

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar Sunday held a telephone call with the Foreign Minister of Oman, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Al Busaidi. They reviewed the existing bilateral ties and expressed satisfaction on the upward trajectory. Regional and international current issues of mutual interest also came under discussion.



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Shehbaz launches vows complete eradication of polio

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed the government's commitment to eradicating polio from the country, announcing the launch of a fresh 7-day national anti-polio campaign aimed at vaccinating millions of children under the age of five.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the campaign on Sunday, the Prime Minister said that the government, along with health authorities, is making tireless efforts to eliminate the virus once and for all. "Today marks the beginning of another nationwide polio campaign. With Allah's grace, we are vaccinating children not only here, but across the country including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir," he said.

PM expresses pleasure over start of PIA direct flights from Lahore to Baku

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed pleasure over the start of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) direct flights from Lahore to Baku. The premier said that direct flights from Lahore to Baku would help promote the tourism sector.

On pattern of PIA direct flights from Lahore to Baku, PIA direct flights would be started with other friendly countries very soon, he added. The prime minister said that it was big achievement for Pakistan on the diplomatic level. Shehbaz Sahrif said, "Azerbaijan is among the best friends of Pakistan in this region. We want to collaborate with Azerbaijan in tourism and other sectors."

The Prime Minister personally administered polio drops to children to formally kick off the campaign, which will conclude on April 27.

He praised the efforts of the Ministry of Health, including Minister Mustafa Kamal, Dr Malik

Mukhtar Ahmed Bharath, the Secretary, Coordinator, and frontline health workers for their dedication. "I urge all parents to fully cooperate with field teams to ensure every child is vaccinated," he added. Acknowledging chal-

lenges in some security-sensitive areas, he said that robust measures have been taken to ensure the safety of teams and smooth implementation of the drive. "We must mobilize communities in every neighborhood and street to support this national cause," he emphasized.

The premier also extended heartfelt thanks to international partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Bill Gates, and other stakeholders for their continued support. "With your cooperation and our collective resolve, I am confident we will achieve permanent relief from this dangerous disease," he said.

Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal, Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmed Bharath, and senior health officials were present at the event.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing the inaugural ceremony of the National Polio Eradication Campaign.

Canal issue

Rana, Sharjeel agree to resolve issue through talks

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs, Rana Sanaullah, has made telephonic contact with Senior Minister of Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon. Both leaders have agreed to resolve the canal issue through dialogue.

According to the Sindh government's handout, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs, Rana Sanaullah, made telephonic contact with Sindh Senior Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon.

During the conversation,

both leaders agreed to resolve the canal issue through dialogue.

Rana Sanaullah stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Mian Nawaz Sharif have directed that Sindh's reservations be eliminated, and they are ready to hold talks with Sindh on the canal issue.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government has presented its stance on the canal issue at every forum and that the PPP and the people of Sindh have serious reservations about the controversial canals.

He said that the Pakistan

People's Party wants a fair distribution of water for the people of Sindh under the 1991 Water Accord. The PPP is also ready to hold negotiations with the federal government on the issue of canals.

As the controversial canals project has become a bone of contention between the two major political parties, which are allies in the centre.

The issue concerns the federal government's plan to divert water from the Indus River by constructing six canals to irrigate the Cholistan desert — a project opposed by its key ally,

the PPP, and several nationalist parties in the province.

According to government sources, the estimated cost of the Cholistan canal system is Rs211.4 billion, and through the project, thousands of acres of barren land can be used for agricultural purposes, and 400,000 acres of land can be brought under cultivation.

Almost all political and religious parties, nationalist groups and civil society organisations staged widespread rallies across Sindh against the controversial plan.

KP govt to revolutionaize healthcare system: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister on Information Barrister Dr. Saif has said that in line with the vision of Imran Khan, the provincial government has taken another revolutionary step in the healthcare sector.

The decision to include transplant and implant serv-

ices in Sehat Card program was taken during a meeting chaired by the Chief Minister.

The provincial government will now bear the costs of kidney, liver, and bone marrow transplants. Additionally, cochlear implant procedures will also be provided free of cost.

The Advisor added that the rehabilitation of drug

addicts will also be included in the Sehat Card program very soon saying that Chief Minister has issued necessary directions to the health department in this regard.

Barrister Dr. Saif said that necessary rules and regulations for the use of the cannabis plant for treatment, research, and industrial purposes have also been approved.

Naqvi meets Saudi ambassador

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmed Al-Malki at the Saudi Embassy, where both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepening mutual cooperation and strengthening bilateral relations.

Upon his arrival, the Interior Minister was warmly received by Ambassador Al-Malki. During the meeting, key issues of mutual interest were discussed, including collaboration in economic, social, and security sectors.

Minister Naqvi expressed gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the ambassador for their consistent support to Pakistan, particularly in the areas of economic assistance and social development.

He also extended thanks for Saudi Arabia's participation through a high-level delegation in the recent Pak-Gulf Cooperation Council Anti-Narcotics Conference.

Highlighting Pakistan's resolve to tackle transnational crimes, the Minister emphasized the country's keen interest in working closely with Saudi Arabia to combat drug trafficking and human smuggling. He noted that new passport regulations are being introduced to curb beggary and illegal immigration, and that strict action is being taken against organized begging networks.

Minister Naqvi also acknowledged the visa-free entry for Saudi citizens into Pakistan as a reflection of the strong brotherly ties between the two nations.

He expressed special appreciation for the Saudi government's instrumental role in securing the release and safe return of five Pakistani family members wrongly implicated in a drug case.

"It was only due to the cooperation and support of the Saudi government that this innocent family was able to return home safely," he said.

Attaullah Tarar praises Christian community's role in nation-building

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Sunday extended heartfelt Easter greetings to the Christian community, acknowledging their historical contributions and ongoing efforts in the development of Pakistan.

Addressing a special Easter event, the minister said: "I extend my warmest wishes to all members of the Christian community on the occasion of Easter." He emphasized that the Christian community held a distinct and honorable place in the country's history, having played a vital role in the creation of Pakistan and making sacrifices for its defence and unity.

"The Christian community has offered sacrifices in the wars fought by Pakistan and has given their lives for the nation," he remarked.

"Their role in upholding the values symbolized by the white in Pakistan's flag is truly commendable", he said. Attaullah Tarar shared that he proudly represents a constituency with 70,000 Christian

voters, describing his electoral area as a source of personal pride. The Christian community comprises capable and dedicated individuals who were actively contributing to Pakistan's growth and progress, he added.

He stressed the need for unity, love, and interfaith

harmony in building a strong and inclusive society. "Brotherhood, harmony, and mutual respect are essential.

I stand with the Christian community on every joyous occasion and festival," he said.

Highlighting Pakistan's economic trajectory, the minister stated the country was steadily advancing towards sustainable development under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. He noted that successful revival of the national economy was a testament to effective governance, collective effort, and visionary leadership.

Attaullah Tarar also praised Punjab Chief

Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for her exceptional service to the people of the province. He highlighted the "Uraan Pakistan" initiative as a major step forward for national development and uplift.

"International financial institutions are acknowledging Pakistan's economic progress, which is a testament to the government's effective policies," he added.

The event concluded with a message of peace, inclusivity, and national unity, with the minister reaffirming the government's commitment to standing with minority communities and ensuring their rightful place in Pakistan's journey forward.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami gathered at Islamabad Expressway during Gaza Solidarity March. — INP photo

Vance set to visit India for talks on economic ties

NEW DELHI (AP): U.S. Vice President JD Vance will embark on a four-day visit to India on Monday as the two countries seek to unlock economic opportunities and negotiate a bilateral trade deal.

Vance will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi for talks on the economy, trade and geopolitical ties. Vance's visit is seen as an important diplo-

matic mission by President Donald Trump's administration, and it coincides with a rapidly intensifying trade war between Washington and Beijing, which is New Delhi's main rival in the region.

A trade deal between India and the U.S. could significantly enhance economic ties between the two countries and potentially strengthen diplomatic ties.

The U.S. is also India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade valued at \$190 billion until recently.

India's foreign ministry has said the visit will "provide an opportunity for both sides to review the progress in bilateral relations" and two leaders will "exchange views on regional and global developments of mutual interest."

Israel admits failure to fully report on killings of medics in Gaza

JERUSALEM (AP): An Israeli probe into the killings of 15 Palestinian medics last month in Gaza by Israeli forces said Sunday it has found "professional failures" and a deputy commander will be fired.

Israel at first claimed that the medics' vehicles did not have emergency signals on when troops opened fire but later backtracked. Cellphone video recovered from one of the medics contradicted

Israel's initial account.

The military investigation found that the deputy battalion commander, "due to poor night visibility," assessed that the ambulances belonged to Hamas militants. Video footage obtained from the incident shows the ambulances had lights flashing and logos visible, as they pulled up to help an ambulance that had come under fire earlier.

The teams do not appear to be acting unusually or in a threatening manner as

three medics emerge and head toward the stricken ambulance. Their vehicles immediately come under a barrage of gunfire that goes on for more than five minutes with brief pauses.

Eight Red Crescent personnel, six Civil Defense workers and a UN staffer were killed in the shooting before dawn on March 23 by troops conducting operations in Tel Al-Sultan, a district of the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Troops then bulldozed over the

bodies along with their mangled vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. UN and rescue workers were only able to reach the site a week later to dig out the bodies.

The head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society has said the slain men were "targeted at close range."

The Israeli military investigation said the Palestinians were killed due to an "operational misunderstanding" by Israeli

forces, and that a separate incident 15 minutes later, when Israeli soldiers shot at a Palestinian UN vehicle, was a breach of orders.

It was not immediately clear whether the military investigation found that any of those killed were Hamas militants. Israel's military initially said nine were militants.

The investigation found that the decision to crush the ambulances was wrong but denied that there was an attempt to conceal the

event. "The examination found no evidence to support claims of execution or that any of the deceased were bound before or after the shooting," it added.

Israel has accused Hamas of moving and hiding its fighters inside ambulances and emergency vehicles, as well as in hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, arguing that justifies strikes on them. Medical personnel largely deny the accusations.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 150 emergency responders from the Red Crescent and Civil Defense, most of them while on duty, as well as over 1,000 health workers, according to the UN. The Israeli military rarely investigates such incidents.

Palestinians and international human rights groups have repeatedly accused Israel's military of failing to properly investigate or whitewashing mis-

conduct by its troops.

The International Criminal Court, established by the international community as a court of last resort, has accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defense minister Yoav Gallant of war crimes. Israel, which is not a member of the court, has long asserted that its legal system is capable of investigating the army, and Netanyahu has accused the ICC of antisemitism.



Kiyani assures Sindh to get full share of water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Railways Bilal Azhar Kiyani Sunday assured the people of Sindh that not a single drop of their rightful share of water will be compromised.

Speaking to the media in Dina, he emphasized that the government will hold political, technical and policy-level discussions with coalition partner Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on the matter of canals.

Kiyani said that under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government is committed to providing relief to the public. He said the reduction in electricity prices as a major step towards curbing inflation and supporting the masses.

He highlighted the role of the 2022, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government in stabilizing the economy and expressed confidence that cooperation with the PPP will further enhance public service efforts. Referring to Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar's assurance in the National Assembly, Kiyani reiterated that decisions regarding canal management will be made in consultation with the PPP.

He reaffirmed PML-N's dedication to safeguarding farmers' interests, saying that the party would never allow any harm to come to farmers across the country, including those in Sindh. "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister

Maryam Nawaz Sharif are working on historic initiatives to boost the agriculture sector," he added.

Kiyani also mentioned that 1,000 Pakistani youth have been sent to China for training in modern agricultural techniques.

"These individuals will return as master trainers and are expected to play a vital role in leading an agricultural revolution in the country. Initiatives such as the Kisan Card, Agri-Malls, and other facilities mark the beginning of a new era for farmers," he added.

During his visit, the minister also inaugurated the newly restored road from Nakoder Chowk to Mirabad in Dina Tehsil, completed as part of local development projects.



LAHORE: People of the Christian community gather to performing their religious rituals on the occasion of Easter at Don Bosco Church. —APP Photo

Vaccination process for pilgrims from 21st

LAHORE (APP): The vaccination process for pilgrims will start at Darul Hajj here at Nicholson Road from April 21.

It has been made mandatory for pilgrims to get vaccinated against dengue fever, influenza and polio.

Darul Hajjaj official sources said that a yellow certificate will be issued to the pilgrims upon getting vaccinated. The government has directed pilgrims above the age of 65 to also get the corona vaccine.

All pilgrims will have to obtain a vaccination card 10 days before the flight, they said. Vaccination facilities will be available at Darul Hajjaj, here for 7 days a week.

Before the Hajj flight, pilgrims will also have to obtain SIM, identity locket and other details.

Governor Tessori visits Hazrat Ali's shrine

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori offered prayers for Pakistan's peace, prosperity, and security during his reverent visit to the shrine of Hazrat Ali (RA) in Najaf, Iraq.

The visit marked a moment of spiritual reflection and interfaith solidarity, the Governor House informed today. Upon his arrival at the sacred site, Governor Tessori was received by Syed Haider Al-Hakeem, Vice President of the shrine.

He was accompanied by Dr Raza, the representative of Shams al-Din Muhammad Nehru al-Kasnanan al-Qadri al-Hussaini, along with prominent members of the Bohra community. Governor Tessori also took part in the distribution of langar (charity meals) among devotees, emphasizing the values of compassion and service.

In addition to his visit to the shrine, the governor paid respects at the historic residence of Hazrat Ali (RA) and the grand Masjid-e-Kufa. He spent time reflecting on the historical and religious significance of these sacred landmarks. His itinerary also included a visit to the shrine of Hazrat Muslim bin Aqeel (RA), where he offered Fataha and supplications for national unity and harmony.

Christian community celebrates Easter

LAHORE (APP): The Christian community on Sunday celebrated Easter with religious zeal, devotion, and reverence here and across the country.

Earlier, on Saturday night, Easter Eve was marked with enthusiastic preparations as Christian families flocked to shopping centres in all mega cities of the country including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad and Multan and other cities of the country.

Busy commercial areas such as Anarkali, Ichhra, Mall Road, Saddar Bazar area, Yatim Khana Market

Yuhannaabad market witnessed a significant shopping rush from morning till lam. Families, especially children, shopped for garments, shoes, and artificial jewellery.

Recreational parks in cities were scheduled to remain open from 9am to lam on both Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. Special arrangements have been made for activities like dodging cars, horse riding, boating in the lakes, and the chairlift at Iqbal Park were opened for the public.

Security personnel were deployed, and all church entrances were equipped

with walk-through gates and CCTV cameras. Worship services were organised from 9am to 12pm.

In Lahore, prominent Christian religious leaders include bishops and other clergy within the Church of Pakistan expressed great satisfaction over the security arrangements, such as the Bishop of Lahore, and leaders of other Christian denominations.

Christian leaders Rashid Chauhan and Pastor Asif and other leading leaders of Lahore expressed satisfaction with the security arrangements.

CM constitutes 8-member committee

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the authorities concerned to establish Punjab's first-ever Film City, Film Studio, Post-Production Lab, and Pakistan's first dedicated Film School, marking a historic step toward the revival and modernization of the film industry in the province.

Chairing a meeting here on Sunday, the CM instructed that designated space for the Film City, studio, and post-production facilities be allocated within the Nawaz Sharif IT City. She also reviewed the progress on design and related preparations for the project, calling for expedited implementation.

In a parallel move to support filmmakers and

rejuvenate cinematic culture, the CM has approved the formation of an eight-member committee to provide financial assistance for film production. A formal notification has been issued following the provincial cabinet's approval.

The committee is chaired by Senior Provincial Minister Mariyumi Aurangzeb, and includes Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Finance Minister Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman, and Minister for Human Rights & Minority Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora. Secretaries, Information Secretary Tahir Raza Hamdani, Planning Secretary Asif Tufail, Finance Secretary Mujahid Sherdil, and Tourism Secretary Farid Ahmed Tarar, are also

part of the body.

The committee is tasked with reviewing applications from filmmakers and production companies, evaluating new projects and unfinished film scripts, and determining eligibility for grants and incentives. It will also manage the disbursement of funds, set eligibility criteria, and consider box office-related incentives. The committee has the authority to form sub-committees to address specific issues.

The first meeting of the committee, chaired by Senior Minister Mariyumi Aurangzeb, was held, during which key decisions were made to implement Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision for a thriving and modernized film industry in Punjab.



LAHORE: Ahle Hadith Youth Force representative addresses the gathering to express solidarity with the Gaza March at Mall Road. —APP Photo

Pakistan's health sector producing good research

KARACHI (APP): Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal has said that while significant health research is being produced in Pakistan, the real challenge lies in translating that research into actionable policies and real-world improvements in healthcare. Speaking at the 6th International Medical Research Conference (IMRC), organized by the Health Research Advisory Board (HealthRAB) at the Getz Pharma Auditorium in Karachi, Kamal emphasized the urgent need to link research with policy execution. "As soon as I return to Islamabad, I will call for all research reports from HealthRAB and other institutions and ensure their implementation," he said,

adding that the health ministry must move from words to action. "Technology and mobile health solutions are the future of healthcare in Pakistan," he added.

He also announced that the government was working to make every citizen's CNIC their medical record number, a key step in digitizing health data nationwide. In a candid remark, Kamal said that despite being a nuclear power, Pakistan still lags in basic health indicators like polio. "Afghanistan might eliminate polio before we do. We must end it together."

HealthRAB Chairman Prof. Abdul Basit stressed the need for indigenous research based on local healthcare realities, com-

mending the ministry's initiative to link CNICs with medical records. Digital health expert Dr. Zakiuddin Ahmed announced the launch of five national disease registries and called for meaningful, home-grown research to guide future healthcare planning. DRAP CEO Dr. Obaidullah voiced serious concerns about antimicrobial resistance, warning that drug-resistant tuberculosis had reached pandemic levels. He announced that DRAP would now allocate funding for health research from its Central Research Fund and invited researchers to submit practical, solution-focused proposals.

Dr. Khurram Hussein,

Managing Director of Getz Pharma, reiterated the company's commitment to supporting impactful health research. The conference recognized leading contributions to health research. A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Prof. Tipu Sultan, while the Hajra Biloo Gold Medal for National Health Research was awarded to Prof. Dr. Wasey Shakir. Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq of Khyber Medical University, and Dr. Muhammad Raza Shah of ICCBS, Dr. Raheela Ahmed received special recognition for her services. Health journalist Waqar Bhatti was awarded a Special Health Journalism Award for promoting science-based health reporting.

Damaging Pakistan won't help Palestinian cause: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has strongly condemned violent protests held under the guise of showing solidarity with Gaza, saying such actions do more harm than good.

Speaking at a press conference here on Sunday, she remarked, "Damaging Pakistan will not help the Palestinian cause." She highlighted that around 25,000 Pakistanis earn their livelihoods through food franchises, many of which have come under attack. "Those injured or killed in these incidents were Pakistanis — so whose cause are we really advancing?" she questioned.

She accused extremist elements of trying to disrupt Punjab's development and suggested that foreign forces might be fueling the unrest. She warned that the government would not allow anyone to take the law into their own hands, adding, "Islam stands for peace, not for chaos."

So far, authorities have arrested 149 suspects and registered 14 FIRs [first information reports] in connection with the violence. The information minister concluded by welcoming peaceful protests and urged the public to remain within the bounds of the law.

Over 100 shops sealed over encroachment

LAHORE (APP): The district administration launched a major anti-encroachment operation across the city, resulting in the sealing of over 100 shops and removal of illegal structures from key commercial areas. On the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Lahore Syed Musa Raza, a large-scale drive aims to reclaim public spaces, improve pedestrian accessibility, and enhance the city's overall urban landscape.

