to single digits, and the policy interest rate has

been reduced from 22.5% to 12%. The stock market is performing strongly, and electricity prices have been reduced to lower industrial production costs and prices of essential goods,” he stated.

He also announced that Pakistan’s exports are increasing due to the government’s consistent efforts and progressive policies. “We have successfully reduced reliance on imported goods by increasing local production,” he noted. Shehbaz Sharif lauded the efforts of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, calling their contributions vital for economic development. He also congratulated the Ministry of Commerce and other relevant departments for organizing a successful event.

The exhibition featured a range of high-tech stalls showcasing agricultural machinery, precious stones, pharmaceuticals, and surgical instruments. Dignitaries and delegates from China, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, the United States, Turkey, and other countries participated, with a total of 860 foreign delegates in attendance. On this occasion, several bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding were signed, marking new milestones in Pakistan’s trade and investment outreach. The Prime Minister concluded by inviting international investors to engage in Pakistan’s promising sectors without hesitation, assuring them of a secure and business-friendly environment.