The operation was closely supervised by Chief Officer of Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) Shahid Abbas Kathia, while Metropolitan Officer Regulation Headquarters Kashif Jaleel led the field teams that executed the drive successfully. Prominent markets including Islampura, Anarkali, Moon Market, Samanabad, Faisal Town, and G-1 Market were targeted in the coordinated action.

During the operation, numerous encroachments on footpaths were demolished, allowing for smoother pedestrian movement and better accessibility. In addition, visual pollution was addressed as teams removed unauthorized banners, posters, and streamers from multiple locations.

Metropolitan Officer Kashif Jaleel said the district administration remains in active contact with trade unions to ensure voluntary removal of encroachments, and he appreciated their growing cooperation. However, he emphasized that strict action would continue against violators without exception. "Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza is personally monitoring the anti-encroachment campaign," he said.

1,295 actions taken against fancy number plates

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that 1,295 actions have been taken against fancy number plates, tinted glass, and other illegal accessories.

A total of 308 heavy and light transport vehicles have been seized. Additionally, the registration of 230 vehicles was temporarily suspended and

later released under specific conditions, including technical improvements, renewal of fitness certificates, and other related requirements.

In a statement, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that traffic irregularities pose a threat to the lives of citizens. He added that the ongoing crackdown is evidence of the practical steps being taken to safeguard the lives and property of the public.

He stated that the violation of traffic rules is not

merely a minor offense but a serious threat to collective security. He emphasized that the crackdown will continue indiscriminately and that violations of the law will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that this campaign is just the beginning, and more stringent measures will be implemented in the coming days. He urged to fully cooperate with law enforcement agencies and ensure that illegal accessories are avoided.

Governor vows support for overseas Pakistanis

RAWALPINDI (APP): Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan hosted a special dinner reception at Punjab House on Saturday to honor a delegation of prominent Overseas Pakistanis, reaffirming their crucial role in national development and pledging institutional support to address their concerns.

The high-profile reception was attended by Syed Qamar Raza, Chairman of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation, and Sardar Zahoor Iqbal, Chairman of Pakistan Business Forum Europe, along with other community leaders representing the diaspora. In his address, the Governor urged for national unity

saying "Overseas Pakistanis are the backbone of our economy, their remittances and investments sustain us during challenging times."

He announced concrete measures to facilitate the diaspora, including proposals for special courts and one-window operations to resolve their issues promptly. The Governor commended Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir for his recent policy address.

"The COAS's speech has not only disappointed our adversaries but also renewed the patriotic spirit among Overseas Pakistanis." He urged the prime minister for immediate convening of the

Council of Common Interests to develop consensus on critical water management issues.

The Governor reiterated his open-door policy for the overseas Pakistanis calling for collective efforts to showcase Pakistan's positive image globally. He emphasized the nation's abundant natural resources and the media's role in constructive nation-building.

Syed Qamar Raza on the occasion said that Pakistan remains the first love and identity of the overseas Pakistani diaspora.

Sardar Zahoor Iqbal highlighted how overseas Pakistanis continue to support Pakistan through their hard-earned resources.

PTI chief's family facing oppression: Cheema

LAHORE (PPI): Senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Musarrat Jamshed Cheema, stated that Imran Khan's family is facing severe oppression and tyranny, while some individuals are busy spreading baseless propaganda against them.

In a statement released on X, Musarrat Jamshed Cheema said that Imran Khan's sisters, wife, and the entire family are making immense sacrifices. She mentioned that those

who are being ungrateful cannot be saved from being lost in history.

She further added that the rulers have employed all tactics of oppression and coercion, yet they have not been able to shake Imran Khan's resolve. She expressed hope that the false cases filed against the PTI leadership would soon be dismissed.

Cheema stated that the rulers believed Imran Khan would not be able to endure

the hardships of jail, but their expectations have been proven wrong. Imran Khan's struggle is for the country and the nation, and its success will become the nation's destiny.

She further added that PTI is an ideological party, and all its leaders and workers stand with Imran Khan despite oppression and coercion.

She claimed that whenever elections are held, the current government's alliance will face defeat.

PFA ramps up operations against adulteration: DG

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has significantly ramped up its operations against food adulteration and substandard products, with record-breaking inspections and enforcement actions across the province in the first quarter of 2025.

Giving details on the authority's performance, PFA Director General Asim Javed told the media on Sunday, this year food safety operations had seen a remarkable 147 percent increase compared to previous years. From January to March 2025, the authority witnessed an exceptional rise in food safety checks, particularly in critical sectors like milk, meat, beverages, oils, and spices.

The DG noted 310.4 percent increase in milk inspections, with over

102.74 million litres checked this year alone.

As a result, 312,562 litres of substandard food was discarded. He further highlighted a notable improvement in milk quality, as five times less milk had to be destroyed compared to the previous year.

Similarly, the authority inspected approximately

5.87 million kilogram of meat, seizing and disposing of over 214,000 kilogram of unsafe and unhygienic meat. There was also a sharp increase in inspections of cold beverages, up by 93.62 percent, with over 33,000 litres tested and more than 27,000 litres of unfit soft drinks and bottled water destroyed.



standard
chartered

Notice: Beware

It is hereby notified that the Old Grant Rights of Property No. 35-A, measuring 5,540 square feet, situated at Survey No. 167, Mall Road, Peshawar Cantt, are recorded in the name of National and Grindlays Bank Limited in the Contaminant Board's records.

The aforementioned bank has been merged into Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited as per the notifications issued by the State Bank of Pakistan under the Banking Policy, bearing Notification No. BSD No. (RU-26)/131.03/SCB(100) dated 02-12-2002 and No. BPD (PU-31)/131.03/4/03/2002 dated 28-08-2000.

An application has now been submitted by the Branch Manager and Service Manager at this office, along with the aforementioned notifications, for the transfer of the said property to the name of Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited.

If any person, bank, or institution has any objection to the said transfer, they must submit their objection along with supporting evidence within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this notice. Thereafter, the transfer process will be completed in favour of the aforementioned bank, and no objections will be entertained.

Contaminant Executive Officer Peshawar

Governor slams KP govt over non-payment of salaries in universities

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday expressed deep anger and concern over the non-payment of salaries and pensions to teaching and administrative staff in several universities in the province.

In a statement, the Governor said that faculty members and pensioners of numerous universities, including the University of Peshawar, have not received their salaries and pensions.

He pointed out that many university employees have also been deprived of the additional salary and pension benefits announced by the government. Even during Eid, no relief was provided to them.

Governor Kundi criticized the provincial government, saying that while the Chief Minister claims that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the richest province, the

Kundi extends Easter greetings, emphasizes peace, tolerance, unity

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday extended heartfelt Easter greetings to the Christian community across Pakistan.

In his message, the Governor described Easter as a celebration carrying the beautiful message of peace, love, brotherhood, and service to humanity.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi emphasized that Easter teaches lessons of social harmony, tolerance, and respect for each other's beliefs, which are the foundations of a peaceful and prosperous society. He said that Pakistan is a beautiful cradle of diverse religions, cultures, and ethnicities, where traditions of mutual respect and equality are promoted. He praised the Christian community's exemplary contributions to the development of Pakistan, particularly in the fields of education, healthcare, and social services, noting that the entire nation holds their efforts in high regard.

The Governor added that the Governor House in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has always kept its doors open for minorities, organizing seminars on interfaith and inter-sectarian harmony. He mentioned that upon assuming office, he met with leaders of various religious communities in Peshawar and visited their places of worship.

Governor Kundi stressed that it is a collective responsibility to promote religious tolerance, national unity, and brotherhood to ensure lasting peace and prosperity in the country.

reality paints a different picture, with universities facing severe budget deficits.

He further alleged that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government spends millions of rupees on its favored election campaigns in Lahore, yet despite these massive expenditures, they continue to suffer defeats there. Meanwhile, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, those associated with the crucial sector of education responsible for shaping the nation's future are facing severe mental distress and are deprived of their fundamental rights, such as salaries and pensions.

He reiterated that his consistent stance has been that the provincial government's focus is not on the welfare of the people but solely on corruption.

The deteriorating performance of institutions in the province, he said, serves as clear evidence of this claim.



PESHAWAR: Jamaat-e-Islami activists protesting against Israel. — INP photo

BISEP takes action to ensure transparency in Matric Exams

54 officials penalized, private schools blacklisted

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Under the supervision of Commissioner Peshawar Division and Chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Peshawar, Riaz Khan Mehsud, the matriculation exams have been successfully conducted across 11 days in six districts: Peshawar, Charsadda, Upper Chitral, Lower Chitral, Khyber, and Mohmand Tribal District.

A total of approximately 200,000 students appeared for the matriculation exams across 713 designated examination centers. The Board implemented revolutionary measures to ensure transparency and effectively prevent cheating during the exams. Over the course

of the exams, 46 papers covering both Science and Arts streams for 9th and 10th grades were conducted. Strict actions were taken against malpractice and negligence. A total of 54 government examination staff were penalized due to failure in maintaining transparency, providing proper facilities, and preventing cheating. Of these, 37 individuals were dismissed from exam duties and permanently blacklisted from all future examination duties. Their cases have been referred to the Elementary and Secondary Education Department under E&D Rules for possible dismissal from service, and their TA/DA claims were also revoked.

Furthermore, two private schools found involved in facilitating cheating had their affiliations with BISE Peshawar suspended, with cases referred to the Board of Governance. Fourteen individuals were caught with forged exam duty appointment letters; FIRs were lodged, and all 14 are currently in jail.

Four individuals were arrested for creating fake appointment documents, and FIRs were also filed against staff members from four private schools who were found assisting students in cheating.

Additionally, one BISE Peshawar staff member was terminated from service after being found involved in issuing fake appointment letters for exam duties.

Chairman Riaz Khan Mehsud stated that strict

measures will continue throughout the examination period, which runs until April 29, to ensure complete transparency and eliminate cheating. Directives have been issued to administrative officers in all districts, and surprise visits to exam centers by the Chairman himself will also continue.

To encourage a culture of competition and acknowledge excellence, seven schools were selected and awarded for their exemplary performance. Moreover, nine examination staff members received cash prizes and certificates of appreciation from the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These acknowledgments were widely publicized through social, print, and electronic media platforms.

Board of Revenue seeks explanation from DC Tank for ignoring SMBR order

PESHAWAR (APP): The Board of Revenue has issued a notice to Deputy Commissioner Tank, Tanveer Khattak, directing him to explain his refusal to implement orders from the Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) and issuing of illegally NOC to undertrail Qanoongo for promotion urging to submit a detailed report within two weeks.

The move comes after allegations surfaced that DC Khattak failed to act on an SMBR directive and controversially issued a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the promotion

of Qanoongo Israr Shah, despite the Qanoongo being under trial in an anti-corruption court in Dera Ismail Khan and departmental inquiry by SMBR. An official from the SMBR confirmed that no individual facing court trials or inquiries is eligible for promotion until final clearance, terming the issuance of the NOC to Israr Shah a serious violation of procedure.

Applicant Asmat Shah accused DC Tank of deliberately delaying the enforcement of the SMBR's orders and ignoring the inquiry findings

submitted by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Yousaf Jatui regarding Israr Shah. He further alleged that DC Khattak openly refused to act, saying, "I am DC, not sitting here to follow SMBR."

The applicant also claimed that DC Khattak made compliance conditional upon the withdrawal of a complaint filed against him on the Pakistan Citizen's Portal. Previously, DC Khattak, while addressing an open court session, had declared that the district administration was accountable to the

public and that corruption would not be tolerated, vowing dismissal not suspension for officials involved in malpractice. However, the recent developments have cast doubts over these claims and raised questions about administrative integrity in Tank district.

When contacted DC Tanveer Khattak regarding the allegations, he said that he had issued NOC to Qanoongo Israr Shah mistakenly and Chargesheet orders has also been issued in this regard, adding further punishment will be given according to rules.

Cut in power tariff to play role of catalyst for economic growth

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) JK Consultants and prominent expert on SME sector, Javed Iqbal Khattak has termed the recent cut in the power tariff for both domestic and industrial consumers and said that it will play the role of catalyst for economic and industrial growths across the country.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said beside the cut in the power tariff, the country is required more similar steps to bring competitiveness in the country at par with other countries of the region including India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and China.

He said that we are still not in competitive position with these countries of the region and power tariff in Pakistan is high. However, he said that the

country has witnessed political stability after a long period that has made cut in the power tariff possible, which is a positive progress towards attracting investors to invest in Pakistan.

Increase in energy prices has compelled industrial sector to convert to alternative energy source. Import of solar equipment have increased import bill of Pakistan.

Similarly, he said that focused be made on technological improvement in mines and mineral sector to boost country economy. Country natural strength proper attention of the government and financial institutions. He said, until the utilization of modern technology in both mining and processing sectors we will face hardships and will lag behind the world in the sector.

He said that due to the lack of the use of modern technology, we are wast-

ing the minerals irrespective of being one-time resource and not available again and again. Therefore, he called for adopting of value-addition and usage of modern technology in both mining and processing sectors.

Javed Iqbal Khattak, who also a former Chief Executive of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) said that the introduction of modern technology will bear two kinds of benefits, one in shape of the promotion of joint ventures and value addition in the sector.

He further said that the government should disburse incentivised loans to attract investment in mineral sector as it required heavy machinery and big capital. Therefore, he also urged the government to put its share in this sector to increase the

national exports and also to earn foreign exchange for the country.

Regarding industrial development, he said that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will relocate Chinese technology and the local population will get employment and other benefits.

He said that dividends of the CPEC were enormous, but due to long and cumbersome procedures, we have not energized the Rashakai Special Economic Zone, which was the first operational model under the corridor.

He said that though electricity has been given to the grid of the zone, but due to complicated rules and regulations of distribution have could not provide it to industries. He said that according our adopted rules, the tariff of the electricity purchased in bulk is even manifold higher than the domestic consumer.

Farmers urged to make strong liaison with agri experts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Nuclear Institute for Food & Agriculture (NIFA), Peshawar, marked its annual Farmers' Day 2025 with a vibrant event aimed at raising awareness and disseminating advanced agricultural technologies and crop varieties to farmers and end-users.

Dr. Masood Iqbal, Member Science, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), graced the occasion as chief guest and formally inaugurated the ceremony. The event brought together key stakeholders from the agricultural sector, including scientists, policymakers, and Progressive Farmers.

In his welcome address, Dr. Gul Sanat Shah,

Director NIFA, extended gratitude to the chief guest, dignitaries from the provincial agriculture departments, and progressive growers for attending the event. He highlighted NIFA's notable achievements, including the development of 29 high-yielding crop varieties such as wheat, oilseed brassica, chickpea, and mungbean, which are being successfully cultivated across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

He also spoke about the institute's scientific innovations, such as a rapid spot test kit for detecting iron in fortified wheat flour, a Vitamin A detection kit for edible oil, and comprehensive water analysis services through an ISO 17025 Accredited Laboratory.

Addressing the gather-

ing, Dr. Abdur Rauf, Director General, KP Agricultural Research, acknowledged the challenges faced by the research community and shared that despite limited resources, KP Agricultural Research has developed 317 crop varieties. He commended NIFA's breeders for their significant contributions and assured continued cooperation through KP's 16 research stations.

Chief guest Dr. Masood Iqbal emphasized the importance of defense, power, health, and agriculture as the four key pillars of national progress. He praised PAEC's role in fostering economic and social development through basic and applied research in these sectors.

He also acknowledged

the efforts of other PAEC-supervised agricultural institutes including NIAB and NIBGE in Faisalabad, and NIA in Tandojam, Sindh, recognizing their invaluable services in strengthening Pakistan's agricultural base.

Mr. Muhammad Ismail Khan, Mr. Khalid Hussain, Progressive Growers along with representatives from seed companies, shared their experiences and expressed satisfaction over their ongoing collaboration with NIFA for sustainable agricultural development.

The event concluded with a shield presentation ceremony, where Director NIFA honored the chief guest and distinguished guests from the provincial agriculture sector for their presence and support.

KP FA takes action against on sale of counterfeit beverages

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority (KPFS&HFA) has spurred its crackdown against food adulteration and the production of counterfeit consumables, conducting major operations in Peshawar and Abbottabad. As a result, thousands of liters of fake beverages, juices, and other substandard food items were seized.

According to the

Authority's spokesperson, acting on a tip-off, the Food Safety team in Peshawar intercepted a vehicle transporting 1,500 liters of counterfeit carbonated drinks including fake Pepsi, Dew, and Gourmet, which were being supplied to various local markets.

The entire consignment was taken into custody and further legal action under the Food Safety Act has been initiated.

In a similar operation, the Abbottabad Food Safety team inspected multiple factories in the district.

One facility was found to be producing mislabeled products and was found in possession of 4,000 liters of mislabeled juice and 500 liters of vinegar.

The products were confiscated on the spot, heavy fines were imposed, and further legal proceedings are underway.

KP Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru congratulated the teams on successful operations and said that adulteration mafias, counterfeit food business will be rooted out of the province adding that there will be no compromise on food quality.

Director General KP Food Safety Authority Wasif Saeed also lauded the efforts of the safety teams and said that ensuring the availability of pure, quality, and safe food for the public is top priority.

He iterated that there will be zero tolerance for those involved in producing fake and hazardous food items.

Time ripe to fully utilize KP's hydel power potential

PESHAWAR (APP): As temperature soars across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), frequent power outages have left residents sparking frustration on social media and community platforms mostly in peripheries of Peshawar and Mardan divisions.

Despite vast potential of hydel power in KP, the load shedding and low voltage in Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan and Charsadda districts was affecting daily life.

"I fear that edibles in my fridge may rot if there is long load shedding," said Riaz Khan, a consumer of Pabbi feeder in Nowshera district while talking to APP.

"This long intervals load shedding also affects students' studies currently appearing in matriculation examination in KP, businesses and other activities of life."

Although the government is consistently endeavoring to bridge the supply and demand gap during summer, people in many areas still face load shedding.

These areas also include where the recovery is very low and as per policy the load shedding duration is more than normal areas.

Many have already installed solar panels and those not affording have to suffer pangs of load shedding.

PESCO officials told APP that KP was receiving about 1873MW electricity from the national grid while its demand remained about 3220 MW, facing a shortfall of 1347MW being fulfilled through load management in KP.

Under aggregate technical and commercial losses (ATCL) formula,

the official said the areas with high ATCL losses such as Bannu, rural areas of Peshawar including Warak Road, Chagarmathi and Regi and DI Khan district were facing long hours load shedding.

"There is no load shedding at Hayatabad and Gulbahar Peshawar due to high recovery ratio and lack of Kunda culture," he said.

"The key factor behind long hours load shedding are power thefts through direct hooks, outdated power distribution system and non-construction of large dams."

In spite of thousands of Mega Watt hydel power potential in Pakistan including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this key resource has not been fully tapped due to ill energy policies by the past rulers, resulting the

deepening energy crisis today. Even after the slogan of constructing 200 dams by the previous PTI government, nothing concrete was done.

However, the present government is taking necessary measures to exploit this potential, but the follies of decades may not be rectified in months.

"Due to global warming and climate change glaciers in our northern areas are melting fast and construction of dams was inevitable to store this water for domestic and agriculture consumption," remarked Dr. Zilakat Malik, former Chairman, Economics Department at University of Peshawar.

He said that plenty of sites on rivers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were suited for construction of dams, especially small and medium ones to tap the province's 30,000MW

hydel power potential.

Engr Zahoor Hussain, Director Projects, Wapda (North) said that over 90 percent work on multi-purpose Kurram Tangi (Stage-I) Bannu and North Waziristan inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has been completed and after inauguration it would add more power to national grid.

Asian Development Bank assisted Wapda in completion of design and feasibility study of Kurram-Tangi Dam (stage-II). The large dam would store around 1.2 million acre feet water besides generating 80.9MW electricity.

He said, 108MW Golen Gol dam in Chitral has been completed and work on 800MW Mohmand dam on river Swat with 1.293 MAF

water storage capacity has been expedited. "This mega dam would help irrigate 160,000 acres existing land and about 18,237 acres of new area with annual benefits of Rs2.23 billion."

Likewise, he informed, 300 million gallons drinking water per day would also be provided to Peshawar as Mohmand dam would also save Peshawar, Charsadda and Nowshera from floods.

Engr Zahoor also mentioned to expediting construction work on Dasu Hydropower Project on River Indus in Kohistan that would provide 4 3 2 0 M W electricity. "Dasu project will be developed in two stages. Stage-I will generate 2160MW while stage-II to be completed in five years."

Meanwhile, construction work on a high volt-

age direct current (HVDC) convertor station was in progress at Azakhel Bala Nowshera district under the CASA-1000 Project for transmission of 1300 MW inexpensive, clean and environment-friendly electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan.

According to KP Energy Department, 36.6MW Daral Khwar HPP Madain Swat has been completed and electricity generation would bring in over Rs1.3 billion annually. Moreover, 300MW Balakot HPP would Rs 85 billion approved by ECNEC on River Kunhar in Mansehra would also be a good addition.

Engr Zahoor said Gomal Zam Dam in South Waziristan with a capacity to store 114,000 cubic feet water has

already started generating power and water for irrigation.

"The Gomal Zam dam with about 17.4 MW power generation potential besides benefiting 25,000 households has been formally handed over to Wapda for operation.

The first unit of Suki Kinari Hydropower Station with 221 MW capacity constructed on river Kunhar in Mansehra district has successfully achieved synchronization and started generating power to local communities.

The Suki Kinari project would generate 884MW of electricity. The experts said that these hydel projects would help provide much needed relief to consumers besides expediting the pace of economic and agricultural growth in the country.



In brief

School enrolment drive F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: District Education Officer (DEO) Lower Dir, Inayatullah Khan, has issued special directives to the heads of all government schools across the district to ensure the success of the ongoing School Enrolment Campaign 2025. Addressing a meeting at his office, he emphasized the need for compiling comprehensive data on all children within school catchment areas—particularly those who were unable to enroll last year or have been completely deprived of education. He stressed that the enrolment drive should not be treated as a mere formality. “School heads must engage with communities and conduct door-to-door awareness campaigns to inform parents about the importance of enrolling their children. Every child has the right to education, and it is our duty to ensure that no one is left behind,” he stated. The DEO further underscored that the central goal of the campaign is to achieve 100% school enrolment across the district. Inayatullah Khan also appealed to elected members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and National Assembly from to play an active role in legislating for compulsory and free education up to matriculation level in the province. “Without concrete legislation, efforts made at the administrative level cannot yield lasting results,” he said. The DEO also asked religious clerics, khateeb, teachers, lawyers and doctors to play their active role in the ongoing entollment campaign of the education department. “Education is the fundamental right of every child, and safeguarding this right is a collective responsibility of both the state and society,” he added. “We must all play our part in this national cause.” It is worth mentioning that the enrolment campaign is currently underway throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Lower Dir, aiming to bring maximum out-of-school children into the educational mainstream. According to DEO Inayatullah, the campaign will continue until April 30, while a special ceremony is scheduled to be held at his office on April 22 in connection with the campaign.

122,000 to get BISP assistance

LODHARAN (APP): As many as 122,000 beneficiaries would get financial assistance of third quarter under Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) in the district. Talking to APP here on Sunday, BISP District Director Irfan Malik said the tranche was being distributed transparently through nine campsites across the district. He informed that Rs 13,500 financial aid and education stipend for the kids of beneficiaries was being provided at the campsites. He said that all facilities including sitting area, cold water and others were being provided to beneficiaries at campsites. The official further stated that the task force was monitoring campsites time to time to ensure transparency and strict action was taken on any complaints. The disbursement process of the tranche would continue for 15 days, he said and urged the BISP beneficiaries to get the payment from a nearby campsite at the earliest.

Upgradation of GMS Khawaja Payal Kohat inaugurated

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights Aftab Alam Advocate has along-with the Former Interior Minister and Senior PTI Leader Shehryar Khan Afridi MNA and Chairman Tehsil Gumbat Sajid Iqbal visited the Union Council Ziarat Sheikh Allah Dad of his Constituency PK-90 where he inaugurated the Government High School Khawaja Payal Kohat, which has been upgraded from Middle to High level.

The inaugural ceremony of the said school was largely attended by the elders of the area, teachers, local party leaders and workers

and general people.

They formally inaugurated the new building of the school by unveiling the plaque, which has been constructed at a cost of Rs.33.19 Million. They also inspected the new building.

The Law Minister said in his address that the work on the said school had been very slow for a long time, for which special funds were arranged with his and Shehryar Afridi's efforts, which was completed on priority basis and inaugurated Sunday.

This was a question of the future of the children of the area because education is the fundamental right of every child.

Aftab Alam said that

Shehryar Afridi is our group leader and all the elected representatives of the district are working for the development of Kohat under his leadership. He said that according to the government policy, the ongoing projects that are nearing completion are being completed first, while for the next phase, projects have been prepared in consultation with the public and ideological workers, keeping in view the needs of each area, for which funds have also been allocated.

The Minister said that education, health, communication, drinking water, agriculture and irrigation are his priority areas and he is trying to ensure its timely completion.

FAPUASA threatens protests over delay in VCs appointments

F.P. Report

Bannu: The Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUASA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter - South Region, has warned of street protests if permanent Vice Chancellors are not appointed in the universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in the southern districts. The association also demanded the implementation of Supreme Court and High Court decisions regarding the appointments.

According to FAPUASA representatives, the future of over 40,000 students in the southern districts is at stake due to the absence of permanent Vice Chancellors. Thousands of students are facing delays in the issuance of their degrees, causing widespread frustration and academic setbacks.

Dr. Nasir Gul Batsa, President of FAPUASA KP South Chapter, and General

Secretary Dr. Dilfraz Khan expressed these concerns while addressing the media after a joint meeting of the association.

They stated that for the past three years, most universities in the province have been functioning without permanent Vice Chancellors. A previous government had formed a scrutiny committee that completed the appointment process according to established rules, but the current provincial administration halted the appointments.

The selected Vice Chancellors approached the Peshawar High Court, after which the provincial government escalated the matter to the Supreme Court. A three-member bench of the Supreme Court sought a response from the provincial government and appeared to support the appointment process. However, the government later withdrew the case from the Supreme Court and agreed to move forward with the appointments

- only to file a review petition again recently.

FAPUASA leaders condemned this move as a deliberate attempt to sabotage the higher education sector and jeopardize the future of students across the province.

Due to the lack of permanent leadership in universities, especially in the southern districts, degrees are not being signed, leaving students in academic limbo.

Dr. Batsa announced that the association will no longer remain silent. A phased protest action plan has been formulated, starting with symbolic street classes outside university campuses in the southern districts. Professors, assistant professors, lecturers, and visiting faculty have pledged their full support for this movement. FAPUASA vowed to resist any harmful or unlawful actions by the provincial government that could further damage the higher education system.



SARGODHA: People viewing a variety of flowers at a floral exhibition organized by the PHA.



LODHARAN: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani reciting Fateha during the Chehlum ceremony of the late prominent social leader Mehr Rashid Ahmed Dhamraiya.

CM Balochistan extends warm Easter greetings



QUETTA (APP): Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, extended heartfelt Easter greetings to Christian community across the province and the country, acknowledging their contributions and expressing solidarity on this significant religious occasion.

In his Easter message, Chief Minister Bugti said the day symbolizes joy, hope, and the spirit of sacrifice.

He praised the Christian community for their exemplary role in the development and progress of Balochistan and Pakistan at large.

“The Christian community has made valuable contributions toward the betterment of our province and country. Their role in nation-building is truly commendable,” said Bugti.

Reaffirming his government's commitment to the protection of minority rights, he added, “We are fully committed to safeguarding the constitutional, social, and religious rights of all minorities. Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens is a cornerstone of a just society.”

He further emphasized the importance of unity and collective progress, urging all communities to come together for a peaceful, prosperous, and united Balochistan and Pakistan.

“Let us all join hands to lay the foundation of a harmonious and inclusive society,” he concluded.

Action against illegal gold mining to be taken

F.P. Report

KOHAT: In line with the directives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, a joint operation against illegal gold mining in the Rakh Topi and Rakh Saban areas of Kohat district was successfully carried out by the Forest Department, local administration, police, and the Minerals Department.

According to spokesperson of Forest Department, 36 cases were registered during 11 different raids, and legal proceedings have been initiated. Four sus-

pects have been arrested and presented in court, where judicial remand has been obtained.

He said, during the operation, 4 pickup trucks, 7 motorcycles, 61 generators, 17 fuel drums (200 liters each), 11 batteries, 7 tents, 15 pipes, and other mining equipment were seized. Additionally, 112 excavators, 80 generators, 17 fuel drums, 20 tents, and 1 tractor were rendered inoperable.

He said, In 17 cases, compounding was done, resulting in fines and penalties totaling Rs. 685,400.

He said, to prevent illegal mining, a joint checkpoint has been established at a central location. Five permanent forest guards have also been deployed, and a complete ban has been imposed on the return of machinery and individuals.

For effective monitoring, CCTV cameras have been installed in the area.

The spokesperson added that the Forest Department remains fully active in protecting natural resources and action against illegal activities will continue relentlessly.

Anti-Polio campaign kicks off in Hafizabad

Hafiz Muhammad Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: A five-day national anti-polio campaign officially commenced in Hafizabad today, with a determined goal of administering life-saving polio vaccine drops to 238,551 children under the age of five. The campaign, running from April 21 to April 25, was formally inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq, who personally administered drops to children residing in the city's slum areas. He was accompanied by Chief Executive Officer Health, Dr. Zaheer Ahmad.

Speaking at the campaign's launch, Deputy Commissioner Razzaq emphasized the administration's commitment to ensuring 100% vaccination coverage across the district. “This campaign is a vital step towards eradicating a disease that continues to threaten the future of our children. We will leave no stone unturned to make sure that not a single child is left unvaccinated,” he stated.

To achieve this goal, the district health department has mobilized 998 vaccination teams. These teams have been strategically assigned to cover schools, madrassas, bus stands, railway stations, public places, and door-to-door household visits. Their mission: to reach every eligible child and administer the essential polio vaccine drops.

Highlighting the extensive arrangements, Dr. Zaheer Ahmad confirmed that the health department has completed all necessary logistical and operational preparations. “Special mobile teams will be deployed at transit points and crowded locations. These teams, along with the rest of the campaign force, will be closely monitored to ensure maximum efficiency and transparency,” he said.

The Deputy Commissioner also issued an earnest appeal to the public, especially parents, to play an active role in the campaign.

“I call upon our respected religious scholars, teachers, traders, media, social activists, and community leaders to support this noble initiative. Ensuring our children receive the polio vaccine is not just a responsibility it is a duty for the health and future of our nation.”

Pakistan remains one of the few countries where polio is still endemic. Despite major strides made through national immunization days and community-based efforts, sporadic cases continue to emerge, often due to missed children and vaccine refusal in certain regions.

The campaign in Hafizabad aligns with the nationwide drive launched by the Government of Pakistan under the National Emergency Action Plan (NEAP) for polio eradication. With synchronized efforts across all provinces and districts, health officials remain hopeful that persistent and inclusive vaccination campaigns like this will pave the way for a polio-free Pakistan.

Authorities are urging the public to cooperate fully with vaccination teams. Any households missed during the initial visits are encouraged to report to local health centers or campaign helplines to ensure no child is left vulnerable.

As the campaign gains momentum, all eyes remain on the commitment of the field teams, the cooperation of communities, and the joint responsibility shared by every citizen to protect future generations from the crippling disease of polio.

Meanwhile, Sohail Anwar Sahotra Appointed to Punjab Minority Advisory Council.

Prominent political and social figure Sohail Anwar Sahotra has been officially appointed as a member of the Minority Advisory Council Punjab, according to a notification issued by the Government of Punjab, Human Rights and Minority Affairs Department.

GB welcoming another Juyline Spring

GILGIT (APP): With the end of harsh and chilling winter and spring just arriving, the Gilgit Baltistan region is preparing for another pleasant season of blooming flowers, singing brooks and streams and chirping birds.

As temperature starts rising and snow starts melting, the residents of these areas as well as the tourists are tightening their belts to take on thousands miles journeys to enjoy this glamorous season locally known as “Juyline Spring”

When the snow starts melting from mountain peaks, this season starts bringing new life to region—apricot trees bloom, glaciers melting fill rivers' and lakes and communities become active again after the long, cold winter.

Tall pines, dozens of lakes, meadows, glaciers, plains and vast forests all present bounties of Nature bestowed to this region. From the advent of spring season till next winter, these areas remain center of tourism and amusement for millions of visitors.

When for many in GB, Juyline Spring just marks the start of tourist season, it also brings business opportunities, cultural celebrations, sports events for thousands other

locals in Gilgit-Baltistan region.

Hotels and guesthouses in Hunza, Skardu and Ghizer get ready to welcome travelers from across Pakistan and other countries in every spring. Local businesses including handicraft sellers, transporters and food vendors see more customers as visitors throng to explore beautiful valleys.

Karim Ali, a hotel owner in Hunza, shares his hopes saying, “Spring is very important for our business. The last few years have been tough because of weak economy and the pandemic. But we hope this year will be better as we have already started receiving booking from tourists.”

It is very common that people in plain and hot areas every year hilly areas to take respite from scorching heat of areas in Punjab, Sindh and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Although it is attraction for majority to visit these areas during summer and businesses celebrate, many other locals yet worry about the negative effects of tourism without proper waste management, pollution caused by tourists and damages to environment and ecosystem.

Even though people are excited about spring, Gilgit-



Baltistan still faces problems with roads and transport. The Karakoram Highway (KKH), which connects the region to rest of Pakistan, often gets blocked due to landslides.

Flights to and from Skardu and Gilgit are frequently delayed because of bad weather, making travelling difficult for both tourists and locals.

Sajid Hussain, a transport business owner says, “every year, landslide blocks the roads. The authorities fix them temporarily as a long term solution is still awaited. If we want tourism to help contribute more to our economy, we need better roads and other travelling

options.”

“Another major issue is internet access. Many remote areas still do not have reliable internet, making it hard for businesses to grow and for people to stay connected with their kith and kin in rest of the country,” Sajid Hussain said.

Juyline Spring is also a season of cultural celebrations. Traditional music, dance, and polo matches bring people together and remind them of their rich heritage. However, with modern influences, fewer young people are taking part in these traditions.

Shazia Bano, an educationist and cultural activist comments,

“we must work hard to keep our traditions alive. Schools and cultural groups should encourage young people to learn about our folk music, poetry and history.”

It is also with the advent of spring season that different organizations buttress efforts for environmental protection. Local NGOs and government agencies organize tree-planting campaigns and awareness programs about responsible tourism to protect GB's delicate ecosystem.

Juyline Spring is not just about changing weather—it is also a time of transformation. The valleys turn green again, birds return after winter and farmers get ready to plant their crops.

The sight of cherry and apricot blossoms covering the mountains is breathtaking, attracting photographers and nature lovers.

Spring is also crucial for agriculture. Farmers depend on the melting glaciers to water their crops like wheat, barley and fruit orchards. But as the temperature had been continuously during past decade, this global warming phenomenon is affecting glacier reserves, making water security a growing concern.

Therefore, it is urgently required to take steps for preserving our precious water resource emanating from GB glaciers for protecting our ecosystem as well as making our future generations to continue to enjoy blessings of Juyline Spring.

No doubt that the Gilgit-Baltistan region is a jewel on earth offering ample opportunities to tourists to take respite from scorching heat but also amuse from mesmerizing scenic beauty of this region.

But growing tourists' influx and rising population is gradually bringing its resources under stress posing threat to environment, ecosystem, wildlife and flora and fauna.

No doubt, the season brings economic benefits and cultural joy, but problems like weak infrastructure, environmental risks and disappearing traditions need serious attention.

Therefore learning from experiences of other countries earning billions of dollars annually from tourism, we must also reset our priorities to fully benefit from our tourism potential giving it status of an industry and developing our tourists destination on modern lines providing all required facilities to local and foreign tourists.



Pope Francis emerges from convalescence on Easter, delights crowd with popemobile tour

VATICAN CITY (AP): Pope Francis emerged from his convalescence on Easter Sunday to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square and treat them to a surprise pope-mobile romp through the piazza, drawing wild cheers and applause as he continues his recovery from a near-fatal bout of double pneumonia.

"Viva il Papa!" (Long live the pope), "Bravo!" the crowd shouted as Francis looped through the square in his open-topped popemobile and then up and down the main avenue leading to it. He stopped occasionally to bless babies brought up to him, a scene that was common in the past but unthinkable just a few weeks ago as the 88-year-old pope fought for his life.

"Brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!" Francis said, his voice sounding stronger than it has since he was released from the hospital March 23 after a five-week stay.

Francis didn't celebrate the Easter Mass in the piazza, delegating it to Cardinal Angelo

Comastri, the retired archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica. But after the Mass ended, Francis appeared on the loggia balcony over the basilica entrance for more than 20 minutes and imparted the apostolic blessing in Latin.

The crowd of people below, estimated by the Vatican to be more than 35,000, erupted in cheers as a military band kicked off rounds of the Holy See anthem.

In all, Francis was outside on a sunny spring day for around 50 minutes, with temperatures at 21 degrees Celsius (70 Fahrenheit) in a piazza awash in daffodils, tulips and other flowers donated by the Netherlands for Easter.

"It is excellent, a miracle," said Margarita Torres Hernandez, a pilgrim from Mexico who was in the square. "Now that he has come out, for me it's a miracle, it's something very big, very beautiful."

On his way to the basilica, Francis met briefly in his hotel with U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who



was spending Easter in Rome with his family. The Vatican said the encounter lasted just a few minutes and was designed to allow for an exchange of Easter greetings.

Francis, for his part, gave Vance three big chocolate Easter eggs to give to his three young children.

"I know you have not been feeling great but it's good to see you in better health," Vance told the pope. "Thank you for se-

ing me."

Francis has only appeared in public a handful of times since returning to the Vatican after a 38-day hospital stay. He skipped the solemn services of Good Friday and Holy Saturday

leading up to Easter, but he had been expected to make an appearance on Sunday.

Doctors have prescribed two months of convalescence and respiratory therapy to improve his lung function after he came down with a life-threatening case of double pneumonia. He still seems to require great effort to project his voice, and his breathing remains labored. But his voice sounded stronger than it has to date in the few words he uttered from the loggia.

"It was a very touching moment for us (to see the pope)," said Marcin Popowsky, a pilgrim from Poland. "And we are very happy that we can see a pope in good shape."

Easter is the most joyful moment on the Christian liturgical calendar, when the faithful celebrate the resurrection of Christ after his crucifixion. This year, Easter is being celebrated on the same day by Catholics and Orthodox Christians, and has been marked by Russia's announced temporary Easter truce in its war in Ukraine.

Easter at the Vatican traditionally involves a Mass and the pope's Urbi et Orbi blessing (Latin for "to the city and the world"), a papal speech delivered from the loggia which is usually a

roundup of global hotspots and human suffering.

In the speech, read by Archbishop Diego Ravelli, master of liturgical ceremonies, Francis appealed for peace in Gaza and Ukraine, as well as Congo and Myanmar and in other hotspots. And he made a special appeal for migrants and those affected by violence.

"How much contempt is stirred up at times toward the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants!" the message said. "On this day, I would like all of us to hope anew and to revive our trust in others, including those who are different than ourselves, or who come from distant lands, bringing unfamiliar customs, ways of life and ideas! For all of us are children of God!"

Before Sunday, Francis' biggest outing had been a visit to Rome's downtown prison to spend Holy Thursday with inmates. The visit made clear his priorities as he slowly recovers: to spend time with the people most on the margins.

Qatar's chief negotiator says 'frustrated' by pace of Gaza talks

DOHA (AFP): Qatar's chief negotiator voiced frustration over talks for a truce in Gaza in an interview with AFP, a month after Israel resumed its strikes on the Palestinian territory and another round of negotiations ended without a deal.

"We're definitely frustrated by the slowness, sometimes, of the process in the negotiation. This is an urgent matter. There are lives at stake here if this military operation continues day by day," Mohammed Al-Khulaifi said on Friday.

Qatar, with the United States and Egypt, brokered a truce in Gaza between Israel and Hamas which came into force on January 19 and largely halted over a year of war triggered by Palestinian militants' October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

The initial phase of the truce ended in early March, with the two sides unable to agree on the next steps.

Hamas has insisted that negotiations be held for a second phase to the truce, leading to a permanent end to the war, as outlined in the January framework.

Israel, which had called for an extension to the opening phase, resumed air and ground attacks across the Gaza Strip on March 18 after earlier halting the entry of aid.

Late on Thursday, Hamas signalled the group would not accept Israel's newest proposal for a 45-day ceasefire. Israel had wanted the release of 10 living hostages held by the Palestinian group, the militant group said.

'Noise'

"We've been working continuously in the last days to try to bring the parties together and revive the agreement that has been endorsed by the two sides," the Qatari minister of state said.

"And we will remain committed to this, in spite of the difficulties," he added.

During the long mediation process, Qatar has been the target of direct criticism from Israel and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

At least two of Netanyahu's aides are suspected of receiving payments from the Qatari government to promote Doha's interests in Israel, prompting an Israeli criminal probe. Qatar has dismissed the attacks as a "smear campaign".

Earlier in March, an investigation by Israel's domestic security agency attributed funds from the Gulf state to an increase in Hamas's military strength before the October 7 attack. Qatar has rebuffed the accusation as "false".

"We've been receiving those types of criticism and negative comments since the early times of our involvement," Al-Khulaifi said.

"Critiques without any context, such as the ones that we keep hearing from Netanyahu himself, are often just noise," he added.

Al-Khulaifi rejected recent remarks from Netanyahu to the US-based evangelical Christian channel Daystar that Qatar had promoted "anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism" on US college campuses.

'De-escalation'

"His claims about Qatar's educational partnerships have been repeatedly disproven. Everything we do is transparent," the Qatari official added.

Qatar, with Al-Khulaifi as its lead negotiator, has emerged as a facilitator in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo that has flared in recent months, with the armed M23 group making a series of rapid gains in the country's resource-rich east.

In early March, Congolese

President Felix Tshisekedi and his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame, who is accused of backing the M23, held surprise meetings in Doha and later expressed their support for a ceasefire.

"This meeting happened to really find a pathway towards de-escalation and more of an agreement on an implementation mechanism," Al-Khulaifi said.

"We've managed to create this flexible line of communication between the two sides, and we're hoping there are more successes than you can hear within the next days," the Qatari minister added.

Al-Khulaifi said following the meetings between the leaders that Qatar had convinced the M23, Rwanda and the DRC to "de-escalate" near the strategic mining hub of Walikale.

This allowed "a process of withdrawing from Walikale to the eastern sides, to Goma. That movement by itself was, in our view, a positive development," he added, referring to the M23-held capital of DR Congo's North Kivu Province.

Al-Khulaifi said the United States had been "a reliable partner" in DR Congo and he hoped to discuss the conflict with the US envoy for Africa, Massad Boulos, in Washington in the coming days.

In the United States, Khulaifi said he would also raise the issue of ongoing sanctions on Syria following the ousting of president Bashar al-Assad.

Along with Qatari funding for gas supplies to Syria, Qatar is discussing with regional partners an increase in public sector salaries in the country.

"We're discussing it very closely with our US colleagues to see, how can we move on within this project," Al-Khulaifi said.



DUBAI: Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan Envoy to UAE, visited the exhibition 'Vanishing Points' by renowned Pakistani artist Imran Qureshi at Alserkai Avenue

Descendants of slave owners and enslaved people call for reparations

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The great-great-grandson of 19th-century British Prime Minister William Gladstone said he was horrified to learn seven years ago that his ancestors were slave owners in Jamaica and Guyana.

And former BBC journalist Laura Trevelyan said she learned after records of Britain's Slave Compensation Commission were put online in 2013 that one of her ancestors, Sir John Trevelyan, owned sugar cane plantations in Grenada and about 1,000 enslaved people.

They spoke at a meeting at U.N. headquarters in New York this past week where, for the first time, descendants of slave owners and enslaved people in former British colonies in the Caribbean sat at the same table with diplomats and experts from those nations discussing the contentious issue of reparations.

"This was a historic event," said Trevelyan, who moderated the meeting on the sidelines of the U.N. Permanent Forum on People of African Descent's weeklong session.

From about the year 1500, millions of West Africans were sent to work mainly on plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas, including the southern United States. U.N. human rights chief Volker Turk told the forum that an estimated 25 million to 30 million Africans were uprooted for the purpose of slavery.

Few nations have apologized for their role in slavery, and reparations have been the subject of much debate.

The Geneva-based Human Rights Council has called for global action for years, including reparations, apologies and educational reforms to make amends for racism against people of African descent. The 15-nation Caribbean Community, known as CARICOM, has a 10-point plan for reparatory justice,

starting with demands for European countries where enslaved people were kept and traded to issue formal apologies.

Türk noted a European Union statement in 2023 profoundly regretting the "untold suffering" caused by the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the African Union's designation of 2025 as the "Year of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations."

At the meeting of descendants of enslaved people and slave owners on Tuesday, Trevelyan spoke of her family's decision to apologize to Grenada and to make a contribution of 100,000 British pounds (about \$133,000) toward education in the Caribbean island nation.

Going to Grenada with family and apologizing "wasn't exactly smooth sailing," said Trevelyan, who left the BBC and has become a campaigner for reparations. There were protests by one group that thought the apology was inadequate and the money not enough.

Also at the meeting was Aidee Walker, who said she was shocked when a DNA test revealed she was not only predominantly Scots-Irish but also part Nigerian, then discovered that her great-great-grandfather, who moved to New Zealand, was the son of a slave owner in Jamaica named John Malcolm and an African housekeeper.

Walker and her sister,

Kate Thomas, said when they found out they felt they had to do something.

Thomas said she discovered what Trevelyan was doing and got in touch with Verene Shepherd, a professor emeritus and vice chair of the CARICOM reparations commission, who encouraged the sisters to start with the apology.

Charles Gladstone, meanwhile, said he felt "a profound sense of guilt" after learning that former Prime Minister Gladstone's father owned estates with enslaved people — and that a great deal of his privileged life "was essentially connected to this criminal past."

He said he apologized to Guyana and Jamaica and will try to do something "to make the world a better place."

While Britain's role in abolishing slavery in 1833 is widely taught, Gladstone said, its involvement in the trade "has been completely buried." The history must be told, he said, because "the evils of this crime against humanity are not historical, they're felt very, very profoundly today."

Britain's deputy U.N. ambassador, James Kariuki, attended the meeting but did not speak.

The British Mission, asked for a comment, sent a statement from Development Minister Anneliese Dodds to Parliament on Feb. 25 saying she and Prime Minister Keir Starmer have been "absolutely clear that we will not be making cash

transfers and payments to the Caribbean."

Gladstone said supporters of reparations must keep working together. If thousands of families like his stand up and say, "'We would like to do something about this,' then there is a chance that the government in Britain could do something more substantial," he said.

Thomas agreed. "If we can get the numbers, then that could influence institutions and governments to act," she said. "It's a really great start to what I think will be a lifelong journey."

Shepherd, who taught at the University of the West Indies, said there have not been many apologies and, while some Europeans express remorse or regret for slavery, "no one is talking about reparations."

Arley Gill, chairman of Grenada's National Reparations Commission, said, however, he sees positive movement toward reparative justice globally and believes "we are on a good path to ensure these crimes against humanity are being recognized by the colonial powers."

Antigua's U.N. ambassador, Walton Webson, who is chair of the Caribbean ambassadors' caucus, ended the meeting by saying, "We have reached the point where speaking of reparations is no longer taboo."

Now, he said, it's time to put reparations "on the lips of every child, every person" and start to take action.



US Supreme Court temporarily blocks deportations of Venezuelan migrants under wartime law

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The U.S. Supreme Court temporarily barred the Trump administration from deporting a group of Venezuelan migrants it accused of being gang members under a rarely used wartime law, but the government urged the justices to lift their order.

The court issued the decision after lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union asked it to intervene on an emergency basis, saying dozens of Venezuelan migrants faced imminent deportation without the judicial review the justices previously ordered.

"The Government is directed not to remove any member of the putative class of detainees from the United States until further order of this Court," the justices said earlier in a brief, unsigned decision.

Conservative Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito publicly dissented from the decision, issued around 12:55 a.m. (0455 GMT).

The Trump administration filed a response on Saturday afternoon urging the justices, once they review the matter further, to formally reject the ACLU's request on the migrants' behalf.

The White House responded that President Donald Trump would stay the course in his immigration crackdown but gave no immediate indication that the administration would defy the Supreme Court, appearing for now to avert a potential constitutional crisis between coequal branches of government.

Although it was unclear where the Venezuelan migrants were headed, the Trump administration already has deported to a maximum-security prison in El Salvador more than 200 Venezuelan and Salvadoran men it claims are gang members.

The deportees included Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran immigrant whom the administration admitted was removed by mistake, igniting an outcry over its immigration policy.

Many of the migrants' lawyers and family members say they were not gang members and had no chance to dispute the government's assertion that they were.

"We are confident in the lawfulness of the Administration's actions and in ultimately prevailing against an onslaught of meritless litigation brought by

radical activists who care more about the rights of terrorist aliens than those of the American people," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement.

The case has raised questions about whether Trump, who has shown a willingness at times to defy court decisions since returning to office on January 20, will comply with limits set by the nation's highest court.

The high court majority issued Saturday's stay after ACLU lawyers filed urgent requests for immediate action in multiple courts, including the Supreme Court, after reporting that some of the men already had been loaded aboard buses and were told they were to be deported.

The ACLU said the administration was poised to deport the men using a 1798 law that historically has been employed only in wartime without affording them a realistic opportunity to contest their removal - as the Supreme Court had ordered.

U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer, in a written filing, asked the court to lift its temporary order halting the deportations to first allow lower courts to resolve the "adequacy of notice that des-

ignated enemy aliens receive."

Barring that action, Sauer wrote, the court should clarify its order to say that it "does not preclude the government from removing detainees pursuant to authorities other than the Alien Enemies Act."

Sauer said the government provided advance notice with "adequate time" to the detainees prior to starting deportations - though he did not say how much time was given.

Lee Gelernt, the ACLU's lead attorney in the case, said in a statement earlier on Saturday: "These men were in imminent danger of spending their lives in a horrific foreign prison without ever having had a chance to go to court. We are relieved that the Supreme Court has not permitted the administration to whisk them away the way others were just last month."

In an audio recording posted on TikTok, several men said they were Venezuelans falsely accused of being gang members and held at Bluebonnet immigration detention center in Texas. They said they were taken by bus to a regional airport late on Friday but then returned.

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Putin declares Easter truce, Ukraine unimpressed

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has announced an Easter truce to last from Saturday evening – Moscow time – till after midnight on Sunday. He told the Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov on a recorded video, “We assume that the Ukrainian side will follow our example. At the same time, our troops must be ready to repel possible violations of the truce and provocations from the enemy, any of its aggressive actions.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called the ceasefire “another attempt by Putin to play with human lives”. He said “air raid alerts are spreading across Ukraine” and “Shahed drones in our skies reveal Putin’s true attitude toward Easter and toward human life.” And in the middle of the bitter attitude towards each other between Putin and Zelensky, Russia and Ukraine had exchanged prisoners, and this time without international mediation.

Earlier, it was through the efforts of United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia that the swapping of prisoners had occurred.

There is speculation that Putin’s Easter truce is a prelude to a longer truce and to negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. There is a suggestion that Putin is indeed looking forward to an extended truce, but the two sides are not able to settle on the terms. This has pushed the United States under President Donald Trump, which had been trying hard to arrange a truce, to give up hope. The US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, had said that the US would turn away from its mediatory efforts if there is no quick breakthrough, and truce is worked out to facilitate negotiations.

President Putin might be more inclined to a truce because Russia is in an apparently advantageous position on the battlefield. Russian reports say that Ukrainian troops have been pushed back from Russian territory in the Kursk region.

Ukraine had intruded into the Russian territory last winter with the intention of being in a stronger bargaining position at the time of negotiations. President Zelensky is desperately hoping to get to the negotiating table with terms that favour Ukraine.

For that to happen, he needs unqualified American support. But President Trump is not too willing to stand with Ukraine. He is more favourable to President Putin, and he was suggesting that Ukraine must accept that Russia will keep the Ukrainian territory under its control. It will be difficult for President Zelensky to accept because that would be the end of his presidency and of his political career.

He had become president on an anti-Russia agenda. And the Russian invasion of Ukraine was an attempt by President Putin to replace President Zelensky.

Meanwhile, the European Union (EU) has expressed strong support for Ukraine but it is not able to match its words with military and financial aid. And President Trump is unwilling to extend the military and financial aid that his predecessor Joe Biden had provided Ukraine.

It is a strategic gridlock, and no player – Russia, Ukraine, the EU and the US – are able to reach an agreement that would satisfy all the players. And no one of them is in a position to be flexible in their adopted stance.

Russia cannot be seen to be yielding to Ukrainian demands, nor can Ukraine give up its claims on its own territory. The US does not see any advantage in supporting even if the rare minerals agreement between Washington and Kyiv is reached.

The EU does not want to be seen as legitimising Russian claims on its sphere of influence in the eastern part of Europe, which was once part of the bloc when the former Soviet Union, now Russia, has wielded indirect power over the region.

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The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Gaza had educational justice. Now the genocide has wiped that out, too

Refaat Ibrahim

Palestinians have always been passionate about learning. During the Ottoman era, Palestinian students travelled to Istanbul, Cairo, and Beirut to pursue higher education. During the British Mandate, in the face of colonial policies aimed at keeping the local population ignorant, Palestinian farmers pooled their resources and established schools of their own in rural areas.

Then came the Nakba, and the occupation and displacement brought new pain that elevated the Palestinian pursuit of education to an entirely different level. Education became a space where Palestinians could feel their presence, a space that enabled them to claim some of their rights and dream of a better future. Education became hope.

In Gaza, instruction was one of the first social services established in refugee camps. Students would sit on the sand in front of a blackboard to learn. Communities did everything they could to ensure that all children had access to education, regardless of their level of destitution. The first institution of higher education in Gaza – the Islamic University – held its first lectures in tents; its founders did not wait for a building to be erected.

I remember how, as a child, I would see the alleys of our neighbourhood every morning crowded with children heading to school. All families sent their children to school.

When I reached university age, I saw the same scene: Crowds of students commuting together to their universities and colleges, dreaming of a bright future.

This relentless pursuit of education, for decades, suddenly came to a halt in October 2023. The Israeli army did not just bomb schools and universities and burn books. It destroyed one of the most vital pillars of Palestinian education: Educational justice.

Making education accessible to all

Before the genocide, the education sector in Gaza was thriving. Despite the occupation and blockade, we had one of the highest literacy rates in the world, reaching 97 percent. The enrolment rate in secondary education was 90 percent, and the enrolment in higher education was 45 percent.

One of the main reasons for this success was that education in Gaza was completely free in the primary and secondary stages. Government- and UNRWA-run schools were open to all Palestinian children, ensuring equal opportunities for everyone.

Textbooks were distributed for free, and families received support to buy bags, notebooks, pens, and school uniforms.

There were also many programmes sponsored by the Ministry of Education, UNRWA, and other institutions to support talented students in various fields, regardless of their economic status. Reading competitions, sports events, and technology programmes were organised regularly.

At the university level, significant efforts were made to make higher education accessible. There

was one government university which charged symbolic fees, seven private universities with moderate to high fees (depending on the college and major), and five university colleges with moderate fees. There was also a vocational college affiliated with UNRWA in Gaza that offered fully free education.

The universities provided generous scholarships to outstanding and disadvantaged students.

The Ministry of Education also offered internal and external scholarships in cooperation with several countries and international universities. There was a higher education loan fund to help cover tuition fees.

Simply put, before the genocide in Gaza, education was accessible to all.

Since October 2023, the Zionist war machine has systematically targeted schools, universities, and educational infrastructure. According to UN statistics, 496 out of 564 schools – nearly 88 percent – have been damaged or destroyed. In addition, all universities and colleges in Gaza have been destroyed. More than 645,000 students have been deprived of classrooms, and 90,000 university students have had their education disrupted. As the genocide continued, the Ministry of Education and universities tried to resume the educational process, with in-person classes for schoolchildren and online courses for university students. In displacement camps, tent schools were established, where young volunteers taught children for free. University professors used online teaching tools like Google Classroom, Zoom, WhatsApp groups, and Telegram channels. Despite these efforts, the absence of regular education created a significant gap in the educational process. The incessant bombardment and forced displacement orders issued by the Israeli occupation made attendance challenging.

The cost of education amid genocide

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absence of regular education created a significant gap in the educational process. The incessant bombardment and forced displacement orders issued by the Israeli occupation made attendance challenging. The lack of resources also meant that tent schools could not provide proper instruction.

As a result, paid educational centres emerged, offering private lessons and individual attention to students. On average, a centre charges between \$25 to \$30 per subject per month, and with eight subjects, the monthly cost reaches \$240 – an amount most families in Gaza cannot afford.

In the higher education sector, cost also became prohibitive. After the first online semester, which was free, universities started requiring

forced to make difficult decisions: Sending older children to work to help fund the education of the younger ones, or giving the opportunity only to the most outstanding child to continue studying, and depriving the others.

Then there are the extremely poor, who cannot send any of their children to school. For them, survival is the priority. During the genocide, this group has come to represent a large portion of society.

The catastrophic economic situation has forced countless school-aged children to work instead of going to school, especially in families that lost their breadwinners. I see this painful reality every time I step out of my tent and walk around.

The streets are full of children selling various goods; many are exploited by war profiteers to sell things like cigarettes for a meagre wage.

Little children are forced to beg, chasing passersby and asking them for anything they can give.

I feel unbearable pain when I see children, who just a year and a half ago were running to their schools, laughing and playing, now stand under the sun or in the cold selling or begging just to earn a few shekels to help their families get an inadequate meal.

For Gaza’s students, education was never just about getting an academic certificate or an official paper. It was about optimism and courage, it was a form of resistance against the Israeli occupation, and a chance to lift their families out of poverty and improve their circumstances. Education was life and hope.

Today, that hope has been killed and buried under the rubble by Israeli bombs.

We now find ourselves in a dangerous situation, where the gap between the well-to-do and the poor is widening, where an entire generation’s ability to learn and think is being diminished, and where Palestinian society is at risk of losing its identity and its capacity to continue its struggle.

What is happening in Gaza is not just a temporary educational crisis, but a deliberate campaign to destroy opportunities for equality and create an unbalanced society deprived of justice.

We have reached a point where the architects of the ongoing genocide are confident in the success of their strategy of “voluntary transfer” – pushing Palestinians to such depths of despair that they choose to leave their land voluntarily.

But the Palestinian people still refuse to let go of their land. They are persevering. Even the children, the most vulnerable, are not giving up. I often think of the words I overheard from a conversation between two child vendors during the last Eid. One said: “There is no joy in Eid.” The other one responded: “This is the best Eid. It’s enough that we’re in Gaza and we didn’t leave it as Netanyahu wanted.”

Indeed, we are still in Gaza, we did not leave as Israel wants us to, and we will rebuild just as our ancestors and elders have.

Israeli army is more divided than ever

Yossi Mekelberg

If ever there has been a national institution that is revered in Israel and has the power to unite the country, at least its Jewish population, it is the Israeli army.

Nevertheless, no one and nothing is sacred in the eyes of the corruption case defendant, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and his allies in their desperation to cling to power – and perhaps, for some of them, to ensure they avoid a jail sentence.

Not even the Israeli army can avoid the damage and destruction that government officials are inflicting on their own people, because to them, and particularly to Netanyahu, the end justifies the means, and this includes sowing the seeds of division among security forces in the middle of a war.

This is particularly disturbing in a country whose army comprises mostly conscripts and reservists who face unprecedented challenges and should therefore be prevented from becoming embroiled in divisive political squabbles.

Since Israel gained independence, the Israeli army has essentially been regarded not only as a defense force but also a great social equalizer, a melting pot of Israeli society where people of differing backgrounds and gender were united in the objective of defending their country. The practice of this has not always matched the theory but, despite the cracks that have shown through the years, the ethos has prevailed.

It is now under a severe threat, which manifests in at least two phenomena. The first is a moral deterioration, much of which is the result of nearly 57 years of occupation that increasingly has turned the Israeli army into a tool for oppressing the Palestinian people, and eroded the moral fabric of the military, from the rank and file all the way up to its commanders. It has also caused deep divisions between those who support the occupation and its repressive measures, and those who oppose it yet will not refuse to be part of it.

This moral erosion, accompanied by the deterioration of operational discipline, is even more evident in the way in which the war against Hamas is being conducted, and the behavior of some Israeli troops in Gaza since the conflict began.

The second development, which started before the Oct. 7 attacks and is once again gathering momentum, is the protest movement. It includes letters signed by thousands of retired, reservist, and volunteer soldiers and officers, including those in the highest ranks, who oppose the government’s policies but still stop just short of announcing they will refuse to serve.

An army whose soldiers no longer believe in its mission or trust the intentions of their politicians is in real danger of decline.

Certainly, an army with a backbone of conscripts, but particularly reservists, brings with it certain advantages in terms of motivation and a sharing of the burden of serving in defense of one’s country.

However, those who serve in this way bring with them widely differing opinions and attitudes, and even moral values, and at a time of deep crisis and prolonged war this sur- faces in terms of readiness to serve and behavior during the conflict.

In the immediate aftermath of Oct. 7 it was apparent, though completely unjustifiable, that the anger among Israelis could only lead to a war in which military objectives were mixed up with the dark, primordial instincts for revenge. Furthermore, these feelings were directed not only against those who perpetrated that terrible massacre but against the entire Gazan population.

The country’s most senior politicians cultivated this permissive environment; for some of them it

was a means to deflect attention from their own failure to defend Israel against the Hamas attack.

In the past year-and-a-half there have been so many devastating cases of the killing of civilians in Gaza, including an estimated 15,000 children, and the killing and the maiming continues.

The apparent murder of 15 Palestinian paramedics and rescue workers, including at least one UN employee, committed last month by an Israeli army unit, and the burial of their bodies in a mass grave should have shaken Israeli society and made it crystal clear what is taking place on its behalf. Newly released postmortem results reveal that several of those who were killed had close-range gunshot wounds to the head and chest, and their hands or legs were tied.

Even among the endless litany of atrocities this war has produced, this incident stands out, because the slain victims posed no risk, they were simply there to help the victims of war. Attempts to cover up the nature of the deaths by burying the victims and claiming that their convoy of ambulances had been moving without headlights or flashing emergency lights before coming under fire were proved false.

Such an act, carried out by soldiers in a brigade whose commander was once reported as saying that “there are no innocents in Gaza,” can no longer be viewed as a mere one-off aberration, but instead reflects something that runs much deeper in terms of discipline and morality.

At the other end of the spectrum in Israeli society there are those who had volunteered to serve in the military, many of them in elite units, including air force pilots, and who extended their service beyond the legal requirement. These Israelis had already, before Oct. 7, warned that they would not serve a government and a prime minister that was leading the country down the path of authoritarianism. Yet still, in the aftermath of the Oct. 7 attack they showed up for service and carried out the missions they were tasked with.

But a year-and-a-half later, they are, in increasing numbers, no longer showing up when called to serve. This might be for a number of reasons, including the toll it takes on their family and professional lives when they have to serve for hundreds of days at a time. But one of the reasons is because more and more of them no longer believe that the current Israeli government has the best interests of the country and its people at heart.

It is all-too apparent that the war is being continued simply to preserve the governing coalition and its prime minister, while abandoning the remaining 59 hostages to their fate. Letters to this effect from almost all branches of the military, and from former Mossad operatives as well, calling for prioritization of efforts to bring the hostages home over prolonging the war, are becoming a regular occurrence.

In an act of cynical folly, Netanyahu, instead of constructively engaging with those who criticize the way in which he is conducting the war, has dismissed them and hurled insults. He has accused them of being “a small, noisy, anarchistic and disconnected group of pensioners, a large group of whom have not served for years,” and claimed they were “encouraging our enemy to harm us.”

None of the letters suggested any refusal to answer the call to duty, but such claims serve the Netanyahu narrative of a prime minister standing against the elite, against the deep state, against the world to ensure Israel’s victory and survival.

In reality, Netanyahu is standing against his own people, against the hostages, and against ending the war, all in an attempt to ensure his own survival.

A balanced perspective on Saudi-American relations

Dr. Turki Faisal Al-Rasheed

The partnership between Saudi Arabia and the US has long been a cornerstone of international relations, marked by both significance and contention. The recent announcement of a visit by President Donald Trump to the Kingdom serves as a pivotal moment, underscoring the historical roots of this alliance and the pressing geopolitical dynamics that shape it today.

As a proud Saudi national, I perceive this relationship through the lens of Saudi nationalism, recognizing the intertwining interests of our nation, the Arab world and global stability.

The diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and the US began in February 1945 with a meeting between King Abdulaziz and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This encounter established the groundwork for the post-Second World War Middle East, characterized by mutual respect and benefit, albeit often skewed in favor of the US.

Now, we are witnessing a paradigm shift, moving beyond outdated notions toward a future that prioritizes sustainability and mutual prosperity. The Kingdom strives to cultivate an alliance that serves not only our two nations but also extends promise to the entire Arab world and beyond.

Our bilateral relationship encompasses critical areas such as economic collaboration, counterterrorism, cultural exchanges, and a commitment to security and stability. The focus must shift toward a partnership that fosters peace and benefits our citizens, rather than primarily advancing the interests of a select few.

While the Saudi-US alliance presents numerous opportunities, it is not without its challenges. Critics often highlight our reliance on oil and military exports, raising ethical questions about governance and human rights. However, it is essential to contextualize these criticisms within the realities facing both nations.

The ongoing suffering in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, often exacerbated by American arms, presents a stark contrast to the insistence on human rights. Yet, advocating for reform is critical, and navigating the defense and survival challenges posed by complex regional dynamics remains paramount.

Supporters of the Saudi-US alliance argue for its important role in counterbalancing regional threats. This partnership is essential not merely in defense of our interests, but as recognition that stability in the Middle East relies on an integrated approach.

By collaborating with Saudi Arabia, the US secures vital energy resources while fostering a capable partner dedicated to promoting peace throughout the Arab world. This perspective supports a balanced view of the alliance, highlighting mutual interests that can drive positive outcomes for both parties.

However, to fully appreciate the nuances of this evolving relationship it is imperative to consider counterarguments. Critics contend that the foundational disparities, including those stemming from economic structures and human rights practices, pose persistent barriers to trust and collaboration. They argue that the US strategic support for Saudi leaders can sometimes overshadow the Kingdom's need for genuine reforms and respect for human rights. The perception of the US as an enabling force for the status quo can cultivate resentment among younger Saudi citizens, who increasingly advocate for change and engagement on global issues.

Additionally, regional powers such as Iran and other emerging nations are changing the dynamics of international relations, compelling both the US and Saudi Arabia to rethink their alliances. The Kingdom's pivot toward diversifying its partnerships might reveal a diminishing reliance on the US, adding layers of complexity to the bilateral relationship.

Saudi Arabia is currently undergoing a transformation as it pursues Vision 2030, an ambitious road map aimed at diversifying the national economy away from dependency on oil. As a conservative national, I believe that establishing a sustainable economy is vital for our stability and growth. Yet, navigating these challenges amid an unpredictable global landscape is no easy feat.

The reflections of economic thought leaders emphasize the intricacies present within this transition. For example, Nobel laureate Paul Krugman has scrutinized the trade landscape under Trump's administration and its potential pitfalls. While China adeptly maneuvers this complex terrain, the US faces vulnerabilities in its reliance on imports. The unpredictability of American policies can hinder alliance-building efforts and alter the strategic calculus for Saudi Arabia, necessitating a cautious approach.

Ray Dalio, a prominent financial educator, warns of impending economic challenges tied to historical imbalances. As Saudi Arabia continues to pursue its developmental goals, we must remain vigilant and adaptable, drawing lessons from both our historical context and broader international dynamics.

The Arab region is at a critical juncture, facing crises that could reshape its geopolitical landscape. In this context, Saudi Arabia stands as a potential peace-maker. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza, exacerbated by Israel's military actions, deeply affects the Kingdom and fortifies our commitment to the Palestinian cause, which is integral to our identity and values.

However, solidifying this position requires careful navigation of relationships with allies, particularly the US. The unwavering support Washington extends to Israel complicates our diplomatic efforts. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia remains firm in its assertion that normalization with Israel should hinge on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, reflecting our commitment to justice and prosperity for all Arab nations.

Through diligent diplomacy and open dialogue with neighboring Arab countries, we aim to forge a unified response to the regional chaos that threatens to undermine our economic diversification objectives. Saudi Arabia's proactive diplomatic efforts have enabled us to engage constructively with other nations while maintaining our broader vision for peace and stability in the region.

As President Trump prepares for his visit to Saudi Arabia, the focus shifts to

how the leaders of both countries can effectively address pressing regional issues, particularly in conflict zones. Discussions are expected to center on de-escalation efforts, and recognizing the urgency of resolving the Palestinian occupation, which is critical for bolstering Saudi stability and enhancing regional cooperation.

The multifaceted Saudi-US relationship undoubtedly presents significant challenges, yet it also holds vast potential for collaboration. This partnership must continue to evolve, shedding outdated practices in favor of a new path that emphasizes mutual respect, shared values, and collaborative efforts toward peace and sustainable development.

However, the path forward is not without obstacles. One of the critical challenges in our relationship arises from diverging perceptions of American engagement in the Middle East. An increasing number of Arab leaders and citizens perceive that the US lacks both the political will and capability to effectively influence positive change in the region. This disillusionment necessitates a reassessment of our bilateral ties, urging both nations to transcend transactional interactions.

Instead, there should be a concerted effort toward forming a comprehensive partnership that incorporates security considerations alongside socioeconomic development.

This recalibration should also account for the shifting dynamics of global politics, highlighted by the emergence of new powers and shifting alliances.

Recognizing the need for robust, balanced relationships is vital, both to ensure national security and foster regional prosperity.

Saudi Arabia's positioning as a leader on the global stage is a crucial aspect of our evolving relationship with the US. By addressing complex regional issues strategically, we have cultivated an image as a key actor capable of mediating between conflicting factions. This capability enriches our relationship with the US and enhances our standing within the Arab world.

Engagement in the Russia-Ukraine dialogue and efforts to foster relationships across diverse international stakeholders demonstrate Saudi Arabia's commitment to stability and peace. By acting as a facilitator for dialogue, we can exert a more significant influence on efforts to shape the future of the region while prioritizing cooperation over conflict.

In conclusion, while Saudi-American relations must navigate challenges, they also offer numerous avenues for collaboration and progress. The Kingdom's active diplomacy reinforces our aspirations for peace and highlights the necessity of collective approaches amid an increasingly intricate geopolitical landscape.

As we confront the mounting pressures caused by rising tensions, a balanced and informed partnership with the US can help illuminate a pathway toward mutual prosperity and sustainable conflict resolution.

As Saudi citizens, it is incumbent upon us to advocate for an approach that safeguards our identity, values, and interests while engaging in international partnerships. The commitment to preserving our sovereignty while fostering global cooperation for mutual benefit should underpin our approach to redefining Saudi-American relations.

We must remain aware of the broader implications of our actions on both the regional and global scales. Prioritizing the safety and welfare of our citizens while reaffirming our commitment to our sovereignty will ultimately shape the narrative of our partnership with the US.

By embracing an adaptive, strategic mindset, we can pursue a future that honors our rich heritage while navigating the complexities of the modern geopolitical landscape with confidence and resolve.

This balanced perspective encapsulates not only the longstanding partnership and its benefits but also the need for systemic scrutiny and adaptive progress as we look to the future of Saudi-American relations.

A refined approach rooted in mutual respect and strategic cooperation can pave the way for a flourishing partnership that enriches both nations and supports greater stability throughout the region.

Egypt's three options in the Sudan civil war

Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy

Sudan's civil war reached a turning point in March when the Sudanese regular army regained control of the presidential palace in the heart of Khartoum after months of fierce battles with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti. It was not only a milestone in Sudan but also a pivotal moment for Egypt, the Sudanese army's closest historical ally and a major regional stakeholder in Sudanese affairs.

Since the conflict broke out in April 2023, the paramilitaries had maintained a significant military presence across the capital, having leveraged their previous role as a security partner in state institutions. They seized control of key sites including the palace, state media headquarters, and strategic areas such as Al-Muqran, Al-Riyadh, and Khartoum airport. They positioned snipers in high-rise buildings including Al-Fateh Tower and the Friendship Hall.

However, by September 2024 the Sudanese army had launched a coordinated ground offensive on three fronts — East Nile, Jabal Awliya, and Al-Baqir — and reclaimed important cities such as Jebel Moya, Sennar, and Wad Madani. This enabled the army to encircle Khartoum from the south and east while advancing slowly from Omdurman in the west.

In the climactic battle for the palace on March 21, the Rapid Support Forces suffered significant losses, an estimated 600 fighters and over 100 military vehicles destroyed. As their defenses collapsed, the group withdrew from their command centers in Al-Riyadh, the Sports City, and Africa University, effectively ending their presence in the capital.

Since the outbreak of war, Egypt has supported the Sudanese army, guided by strategic concerns about southern stability, Nile water security, and the threat posed by irregular armed groups near its southern border. However, Egypt's support remained unofficial and behind the scenes, until Hemedti began accusing Cairo of direct involvement.

Last October he publicly accused the Egyptian military of air attacks on paramilitary positions in Jebel Moya, and of supplying drones and US-made bombs to the army. He claimed his forces were "betrayed and killed by Egyptian airstrikes."

Later, the Rapid Support Forces escalated its rhetoric, threatening to expose "Egyptian prisoners of war," labelling them "mercenaries," and warning of retaliation. One of Hemedti's advisers even suggested targeting Egypt's High Dam, an ominous threat interpreted by many as a message crafted by hostile regional actors, particularly Ethiopia.

Despite official denials from Egypt's Foreign Ministry and armed forces, numerous diplomatic and Western media sources indicated that Egypt had indeed provided limited military support to the Sudanese army, especially during critical phases of the conflict, although not to the extent of full-scale intervention.

In March 2025, the Rapid Support Forces took the unprecedented step of imposing a ban on all Sudanese exports to Egypt from paramilitary-controlled areas. The banned goods included peanuts, gum Arabic, livestock, gold and minerals, oils, grains, tobacco, sorghum, and hibiscus: The RSF warned traders under its jurisdiction that even exporting eben "a single cup of gum Arabic" to Egypt would be considered treason and any vehicle heading north to the Egyptian border would be declared "an enemy," the paramilitaries warned traders.

This ban was not merely economic, it was a political message. The Rapid Support Forces now view Egypt as not just a supporter of the army but as a direct adversary. Although the main trade routes to Egypt remain under paramilitary control, the army's hold over the agricultural heartlands of Darfur and Kordofan gives it leverage over key exports traditionally destined for the Egyptian market.

ally destined for the Egyptian market.

However, this raises crucial economic questions: does Hemedti have alternative markets for these goods? Who will buy them amid territorial isolation and diplomatic constraints? Do the Rapid Support Forces have the logistical capacity to run a regional wartime economy?

Cairo now faces an extremely complex scenario. On the battlefield, the army is gaining ground, with Egyptian backing, but the war continues to drain all sides. The paramilitaries still maintain a strong presence in western Sudan, making a total military victory far from imminent.

Politically, Hemedti has formed a parallel "government of peace and unity" in partnership with the National Umma Party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, and various civil and tribal forces. Headquartered in Nairobi, the new government has a secular federal constitution that separates religion from the state. This creates a parallel claim to legitimacy that may appeal to some regional and international powers as an alternative to the

Rapid Support Forces militarily but allows for limited political representation of their allies, preventing total marginalization and international backlash.

Third, adopt a phased withdrawal. Egypt could scale back its involvement to intelligence and humanitarian assistance, opting to wait out the conflict. But this carries the risk of losing influence to other regional players and forfeiting its leadership role.

The Sudanese army's triumph in Khartoum was not achieved without Egyptian support. However, it has also triggered an open confrontation with the Rapid Support Forces, who now explicitly view Cairo as an enemy. With frontlines shifting, internal Sudanese divisions deepening, and regional interference mounting, Egypt finds itself at a crossroads.

It must now decide: will it manage the Sudanese conflict as a temporary border crisis, or as a long-term struggle over Sudan's identity, sovereignty, and its role in Egypt's national security doctrine? The answer may shape the future of both countries for years to come.

Prioritizing conservation over species 'de-extinction'

Hany Tatwany

Scientists have long dreamed of regenerating extinct animals — a dream that is now reality thanks to advances in molecular science and genetic techniques. However, the cost, value, and significance of such efforts have always been questionable.

The recent news about the "resurrection" of the dire wolf is captivating — but somewhat misleading. Scientists used ancient DNA from dire wolf fossils to modify a small segment of the gray wolf genome, recreating certain physical traits reminiscent of the extinct dire wolf.

But this does not mean the species has been revived. The dire wolf and gray wolf diverged more than 5 million years ago. A genetically modified gray wolf exhibiting some traits of the dire wolf has been developed — but it is not a resurrection.

Genetic engineering is a contentious issue because it is invasive and permanently alters an organism's genetic profile. The process of genetically engineering mammals is slow, tedious, and expensive. The insertion, modification and deletion of genes are often heritable, producing new strains or breeds that do not occur naturally.

This raises questions about their biological, psychological and social characteristics, as well as their adaptability and disease resistance.

While cloning can help save endangered species from extinction, it may also lead to genetic homogeneity, weakening their long-term survival in the

world.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature predicts that by the end of this century nearly all critically endangered species worldwide — and 67 percent of endangered species — could be lost forever.

In Saudi Arabia, the rise of motor vehicles and the widespread ownership of firearms after the Second World War led to an explosion in hunting. This led to a significant decline in wild species — some now facing imminent extinction.

Examples include the Arabian ostrich, the onager and the Saudi gazelle. Sadly, some carnivorous species, such as the Arabian cheetah and lion, have long gone extinct in the Kingdom.

In 1989, we launched a worldwide campaign to find the Saudi gazelle, dubbed "Operation Saudi Gazelle," to locate living specimens of this unique animal, found exclusively in the Kingdom. The gazelle was extinct in the wild and known only from museum skin samples.

After failing to locate living gazelles in the wild, we redirected our efforts to protecting endangered species that still exist in the Kingdom.

Several conservation organizations argue that resources would be better spent on saving endangered species by mitigating human impact on ecosystems.

After all, pouring scientific and financial capital into reviving extinct species like the dire wolf — not to mention the

woolly mammoth, thylacine or even the dodo — does nothing to help the millions of species alive today that urgently need our support.

Science can — and should — support conservation. But it must be grounded in ethics and responsibility. Misleading headlines do more harm than good.

What is lacking is not technology but support, funding and consistent care for the biodiversity that still survives.

We are losing species every day at an alarming rate, while simultaneously spending millions trying to bring back animals that no longer exist.

Instead, scientists should be fighting to protect the animals still clinging to existence. They are not extinct or mythical. They are just overlooked.

while people may disagree about history, they all ought to focus on the current opportunity and try to determine the country's future.

The election of a president and appointment of a prime minister free of Syrian or Iranian influence should be grasped, despite unfair accusations of undue French and American influence. The new government needs to be judged on how it tackles urgent and sensitive issues. Among those is the course of Lebanese-Syrian ties since the overthrow of the Assad regime, which exercised decades-long hegemony over Lebanon and is accused of assassinating numerous Lebanese officials who opposed Syrian rule.

A new draft banking law

Last chance for Lebanon, a country at war with itself

Mohamed Chebaro

For years I have been arguing that Lebanon has been at war since 1975, and maybe before then. The hyped idea that peace has prevailed since 1990 is a myth: the Taif agreement led to a long ceasefire and paved the way for a coexistence formula that at times has proved short of accommodating the many national, regional, and international divides.

Unlike what many Lebanese people tell you, the war is mainly Lebanon vs. Lebanon: a country that is not at peace with itself, with its national identity, with its minorities' many identities, religious and sectarian, even communitarian and ethnic. All that before even addressing

Lebanon's relationships with long-term Palestinian and more recent Syrian refugees within its borders, or its relationship with its immediate neighbors Syria and Israel, or with the wider Arab world, or with countries such as France and Britain that for centuries were involved in protecting some of its minorities.

More than a century since the establishment of greater Lebanon and nearly 80 years since its independence, Lebanon is again at a crossroads — with an opportunity to find its feet, and for the new government to usher in a new era of healing and push toward a balanced and stable future. Last weekend's commemoration of the start of the civil war 50 years ago should be the catalyst to realize that Lebanon is finally free of Assad regime diktats, and that its government is free of the pro-Iran Hezbollah militia, weakened and nearly eclipsed after the war with Israel.

The government marked last Sunday's anniversary with a small ceremony and a minute's silence. It was a rare official acknowledgment of the legacy of Lebanon's civil war. Citizens remembered the strife that killed more than 150,000 people and left 17,000 missing, with trench warfare in towns and cities, massacres, snipers, assassinations and car bombs.

There have been many efforts to define the root causes of the civil war and why Lebanese failed to

avert it, but consensus remain elusive. Some reduce the problem to a Christian-Muslim divide over the need to defend Palestine at the expense of Lebanese sovereignty. Others blame the Cairo Arab summit in 1969, permitting the Palestinians to arm and resist Israel from inside Lebanon.

Many even believe that the war began in 1973, when the Lebanese armed forces backed down from taking control of Palestinian refugees camps. Some argue that was the brief civil strife of 1958, when Lebanon was split along pro-Nasser and anti-Nasser lines, and people skirmished in street battles while the army tried to hold the peace.

After April 13, 1975, the war unfolded and alliances shifted, with new factions formed. Israel and Syria occupied parts of the country. The US intervened, and the US Embassy and Marine barracks were bombed. Beirut was divided between Christian and Muslim sectors. Later Syria dominated the country only to cede its control to Hezbollah. That was followed by waves of assassinations of politicians, journalists and activists.

Fast forward to today, and Lebanon is still grappling with that legacy, as every community has a different set of memories. But

seem a step in the right direction to unlock international aid to emerge from an economic crisis it has suffered since 2019. New banking laws could return lost trust, refloat the economy, and release all or part of depositors' savings that the previous government used to prop up ruling elites and their cronies.

Finally, one must not belittle the news that most Hezbollah military sites in south Lebanon have ceded to the army. The Nov. 27 ceasefire that ended more than a year of conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, including two months of full-blown war, required that only UN peacekeepers and Lebanon's army should be deployed south of the

Litani River, about 30 kilometers from the Israeli border.

All this looks like a promising departure from Lebanon's recent history, critical and timely steps in the right direction. Policy making in Lebanon has always been challenging as the limited resources of a small nation have often left out a player, as in musical chairs, when the music stops. In his speech marking the anniversary of the outbreak of the civil war, President Joseph Aoun renewed his appeal for Hezbollah to lay down its weapons. Heeding the president's call will be crucial if Lebanese people hope to abandon the state of perpetual war and embrace a peaceful future.

SCCI urges Saudia to grant Hajj visas, quota for 77,000 Pakistani applicants

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry appealed to the government of Saudi Arabia and relevant officials to issue visa/quota for more than 77,000 Pakistani applicants, intending for Haj to perform religious obligation pilgrimage this year.

In a joint statement issued here on Sunday, president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqeem Khan, senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, Vice president Shehyar Khan and members of executive committee stated that every year, the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Interfaith

Harmony made arrangement for Haj pilgrims.

According to them, the ministry has allocated a 50 percent quota for the government and 50 percent for the private Haj scheme and 89605 quota allotted to private organizers for Haj 2025.

SCCI office bearers informed current year, Saudi government has taken steps for digitization of the Haj system. Under the new procedure, directives were issued to submit payment for land of Mina and Tawafa till 14 Feb, 2025, they explained.

However, they clarified that due to delay in State Bank foreign policy, Haj policy, organizer 2,000

quota, registration and other allied issues, payment of Tawaaf for more than 77,000 Pakistani applicants, intending for Haj didn't submit as per set deadline.

SCCI office bearers furthermore said on request of Prime Minister of Pakistan, Saudi Government has allotted additional 10,000 quota for Pakistan, which is highly appreciable.

They, however, said despite allotment of additional quota, 67,000 Haj pilgrims still remain, which may miss from performing Haj this year.

The payment for Tawaaf, stay in Makkah and Madina in hotels of these Haj pilgrims had already been sent

to Saudi Arabia, they elaborated.

Despite the sending payment worth billions of rupees, they said more than 77,000 intending Pakistani pilgrims are still waiting for approval and in an extreme disarray, many of them gave all their earnings and applied for Haj.

SCCI office bearers urged the Saudi government to approve all quotas by relaxing conditions under the new system to perform religious obligation in a large number of the Pakistani, intending pilgrims this year.

They assured the private Haj organizers next year will ensure all arrangements as per the new system.

Gross metering shift may speed up grid defection

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan is experiencing a significant shift towards solar energy, driven by high electricity tariffs and policy changes. This trend is leading consumers to opt for off-grid solutions, which could have profound implications for the country's energy landscape.

Owais Ahmad, an energy expert at LUMS Energy Institute, highlighted that the country's growing base of over 280,000 solar-connected consumers reflects a broader shift toward self-generation as a response to skyrocketing grid electricity prices, which have rendered net metering a secondary benefit rather than the primary motivator.

He opined that the proposed transition to gross metering risks accelerating grid defection, as consumers may shift toward hybrid solar systems paired with battery storage to maximise energy independence.

"With battery costs plummeting from \$400/kWh to around \$100/kWh, households and businesses can increasingly store daytime solar generation for night-time use, bypassing the need to sell excess energy to the grid at unfavourable rates. This trend could undermine grid stability by reducing consumer reliance on centralised power systems," he said.

A more equitable solution, according to Ahmad, requires restructuring the tariff framework using a multi-part model. "Separating fixed charges (covering capacity payments and grid maintenance) from variable energy costs would align pricing with actual consumption." For instance, a fixed charge of Rs18/kWh could address the Rs2.8 trillion capacity payment burden, while variable rates (Rs9/kWh) would charge users only for grid electricity consumed. This approach balances grid sustainability with fair pricing, preventing punitive measures against low-income users," he explained.

"Rather than discouraging solar adoption through gross metering, which risks pushing consumers toward complete off-grid systems, a reformed tariff structure could integrate decentralised solar into the national grid while maintaining its financial viability. The path forward hinges on fostering collaboration between consumers and utilities, ensuring energy affordability without sacrificing long-term grid resilience," LUMS energy expert emphasised.

Dr Khalid Walid, an energy expert, cautioned that the decision to reduce incentives for net metering sends a negative signal to the market and is unlikely to achieve the government's goal of increasing electricity demand and grid utilisation.

"High electricity tariffs make rooftop solar economically advantageous even without buyback incentives. The government should consider how electricity pricing affects other sectors and develop a strategy to reduce rates by addressing cross-sectoral implications," he suggested.

He highlighted that redirecting resources to subsidise vulnerable groups, such as low-income consumers, could reduce overall subsidies while making electricity more affordable.

Recalling his own tenure as District Nazim, Haji Ghulam Ali pointed out that during the demolition of significant structures including fuel stations near Bala Hisar Fort, boundary walls of the

Sufian applauds GCCI president efforts for organizing Expo- 2025



ISLAMABAD (APP): Member Executive Committee, Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Malik Muahammad Sufian Ayub on Sunday applauded the "Made in Gujranwala Exhibition" 2025 and appreciated the efforts of President Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry's President, Rana Muhammad Sadique Khan and his team.

The Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) is the fourth largest Chamber of Commerce and Industry and industrial center of the country and organized the three days trade exhibition will promote the manufacturing sector of Gujranwala and increase the country's exports, Member Executive

Commerce, FPCCI, Malik Muahammad Sufian Ayub said this while talking to the media here.

At present, the entire team under the leadership of the President of the Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry is working as a unit and organizing such an international exhibition is a milestone in the national economy, he said.

He termed three days "Made in Gujranwala Exhibition 2025" as significant for Pakistan's global and regional trade integration.

At present, it is very important to be connected to the global supply chain in the world, such an exhibition will not only provide Pakistan with an opportunity to integrate with global and regional

trade but will also further expand Pakistan's market, he said.

Senior business leaders said the three-day event is a premier Business to Business (B2B) trade fair organized by the Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI).

He said that Gujranwala currently owned the 18,000 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMES), which are the backbone of the country's economy and such an exhibition by Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce will help SMES access the global market.

He said that Gujranwala has huge potential to connect with the global and regional to play its due role for increasing bilateral trade between both of the countries.

PIAF for raising direct taxes share, lowering indirect levies in budget

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Association Front (PIAF) has called for focusing on lowering tariffs on smuggling-prone items, increasing the share of direct taxes in revenue and lowering the slab of indirect taxes in the forthcoming budget to achieve key economic targets set for the new year. To fill the gap between demand and supply of energy, maximum funds should be allocated for the construction of water reservoirs and tapping of Thar Coal, he added.

The PIAF Chairman Fahimur Rehman Saigol, Senior Vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and Vice chairman Tahirm Manzoor Chaudhry in a joint statement observed that there is significant progress, both on fiscal and current accounts, showing surpluses and could lead towards a sustainable point.

Referring to the data, he said that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has

reported a revenue shortfall of Rs100 billion for March 2025, as provisional tax collection stood at Rs1,120 billion, falling short of the assigned target of Rs 1,220 billion.

After receiving tax collections from imports and local sources, the revenue gap had been reduced but still remained significant.

For the July-March (2024-25) period, the FBR collected Rs 8,464 billion, missing its target of Rs 9,167 billion, resulting in a cumulative shortfall of Rs 703 billion.

Amid revenue challenges, the government has downwardly revised the FBR's annual tax collection target from Rs 12,913 billion to Rs 12,334 billion for the 2024-25 fiscal year, reflecting adjustments to align with economic realities.

The PIAF Chairman said that the culture of amnesty schemes should be eliminated as it discourages the honest taxpayers, besides enacting penalties in the law to punish tax evaders.

Appropriate laws should be made to enable the government to seize local assets, in equivalent value, or levy appropriate taxes if any person holds any kind of assets outside the country for which source of income could not be established" he added. He said that export-oriented industries should be facilitated.

"It is a matter of concern that exports are showing a low growth besides the fact that the country has all resources which is not a good omen" he maintained.

The PIAF Chairman said the Protection of Economic Reforms Act", 1992 should be amended appropriately to curb the practice of remitting undeclared income through unofficial channels outside Pakistan and the same being brought into Pakistan through banking channels in foreign exchange. He demanded the government to improve tax structure for developing business and investment. He said that the existing tax structure discourages investment and encourages

rent-seeking. "A better tax system would help to improve the economic growth of the country, but unfortunately, the present tax system promotes rent-seeking while discouraging entrepreneurship as it imposes heavy taxes on business profits of traders" he added.

Faheem Saigol requested the government to focus on reducing tax rates and expanding the tax base by bringing all exempted sectors into the tax net and suggested that the tax system should be so designed that it should give an attraction to invest in business ventures.

He said that the circular debt amounted to Rs2.384 trillion by the end of December, according to a report by the Power Division. The report further showed that after injecting Rs20 billion from the budget to reduce the stock of debt, there was a net reduction of Rs9 billion in circular debt compared to the Rs2.393 trillion level recorded in June 2024.

Production of bio-based plastics to cut waste, save environment

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's shift to biodegradable plastics is essential to addressing its escalating waste issue and protecting the environment. It will lead to a self-sustaining green bio-plastic industry and economic uplift, said Muhammad Saleem, media spokesperson for the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC).

"Pakistan is grappling with severe pollution, especially with plastic waste in the urban areas, clogging drainage systems and polluting rivers. To mitigate these issues, biodegradable plastics are the ultimate solution that do not cause long-term pollution. These plastics break down within a few months under the right environmental conditions," he said.

Saleem said the growing global demand for eco-friendly products was a lucrative opportunity for Pakistani investors and

businesses. To produce bioplastics, the abundantly produced agricultural bioproducts such as corn, sugar cane, and wheat could be converted into biodegradable plastics, reducing dependency on the petroleum-based plastic.

"Pakistan is facing mounting challenges related to plastic waste, pollution, and environmental degradation. Widespread adoption can begin to alleviate the pollution burden and protect our natural resources. However, with emphasis on sustainable innovation, bio-based plastics, derived from renewable resources, can make a great difference."

He said the government needed to make policies to support bio-based plastic production. It may include research and development subsidies, the establishment of eco-friendly infrastructure, and tax incentives for green manufacturing. The

global trend toward sustainability and increasing demand for eco-friendly products create a favorable market for Pakistan.

By investing in the right technology and infrastructure, bio-based plastics will not only contribute to environmental preservation but also position the country as a global supplier of sustainable alternatives, added Muhammad Saleem.

Dr. Riffat Tahira, Principal Scientist at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), said, "These plastics can be produced by using the agricultural waste or by-products including bagasse, corn cobs, rice bran, wheat straw, and fruit and vegetable peels. These materials can be converted into biodegradable polymers through processes like fermentation or chemical modification, resulting in bioplastics that can decompose naturally."

She said microbial CO₂ fixation could produce polymers that could also be used to create biodegradable plastics - PHAs (poly-hydroxyalkanoates) - produced naturally by microorganisms, including bacteria, as a storage form of carbon and energy.

She said, "During the growth phase, bacteria synthesize PHA through fermentation, using various carbon sources. The PHAs possess properties similar to the conventional plastics, making them suitable for a wide range of domestic and industrial applications, including packaging, textile, and biomedical devices."

The PHAs degrade naturally in various environments, reducing plastic pollution and waste management issues. The increasing mass of plastic waste needs to be decreased through substitutes and PHAs are a strong contender due to their biodegradability and biocompatibility.

He 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.

He also emphasized on improving soil fertility and encouraging research to promote nutritious, high-yield crop production. Public-private training programs should be 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.

He also highlighted that while some institutions are

now producing agricultural machinery domestically, previous reliance on imports such as combine harvesters slowed progress.

He said that the government would prioritise feedback from stakeholders to shape a strategic framework aimed at improving agricultural output and resilience.

He particularly lambasted the bureaucracy's past failures, pointing to poorly managed service companies meant to support small farmers that ended up doing little more than collecting dust. He also underlined the importance of promoting agricultural cottage industries, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and improving crop storage infrastructure.

"There is a clear gap in off-season crop storage and small-scale value-addition plants, he said, adding that these could generate employment opportunities for rural

youth and boost exports.

He proposed targeted reforms, which include improved water management systems, promotion of nutrient-rich crops using modern scientific methods, expansion of public-private training programmes for farmers, digitisation of agriculture through enhanced internet access in rural areas and creation of a centralised database for farmers.

He also recommended focused research on soil fertility and modern extension services, while emphasising the need for mechanized farming and enhanced market infrastructure.

Improving access to agricultural finance and making institutional credit more accessible were also cited as priorities.

Businessmen Panel leader asked the government that its strategies should not only focus on short-term gains but also

encompass a long-term vision for sustained progress, focusing the national economic agenda, giving priority to address the issues of trade and industry in consultation with the business community which is the key stakeholder.

Mian Anjum Nisar observed emphasised that such transparency from the government is crucial for instilling confidence in the business community and investors, as Pakistan, with all its resources and opportunities, cannot afford to continue to muddle through economically due to political polarisation. The FPCCI former president observed that Pakistan requires a political consensus on economic policy. Freeing the country from its economic calamities should not be a matter of party affiliation, but a common task for all political actors who want to see Pakistan flourish.

BMP for promoting agri cottage industries, supporting SMEs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has asked the government to revitalize agricultural sector through innovation and sustainable development as the production had fallen so low that Pakistan had become an importer, while neighbouring countries had progressed in crop yields, which is shameful for us.

FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar 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.

He 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.

He called for a transparent regulatory framework with increased involvement of experts, farmers, and relevant stakeholders in policymaking processes to ensure long-term success.

Anjum said that 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.

Anjum Nisar called for tapping into the talent of young professionals and researchers, while leveraging the wisdom of experienced experts to guide the process.

Referring to 65% of Pakistan's rural population, he stressed the need to pro-

vide 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.

We must learn from past neglect and embrace a comprehensive, inclusive strategy to move forward," he stated, lamenting the lack of off-season storage facilities and value addition plants that could create jobs and reduce food wastage.

He called for the formation of working committees on five critical sectors to submit actionable recommendations, as this should be 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," he said.

He 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.

He also emphasized on improving soil fertility and encouraging research to promote nutritious, high-yield crop production. Public-private training programs should be 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.

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Court Notice

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III/judicial Magistrate II tehsil Matta swat swat. case#147/1? institution 09/04/2025. Next Hearing date 28/04/2025. Bahadar Ali VS Syed kamal. Notice to defendant.1) Syed kamal through Legal Heirs.1/2) Jamil.1/3) Mst. Shahzia.1/4) Mst. Muntazera sons daughter Syed kamal.3/4) Sher Muhammad son.3/5) Bacha Zameena.3/6) Mst .sakeena daughter Hussain khan r/o Bahadar Banda tehsil matta district Swat. Whereas the above named defendant cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 28/04/2025. at 8.00 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you. Issued today on 09/04/2025. under my signature and seal of the court.

Court Notice

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III/judicial Magistrate II tehsil Matta district Swat. Case #45/1. institution 19/04/2025. Next Hearing date 30/04/2025. Muhammad Amin etc.VS Muhammad Rahim. Notice to defendant. 2) Hussain.3) Bacha.4) Muhammad jali.5) sherin zada sons Muhammad karam.6) Msts.Azat Begum.7) khatma bibi daughter Muhammad karam.8) Mst. Mehroon baha widow.10) Mst? Zainab jehan.11) Bakht Afsar bibi.12) Sajid. 13/1) Mst. Nayab widow salman. 13/2) Mst. Mazam son.13/3) Mst. Aleema daughter.14) Faisal. 15) Awais sons.16) Mst. Spoomai.17) Mst. Mehreen daughter Muhammad Ajmal s/o Muhammad Faqir.16) Muhammad Ismail. 19) Muhammad Ishaq sons.20) Mst.Shah Begum.21) Mst.Taj Begum.22) Mst. Razia Begum daughters Muhammad Qamar.24) Masood sons. 25) Mst Shaguffa daughters Akbar Ali.26) Umar Ali.27) Akbar Ali 28) kashmaly sons Mira jan.29) Ayub khan.30) yousaf khan. 31) Nasir khan.32) Irfan khan sons Lal zada.33) sir Amad khan s/o Ahmad khan.34) sadeeq ullah s/o Abdur Rashid khan.35) Abdul karim. 36) Saleem ullah sons Abdur Rahim r/o Bedara.32) karim ullah s/o Umara khan. 38) farman Ali.39) khurshid Ali sons Qemash r/o Bedara tehsil matta district Swat.

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In brief

Trials held for season 4

ISLAMABAD (APP): The trials for season 4 of the Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) National Championship were successfully held at the Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad on Sunday. The trials were held under the joint supervision of Pakistan Mixed Martial Arts Federation (PMAF) and Islamabad MMA Association. More than 150 fighters, representing 30 clubs from Islamabad and its surrounding areas participated in the high-intensity event, showcasing their skills in various MMA disciplines. Deputy Director General of Pakistan Sports Board, Syed Naveed-ur-Rehman, and President of PMAF, Babar Raja attended the trials as chief guests and encouraged the young athletes for their dedication and performance. The selected athletes from these trials will represent Islamabad in the upcoming National MMA Championship, to be held at SA Gardens in Lahore. At the conclusion of the event, certificates were distributed among the successful participants in recognition of their performance and qualification.

McIlroy will return

LONDON (Agencies): Shane Lowry has confirmed newly crowned Masters champion Rory McIlroy will return to defend the pair's Zurich Classic of New Orleans title in Louisiana next week. McIlroy has returned home to Northern Ireland after skipping this week's RBC Heritage event on the PGA Tour following his career Grand Slam-clinching success at Augusta National. But Lowry says the five-time major winner will fly back to the United States in time for the team event, which begins on Thursday. "We'll be there," Lowry told Golfweek. "I talked to him [Wednesday] morning. We're good to go. "To be honest, I didn't want him to feel like he had to play because of me. "He's not letting me down if he wanted to take some time. He feels like he wants to get back out there." McIlroy and Lowry beat Chad Ramey and Martin Trainer in a play-off to win last year's Zurich Classic. McIlroy is also due to compete in the Trusti Championship in Philadelphia between 8-11 May. He will then return to major action at the US PGA Championship on 15 May at Quail Hollow in North Carolina, a course where he was won four PGA Tour events. The 35-year-old will attempt to win his third US PGA title after victories in 2012 and 2014.

Lewandowski injured

BARCELONA (APP): Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski was diagnosed with a hamstring injury on Sunday and is set to miss the Copa del Rey final and Champions League semi-final according to Spanish media reports. The 36-year-old Polish forward, Barcelona's top goalscorer with 40 goals across all competitions, came off during his team's 4-3 La Liga win over Celta Vigo on Saturday. "Tests carried out on Sunday have confirmed that first-team player Robert Lewandowski has a semitendinosus injury in his left thigh," said Barcelona in a statement, without specifying how long he would be sidelined for. Spanish media reported Lewandowski could be out for three weeks, meaning he would not be available next Saturday as Barcelona face Real Madrid in the Copa final in Seville.

Arsenal make Liverpool wait for title party

London (AFP): Arsenal made sure Liverpool cannot secure the Premier League title on Sunday by cruising to a 4-0 victory at 10-man Ipswich, while Chelsea beat Fulham 2-1 to climb into the Champions League places.

Manchester United suffered a hangover from their Europa League heroics against Lyon as Wolves won 1-0 at Old Trafford to secure survival. Liverpool needed both an Arsenal defeat and to beat Leicester later on Sunday to seal a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title.

Defeat realistically ends Ipswich's hope of maintaining their Premier League status as they are 15 points adrift of safety with five games remaining and have a significantly poorer goal difference than West Ham.

Fresh from a famous victory over Real Madrid in the Santiago Bernabeu to reach the Champions League semi-finals for the first time since 2009, Arsenal coasted towards securing a return to European football's elite competition again next season.

Mikel Arteta made only three changes from the 2-1 win in the Spanish capital on Wednesday and was

rewarded with a dominant display to kill the game off inside half an hour.

Leandro Trossard was one of those recalled by Arteta and prodded in his eighth goal of the season to open the scoring. A flowing move saw Bukayo Saka's cross flicked by Mikel Merino into the path of Gabriel Martinelli to finish to double the Gunners lead.

Moments later, Saka was chopped down by an awful challenge from Leif Davis that saw the Ipswich left-back shown a straight red card. Saka escaped serious injury to the relief of the Arsenal support and should have extended the visitors' lead with two big chances he wasted before the break.

However, the England international, who recently returned from a four-month absence due to a hamstring injury, was replaced early in the second half to avoid any further damage.

Trossard fired in his second after a well-worked corner before Ethan Nwaneri's deflected effort rounded off the scoring.

Neto of Chelsea's rescue Chelsea needed two late goals at Craven Cottage to revive their chances of Champions League football

next season. Alex Iwobi opened the scoring on 20 minutes after Ryan Sessegnon outmuscled Chelsea captain Reece James to set up the Nigerian international.

Chelsea were meandering towards a damaging defeat until 19-year-old substitute Tyrique George fired in a snap shot from the edge of the box on 83 minutes.

Pedro Neto then completed the comeback with a stunning strike in stoppage time to secure just Chelsea's sixth win in their last 17 league games.

The Blues move above Nottingham Forest, who travel to Tottenham on Monday, into the top five on goal difference.

A much-changed Manchester United succumbed to an eighth home league defeat of the season.

There was little in the way of goalmouth action at Old Trafford but the only goal was worthy of winning any game as Pablo Sarabia curled in a brilliant free-kick 13 minutes from time.

Wolves' fifth consecutive Premier League win lifts Vitor Pereira's side up to 15th and level on points with United, who stay 14th on goal difference.

Zimbabwe on top in first Test against Bangladesh



SYLHET (AFP): Zimbabwe finished the first day of the first Test in a commanding position at 67-0 after an inspired bowling performance dismissed Bangladesh for 191 runs on Sunday.

The visitors' opening pair of Brian Bennett, unbeaten on 40 off 37 balls, and Ben Curran (17) took the attack to Bangladesh's bowlers in the 14.1 overs they faced before bad light stopped play.

Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, who scored 40, earlier won the toss and opted to bat first on a pace-friendly wicket.

But his batters failed to capitalise on the decision and none of them, including top-scorer Mominul Haque (56) or Jakir Ali, who made 28, were able to turn good starts into decent Test scores.

The Zimbabwe attack bowled aggressive and disciplined lines, with pacer Blessing Muzarabani

and left-arm orthodox Wellington Masakadza both taking three wickets.

They were assisted by Victor Nyauchi and Wesley Madhevere, who shared the other four wickets.

Nyauchi set the tone for the visitors, sending back Bangladesh's openers early in the first session with only 32 runs on the board.

Shadman Islam was the first to fall for 12 in the ninth over, with Nyauchi also removing Mahmudul Hasan Joy (14) in his next over.

A third-wicket partnership of 66 runs between Haque and Shanto gave the home team's score some respectability.

Bangladesh's relatively inexperienced pace attack of Hasan Mahmud, Nahid Rana and Khalid Rana couldn't find their lines against Bennett, who hit six fours.

Trailing only by 124 runs, Zimbabwe have a rare opportunity to set a

formidable first innings total with the pitch expected to be better for the batters on the second day.

Bangladesh are ranked ninth and Zimbabwe are at the bottom of the 12-team ICC Test rankings after a disappointing year and both teams are hoping for a better start to the long season ahead.

The hosts have been formidable on the slow and spin-friendly home pitches but have several veterans missing.

The second and final Test of the series will be played in Chattogram from April 28.

Day 1 scores: Bangladesh: 191 all out (Mominul Haque 56, Najmul Hossain Shanto 40; Blessing Muzarabani 3-50, Wellington Masakadza 3-21)

Zimbabwe: 67-0 Brian Bennett 40, Ben Curran 17; Hasan Mahmud 0-16

Toss: Bangladesh won the toss and decided to bat first.



LEICESTER: Trent Alexander-Arnold of Liverpool celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the Premier League match between Leicester City FC and Liverpool FC at The King Power Stadium.

De Bruyne 'surprised' over Man City exit

LONDON (AFP): Kevin De Bruyne has revealed he was "a bit surprised" to be told his glittering Manchester City career will finish at the end of this season.

De Bruyne recently announced he will leave the Etihad Stadium once the current campaign is over, bringing the curtain down on a memorable era in Manchester for the Belgian midfielder. The 33-year-old arrived from German club Wolfsburg in 2015 and has been instrumental in City's incredible success during boss Pep Guardiola's reign.

De Bruyne has won six Premier League titles, two FA Cups, five League Cups and the 2023 Champions League -- which capped an incredible treble-winning season. Guardiola hinted it was his decision to end De Bruyne's stay after the playmaker's struggles with injuries and inconsistent form over the last two seasons.

City have dipped dramatically this term, surrendering their four-year spell as champions and were reduced to focussing on the battle to qualify for the Champions League.

But De Bruyne admitted he was shocked not to receive a new contract offer because he believes he can still shine at the highest level. "I have not had any offer the whole year, they just took a decision," he said after City's 2-0 win at Everton on Saturday.

"Obviously, I was a bit surprised but I just have to accept it. Honestly I still think I can perform at this level like I'm showing but I understand clubs have to make decisions.

"Maybe if the team didn't struggle and I came back like I did this year and bedded in like normal then maybe they take another decision." De Bruyne said he has not made any decisions about his future as he is concentrating on the race to secure a top-five spot to extend City's run in the Champions League into a 15th successive season.

He has already been linked with moves to Major League Soccer in the United States but he hasn't ruled out staying in the Premier League or joining a major European club.

Skjelmose beats Pogacar



V A L K E N B U R G (Agencies): Danish cyclist Mattias Skjelmose beat three-time Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar to win the Amstel Gold Race via a thrilling photo finish.

In a three-way sprint to the finish line, double Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel seemed to have secured the victory but 2023 champion Pogacar edged just ahead of him with metres to go, only for

Skjelmose to attack from their left and win by less than half a wheel's length.

Great Britain's Tom Pidcock, who was defending his title in the Netherlands, finished ninth.

It was the biggest win of 24-year-old Skjelmose's career but a second successive defeat for Slovenian Pogacar, who won the Tour of Flanders earlier this month before finishing second at the Paris-

Roubaix last week.

Pogacar made his move to the front with around 40km to go of the 256km race, but was unable to break free from Skjelmose and Evenepoel, as they caught up with him with 8km remaining to force the sprint finish.

The third-placed finish marked another promising return for Evenepoel as he returns from a serious injury following a crash last year. The Belgian won the Brabantse Pijl in his first race back on Friday.

The women's race saw a Dutch trio complete the podium as Mischa Bredewold took the title with her compatriots Ellen van Dijk and Puck Pieterse in second and third.

Bredewold finished the 157.3km course in just over four hours, with Van Dijk and Pieterse seven seconds behind.

Defending champion Wilson crashes out



LONDON (AFP): Defending champion Kyren Wilson crashed out in the first round of the World Snooker Championship, losing 10-9 to Chinese debutant Lei Peifan as the "Crucible Curse" struck again.

In a match of stark momentum swings, Wilson lost seven frames in a row in the course of becoming the 20th first-time Crucible champion to fail to defend his title.

No first-time winner has been able to retain the world crown since the tournament moved to Sheffield's Crucible Theatre in 1977. Lei, one of a record 10

Chinese players in this year's draw, looked down and out when trailing 6-2.

But he staged a stunning recovery, including a run of six consecutive half-century breaks, to move to the brink of victory on Saturday's opening night of the championship.

The 21-year-old then had to withstand a Wilson comeback before delivering a break of 66 under intense pressure in the decider to send the defending champion tumbling out.

"Obviously it's really hard to take," said 33-year-old Wilson. "I've got such a strong record at the Crucible and I was nowhere near my best but it

still took a 10-9 to beat me.

"It's been a really long season and I've done so much. I've never been stretched so much in all my life but I'm proud of the way I've handled it and I'm proud of the success I've had as well."

Wilson, who has won four ranking titles this season, had expressed confidence that he would be the man to put the 48-year-old curse to bed.

He was in total control against Lei when he led 6-2 but the Scottish Open champion roared back to lead 9-6.

Englishman Wilson, the world number two, stopped the rot with a defiant clearance of 106 and went on to set up the decider but fell at the final hurdle.

"It feels amazing," said Lei. "The Scottish Open was my first title and this was my Crucible debut -- both moments are very special to me. The emotions were just as intense."

The world number 39, who had to come through qualifying, will face Zhao Xintong or Jak Jones in the last 16.

Sabalenka to face Ostapenko in Stuttgart final



STUTTGART (AFP): World number one Aryna Sabalenka will face Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko in the final of the Stuttgart Open WTA event on Monday after beating Jasmine Paolini in straight sets on Sunday.

The top seed did not drop a set in the 7-5, 6-4 victory, but was forced to fight against the Italian as she reached the final at Stuttgart for the fourth time.

After winning the first set, Sabalenka found herself three games down in the second, but dragged herself back to 3-3.

She only dropped one more game in the set as she overcame Paolini, ranked sixth in the world and seeded fifth in Stuttgart, to reach the final.

Sabalenka will be hoping to finally break through in Stuttgart, where she lost three consecutive finals between 2021 and 2023. The Belarusian can take inspiration that Swiatek, who twice beat her in the final, has already been sent packing from the tournament.

The 26-year-old, a three-time Grand Slam winner, will take on

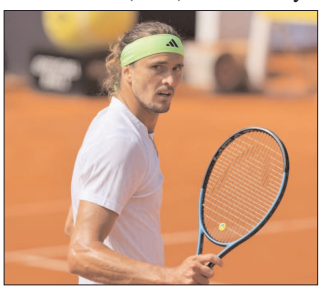
Ostapenko after the latter cruised through her semi-final against Ekaterina Alexandrova in straight sets earlier on Sunday. World number 24 Ostapenko won 6-4, 6-4 to make her first final since she won the French Open in 2017. "I always knew my game was there", Ostapenko said after making the 24th final of her career.

"I always believed in myself and that's the most important thing. I believe I can beat everyone", Ostapenko made the semi-finals after an impressive, three-set win over world number two Iga Swiatek, who boasted an 11-1 record on the Stuttgart clay before her elimination on Saturday. Now considered more of a doubles specialist, this is Ostapenko's second singles final of the season after the Qatar Open in February, where she lost to American Amanda Anisimova.

The defeat means Alexandrova's underdog run in Stuttgart came to an end. The Russian, ranked 22nd in the world, arrived in the semis after beating American world number

three Jessica Pegula and rising teenage star Mirra Andreeva, both in straight sets. Ostapenko's win means she now holds a 6-5 record in 11 career meetings with Alexandrova.

Birthday boy Zverev roars back to form with Munich win



MUNICH (AFP): Germany's world number three Alexander Zverev celebrated his 28th birthday in style on Sunday easing to the ATP Munich title with a 6-2, 6-4 win over American Ben Shelton.

The top-seeded Zverev, appearing in his first final since losing to Jannik Sinner in the Australian Open title decider in January, had little trouble dealing with Shelton, ranked 15 in the

world. For Zverev it was the third time he had won in Munich -- equalling compatriot Philipp Kohlschreiber's record -- and his 24th ATP title overall.

Unlike in his quarter-final win over the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor, where Zverev needed to come from a set down to win, the German was in control from the outset against the 22-year-old second-seeded American. Zverev forced Shelton into several mistakes, before converting his first match point after just 71 minutes.

"It's been a difficult few months," Zverev said, while thanking the home fans: "without you, I would already be out. "On Friday, I was already almost out, but now I'm standing here with the trophy." Sunday's match was the first time the top two seeds met in the Munich showpiece since 2010. Shelton congratulated Zverev on the win in his "home tournament", adding "congrats to your team, you guys are doing great work and are playing really well."

"I would have liked to have

said this is a birthday present, but I had no clue it was your birthday. "I feel blessed to play in front of you guys on Easter Sunday, it's really special for me." Zverev returned the praise, saying Shelton was "becoming one of the most dangerous players on every surface and it's great to see."

Shelton was bidding to become the first American to win a final on clay above ATP 500 level since Andre Agassi in 2002. Zverev's win on Sunday represents a welcome return to form for him. After losing to Sinner in Melbourne, Zverev failed to make it past the quarters at six successive tournaments, before coming to Munich.

The German, most comfortable on clay, repeatedly said he was not concerned about his form and was focused on the French Open, which begins in late May. Winners of the tournament pocket almost half a million euros (\$570 million), along with a luxury car from the sponsors and a pair of lederhosen, traditional Bavarian leather pants.



In brief

Drug supplier gets jail term

RAWALPINDI (APP): A local court sentenced a drug supplier to 9 years in prison and a fine of Rs. 80,000. The criminal Asadullah, was arrested by Ratta Amral Police in November 2023 after recovering 1,400 grams of hashish from him. CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani appreciated the SSP Investigation and legal teams for their efforts. "All measures are being taken to eliminate the menace of drugs," said CPO Hamdani.

Police nab suspect

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Sadiqabad Police on Sunday arrested a suspect for stealing cash and other valuables from the house of a citizen. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the citizen reported to the Sadiqabad Police that an amount of Rs. 1.87 million, along with a laptop and a tablet had been stolen from his house. The police registered a case and used technical means and human intelligence to trace and arrest the suspect identified as Mubashir. All the looted items were also recovered from him.

Gang nabbed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Diplomatic Police team has arrested the leader and other members of a gang involved in providing fake bank vouchers to citizens. A police spokesperson told APP on Sunday that the suspects were apprehended for deceiving unsuspecting individuals seeking visas by offering fake bank vouchers under the guise of payment for visa fees. The gang would create fraudulent bank vouchers and hand them over to their victims. A case has been registered against the suspects, and further investigations are underway. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Security Division, Muhammad Sarfraz Work, stated that Islamabad Police remains committed to ensuring the safety and security of citizens' lives and property. He further emphasized that the force is also dedicated to safeguarding embassies, key government buildings, and the Red Zone.

IRSA reduces water shortage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) has reduced water shortage to 27 percent from 43 percent for Kharif season while keeping in view the prevailing water situation. The IRSA spokesperson told here Sunday that provincial shares and water releases have also been enhanced. As per the enhanced formula, the share of Punjab stood at 64,800 cusecs, Sindh 45,000 cusecs, Balochistan 500 cusecs and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1900 cusecs. Meanwhile, IRSA released 99,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 147,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1427.05 feet which was 25.05 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 51,500 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1117.50 feet, which was 67.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 41,900 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 60,600, 35,200, 29,000 and 7,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 30,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 17,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Success of Overseas convention acknowledged

ISLAMABAD (APP): OPF Board of Governors member Muhammad Kamran Khan & Overseas Executive member Shaheen Khalid Butt Sunday commended the government's Overseas Convention, a resounding success with over 1,200 Pakistanis in attendance, for promoting the country's soft power globally.

In an exclusive interview with PTV news channel, Muhammad Kamran Khan, Member of the OPF Board of Governors, warmly praised the Overseas Convention, terming it a resounding success. He expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the government's efforts in organizing the event, which drew over 1,200 Pakistanis from around the globe.

This convention has not only showcased the country's soft power but also provided a platform for overseas Pakistanis to connect with their roots, Khan added. The enthusiasm and participation of overseas Pakistanis in the convention are a testament to their love for their homeland, Khan said, expressing optimism about the event's long-term benefits for Pakistan's global reputation.

Notably, Khan mentioned that this was the first time such a convention had been held on this scale, making its success all the more remarkable. Shaheen Khalid Butt, Overseas Executive Member also highlighted the convention's global reach, stating that participants came from Gulf

countries to Africa, representing more than 76 countries.

"This convention has not only showcased the country's soft power but also provided a platform for overseas Pakistanis to connect with their roots, Khan added, while Butt emphasized the event's significance in uniting Pakistanis worldwide."

Significantly, they noted that overseas Pakistanis rejected anarchic politics and instead united under the banner of love for Pakistan, demonstrating their commitment to the country's progress and stability. This unity, they emphasized, sends a strong message about the community's dedication to Pakistan's positive global image and development.

Anti-polio campaign kicks off

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Health Authority's anti-polio campaign on Monday to immunize 10, 57,000 children under 5-year age across the district.

The seven day campaign has been equipped with full technical and human resources to achieve 100% results, which is even greater than that of the previous year.

The health authority has chalked out a comprehensive plan comprising different tears based on dynamic maneuvering at homes, health centers, educational institutions, bus stops and transit points.

"The plan includes reaching 731,726 children through intensive house-to-house vaccination efforts, supported by 3,749 vaccination teams", said Dr. Asif Arbab Niazi, the Chief Executive Officer of the

District Health Authority, Rawalpindi.

He informed that under coordinated mechanism, the digitized data update, duty performance and developmental deliverance activities will be monitored at the monitoring center.

"We strongly urge citizens, community leaders and media partners to assist us reaching out maximum children during the campaign to achieve ultimate aim of protecting our generation from polio", Dr. Asif said.

The health authority chief emphasized the government's commitment to polio eradication. Dr. Asif assured that all necessary logistical preparations, including vaccine storage, transportation, and team training, had been completed to facilitate smooth campaign operations.

To address the issue of Rawalpindi- Islamabad bordering areas, the district administrations of the duo have also set a joint mechanism. "Both the districts established a joint communication system using Google Links and WhatsApp groups for real-time data sharing on migrant children, with particular focus on high-risk border areas", he informed.

Earlier in the previous week, DCs from both the districts jointly chaired a meeting in this regard to finalize the joint mechanism to achieve maximum target. Dr. Asif further informed that 3,26,000 children approx, would be administered the polio drops through mobile teams across various tehsils, at educational institutions and at fixed health centers.



ISLAMABAD: Christian women exchange greetings following Easter Mass and religious rituals at Fatima Church in F-8 in the Federal Capital.

Railways to improve hygiene standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): Despite the several financial constraints, Pakistan Railways is making significant strides in improving hygiene standards at major railway stations across the country in order to facilitate the passengers.

"In a bid to ensure passenger safety and comfort, the department has implemented a series of measures to maintain cleanliness and promote public health," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said that round-the-clock janitorial staffs have been deployed at major stations to maintain the cleanliness of platforms, waiting areas, passenger toilets and station premises.

The official said that daily fumigation of platforms and waiting rooms is being carried out to prevent the spread of diseases, ensuring a safer environment for travelers. To guarantee the quality and hygiene of food sold at vending stalls, the medical officers are conducting regular inspections at major railway stations, he added.

Additionally, the official said that under the supervision of Divisional Medical Officers (DMOs), sanitary workers are diligently performing cleaning duties across platforms, wash-

rooms, waiting rooms and other station facilities.

The official said the conservancy contractors also play a role, conducting routine cleaning in accordance with agreed terms. The banners have been displayed and pamphlets distributed encouraging passengers to help maintain cleanliness and prevent the spread of contagious diseases, he said.

Further ensuring public health, the official said the food vendors and handlers are examined twice a year for communicable diseases such as Hepatitis B and C.

In addition, he said the regular inspections of Dining Cars, restaurants and vending stalls are carried out by Railway Officers and Medical Staff and the violations of food safety or hygiene standards can lead to fines or even cancellation of contracts.

Pakistan Railways has also focused on passenger comfort, providing clean waiting rooms with modern seating arrangements and accessible toilet facilities at all major stations, he added.

"Despite the limited fiscal space, we are fully committed to providing quality services and a hygienic environment for our passengers," the official added.

PR overhauls 33 diesel

electric locomotives: Pakistan Railways has completed special repairs of around 33 diesel electric locomotives and rehabilitated 36 German coach shells with bogies over the past three years.

Talking to APP an official from the Ministry of Railways said that the work was carried out at the Pakistan Locomotive Factory in Raisalpur — the country's only locomotive manufacturing facility, commissioned in 1993.

The factory has an annual production capacity of 25 locomotives on a single-shift basis and spans 257 acres, including a 100-acre factory and a 157-acre residential colony.

In addition to locomotive repairs, the factory has rehabilitated 200 BG-64 bogies and conducted special repairs on 15 AGE-30 class diesel electric locomotives under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

The special repairs of 100 newer locomotives are currently in progress. The official also said that production of 230 ZBK wagons is underway, including 115 Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) ZBK units under the 800 HCW project and 20 Brake Vans (BV) already completed.



ISLAMABAD: Rwanda Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhugirehe, accompanied by his delegation, visits Faisal Mosque, Pakistan-based Rwandan High Commissioner Ms Fatou Harerimana and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are also presents. —INP Photo

Mushaal joins Easter prayer

RAWALPINDI (APP): Mushaal Hussein Mullick, Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation, on Sunday called upon churches, faith-based organizations, and civil society worldwide to break their silence and mobilize against the brutal apartheid being carried out by the fascist Hindutva regime in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and the Zionist regime in Palestine.

She emphasized that the international community's inaction was not neutrality but complicity in the face of systematic oppression, as true peace was not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice.

Mushaal, who is the wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Mohammad Yasin Malik, was speaking here at the Christ Church where she joined the Christian community in a solemn Easter prayer.

She highlighted the crucial role that the

Christian community had historically played in promoting peace, compassion, and justice across the world. She lauded the teachings of Jesus Christ - love, mercy, sacrifice, and the defence of the oppressed - as principles that transcend religion and serve as a guiding light for all of humanity.

"Easter reminds us of the power of sacrifice, of unwavering faith, and the promise of justice," she said. "But while the world commemorates this sacred day, we must not turn a blind eye to the untold suffering of the people of IIOJK and Palestine."

Mushaal condemned the continued occupation and brutal oppression of the Kashmiri people, who for decades have lived under a regime of apartheid, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, media blackouts, and systematic human rights violations.

She cited the example of her husband, a symbol of peaceful resistance, who, she said, continued

to languish in solitary confinement on fabricated and concocted charges under inhumane conditions for years, without fair trial or justice, while India flouted the international law with impunity.

She stated that both Palestinians and Kashmiris communities were being denied their fundamental right to self-determination.

Mushaal said, "Today, as Christians across the world remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the triumph of hope over despair, I urge them to extend their moral and spiritual solidarity with the people of Kashmir and Palestine because their struggle is not just political - it is a humanitarian crisis, a moral challenge to the conscience of the world."

She lamented the criminal silence of the international community, particularly the Western powers who preached democracy and human rights, yet turned a blind eye to the

atrocities committed by the Indian forces in the occupied valley.

"When children are blinded by pellet guns, when voices are silenced through torture, and when peaceful political leaders are caged like criminals, the world cannot afford to look the other way."

She urged religious leaders to pressure governments to sanction India and Israel for their human right violations and war crimes and people must boycott complicit corporations from weapons suppliers to tech firms.

Mushaal demanded that the global community should recognize the plight of Kashmiris and take concrete actions to address their suffering.

"On this Easter eve, I stand in solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed. Let us strive for a world where love, compassion, and justice prevail."

The silence must be broken, and the voices of the oppressed must be heard," she concluded.

Woman shot dead in Rawat over land issue

RAWALPINDI (APP): A woman was shot dead on Sunday purportedly over the sale of land in the area of Rawat.

The Rawalpindi Police spokesman citing initial investigation said the victim, Mussarat Bibi, had links with the accused in the context of land sale.

She was called by the accused to show the land to them, however, they killed her by firing on the Chak Bely Khan Road, he added.

Senior officers reached the spot on the information of the incident. The police cordoned off area for collecting evidence of the crime.

Superintendent of Police Saddar Muhammad Nabil Khokhar said the incident was being investigated from all angles, and the accused involved would be arrested and brought to justice.

City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani also sought a report from the SP Saddar about the incident and ordered for immediate arrest of the accused.

ITP facilitates over 42,000 applicants

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) facilitated over 42,000 applicants and collected more than Rs121 million in licensing revenue during the first quarter of 2025 through its Khidmat Markaz network, mobile vans, and document collection counters.

An ITP official told APP on Sunday that six fully-equipped centers operated at Shakarparian, F-6, Cascade Plaza, Swan Garden, G-14, and the Central Police Office (CPO), while mobile vans served remote and priority applicants.

He said from January to March, the Shakarparian center led performance with 12,532 learner permits and 1,127 renewals. He said that F-6 Centre followed with 4,166 learner permits and 543 license renewals. Other centers processed 163 learner permits and 95 renewals (Cascade), 350 and 185 (Swan), 127 and 74 (G-14), 103 and 67 (CPO), while mobile vans handled

681 learner permits and 329 renewals.

He said total service interactions—combining permits, renewals and rejections—stood at 13,896 at Shakarparian, 4,762 at F-6, 1,023 via mobile vans, 535 at Swan, 313 at Cascade, 223 at CPO and 207 at G-14.

He said ITP collected Rs62.78 million from Shakarparian, Rs49.51 million from F-6, Rs3.18 million through mobile vans, Rs2.09 million from Swan, Rs1.89 million from Cascade, Rs915,800 from CPO and Rs 693,200 from G-14.

The ITP official said 138,229 documents were received through circle-based collection counters: 45,750 at Industrial Area (I-9), 42,754 at Margalla (F-10), 41,328 at City Circle (Daman-e-Koh), and 8,397 at Rural Circle (Khana Bridge).

He said ITP also issued 288,459 challans for traffic violations during the quarter, with enforcement intensified in areas includ-

ing Faizabad, Aabpara, F-10 Markaz, I-8 Markaz and Blue Area under the supervision of Chief Traffic Officer Zeeshan Haider.

He said dedicated traffic arrangements were made during PSL matches, while 893 road safety workshops were held in schools, offices and commercial hubs.

He said the ITP is also running a women's licensing counter and offers home delivery services for citizens aged 70 and above.

The 2025 fee schedule includes Rs1,000 for learner permits, Rs6,000 for non-professional licenses, and Rs13,000 for professional licenses, he added.

Meanwhile Chief Traffic Officer Zeeshan Haider told APP ITP was committed to citizen-centric service delivery, adding: "Whether it's a young applicant, a senior citizen or a working woman, our aim is to provide efficient, dignified and transparent services."

Libraries present deserted look as book reading habit declines

ISLAMABAD (APP): A stark reality has emerged in the city: book reading has become a rarity, and libraries are struggling to attract visitors.

Major public libraries in the city, including the National Library of Pakistan in Sector G-5, Aiwan-e-Quaid Library at Fatima Jinnah Park (F-9), CDA Public Library and Reading Hall in Sector G-11, Smart Street Library in Sector F-6, and Islamabad Public Library in Sector H-9, are facing dwindling footfall.

Once revered as temples of knowledge, libraries now stand deserted—a testament to the decline of a culture that once cherished books. Once bustling with book lovers, libraries now

sit empty, reflecting the waning interest in reading.

Muhammad Taimoor Qureshi, an official from Read Pakistan, described the decline in book reading culture as a concerning threat. He attributed it to several factors, including limited access to quality education and libraries.

"To address this challenge, establishing more libraries and increasing book availability is crucial," he suggested.

Taimoor emphasized the need for a national reading policy and community engagement, which he believes could help spark a positive change.

He shared a special message for the youth, urging them to embrace reading as

a path to personal growth and empowerment.

"Align your daily routines with your schedules, and try to dedicate at least fifteen minutes a day to reading. Reading is like an ocean, filled with a motley of wonderful pearls that lead you to the horizon of knowledge. It not only enriches you intellectually but also paves the way toward success and the affluence of wisdom," Taimoor added.

Shafique, a library administrator, said, "It's heart-breaking to see libraries empty. Books were once our gateway to knowledge and imagination."

He attributed the declining interest in reading to the rise of digital media and

shifting lifestyles. "People are more inclined toward social media and online content," he added.

"It's a challenge to make reading appealing to the younger generation," he stated. "We need to make a conscious effort to promote reading—it's essential for intellectual growth and empathy."

A graduate student, Ali, echoed similar thoughts: "I prefer watching videos or scrolling through my phone rather than reading a book. It's just more convenient." "The decline in the reading culture is a concerning issue that warrants serious attention and immediate action by the relevant authorities," it was recommended.

175 more Afghans freed from Pakistan jails return home

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation (MoRR) says 175 more Afghan citizens returned to their homeland on Sunday after being released from prisons in Pakistan. Citing border officials in Kandahar's Spin Boldak town, the ministry wrote on X the 175 Afghans, who spent one to three days in jails, had been arrested in various parts of Pakistan.

Polio vaccination campaign to begin tomorrow

KABUL (Pajhwok): A polio vaccination drive will be launched today (Monday) across the country, targeting around 6.3 million children. On its X platform, Polio Free Afghanistan said it would launch the first sub-national polio vaccination campaign of the current year tomorrow. It said children under five would be administered polio vaccine across Afghanistan.

From service to struggle:

Afghan retirees await overdue pensions



KABUL (TOLOnews): Among the many retired civil servants, Ghulam Hazrat, an elderly man who spent over a decade working for the Kabul Municipality, now struggles to make ends meet. He says he survives by pushing a handcart through the streets. Ghulam Hazrat said: "I collect garbage. I pay 1,200 for room rent. This is how my days and nights pass. The only thing I had was my pension—now I have no other income."

Mohammad Saber, another retiree, added: "The leader of the Islamic Emirate himself issued a decree. It's been five

months since then, but the decree hasn't been implemented by any department in Kabul." Elsewhere, a number of retirees have gathered at the Pension Fund office, hoping for any sign that their long-awaited pensions might finally be paid. They are urging the Islamic Emirate to immediately release their payments. Mohammad Taher, a retiree, said: "We've been going from door to door for four years. It's been five months since the decree was issued, yet still nothing has been done. Our problems are overwhelming."

Abdul Majid, another

retiree, stated: "We poor, elderly, and suffering people with heart disease and diabetes must receive our pensions. Everyone is helpless and desperate. Our request of the Islamic Emirate is to give us our pensions." Although the Islamic Emirate has yet to announce a specific date for the pension payments, earlier this year, on Jadi 1, 1403 (December 22, 2024), the Emir issued a decree instructing the Supreme Court to convene a special court based on Sharia and law to find a solution for the pension disbursements.

New hospital opened

PAKTIA (TOLOnews): The Department of Public Health in Paktia has announced the establishment of a hospital in Gardez city, the provincial capital, in collaboration with a supporting organization, specifically aimed at ensuring the safety of mothers and children.

According to officials, the operation of this hospital is expected to reduce the mortality rate of mothers and infants during childbirth.

Mehraj Gul Adel, head of Paktia's Public Health Department, said: "We offer services in areas such as malnutrition, vaccination, physiotherapy, and maternal and child care. The facility provides 24-hour services and includes laboratory and ultrasound departments."

Some residents of Paktia have welcomed this initiative and called for similar healthcare centers in remote areas of the province to protect the health of mothers and children.

Ehsanullah, a resident of Paktia, said: "Maternal and child mortality is relatively high in Paktia due to the lack of hospitals. We are very pleased with the construction of this hospital."

Sahil, another resident, stated: "This is a significant step for maternal and child health, and we urge the authorities to take more such initiatives."

Ahmad Shah, also from Paktia, said: "We ask the authorities to establish similar healthcare centers in the districts, improve their services, and enhance their capacity."

Clinic closures worsen access to malnutrition care: People

KABUL (Amu TV): As international funding cuts force health clinics to shut down across Afghanistan, many citizens say access to treatment for malnutrition is becoming increasingly difficult. Residents report that following the closure of centers focused on child health-care, cases of malnutrition among children have surged. Some families say their children have developed severe malnutrition due to a lack of adequate food.

Abdul Samad, a resident of Ghor Province, said he has three children suffering from acute malnutrition. He described how, with the closure of nearby clinics and his limited income, he can neither secure medical treatment nor provide sufficient food for his family.

"I took my children to the doctors, and they said they were severely malnourished and needed treatment at a clinic," he said. "But the clinics refused to admit my children, and I have no money to pay for private treatment."

The situation is no better in the southern province of Urugzan, where children are reportedly suffering from extreme hunger-related conditions, including physical deformities caused by chronic malnutrition.

Two-year-old Spozhmai, for example, cannot walk due to inadequate and unhealthy nutrition. Her father, Kamaluddin, said he struggles daily to find food, often relying on stale bread discarded in local markets to feed his family.

"I have no money for proper food or medical care," Kamaluddin said. "I buy dry leftover bread, mix it with water, and feed it to my children." The World Food Program recently warned that Afghanistan is facing the worst malnutrition crisis in its history, describing the situation as an unprecedented emergency. WFP emphasized that children are bearing the brunt of the crisis and called for sustained international funding to continue life-saving support.

The deepening humanitarian crisis comes as the United States and other donors have dramatically reduced aid to Afghanistan, leading to the closure of numerous health centers that previously focused on child nutrition and treatment programs.

Islamic laws must apply to all, including officials

KABUL (Amu TV): Addressing a gathering in Kabul on Sunday, where filming was prohibited, Khalid Hanafi, the Taliban's vice and virtue minister, who explained their leader's recent decree, said that Islamic laws must be applied equally to all citizens, including Taliban officials.

"It is not the case that those who are senior or hold positions are exempt from this religion while it is enforced only upon the rest of the people," he said in an audio message released by the Taliban-run media, RTA.

Meanwhile, he said that scholars and Taliban officials are the leaders of society, and their actions and guidance determine the future course of the community.

He added that Islam seeks the downfall of those who engage in fraud and deceit in transactions, and that this group also includes those who neglect their responsibilities.

Hanafi emphasized that responsibilities must be fulfilled in a way that "presents the best image of the Islamic system to the world".

His comments a week after Taliban publicly executed four people in three provinces following their reclusive leader's renewed call on implementation of Taliban-interpreted "Sharia law".

Since the Taliban's return to power nearly four years ago, the harsh rules — including public floggings, stonings, and executions — have been implemented only on ordinary citizens, with Taliban officials largely shielded from the same punishments.

Visual evidence has emerged showing senior Taliban officials, including those from the Taliban's cabinet, meeting women in public, despite strict edicts forbidding women's public presence or even their voices being heard, according to the Taliban's own Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

The Taliban's enforcement of a ban on the publication of images of living beings has also been selectively applied. While the group's media outlets broadcast photographs of official meetings — includ-



ing a recent meeting between senior Taliban leaders and a visiting Pakistani delegation — independent media outlets are banned from publishing similar content.

Over the past four years, Taliban authorities have flogged at least 855 people, including 148 women, and issued more than 178 qisas (retribution) sentences, according to reports from human rights organizations. At least 10 public executions have taken place, all targeting ordinary citizens, not Taliban members.

Women's rights activists and ordinary citizens have criticized what they describe as a deeply hypocritical system. "Taliban officials themselves are accused of crimes like

assault and murder, yet none of them have faced the same punishments they impose on others," said Raziya Saeed, a women's rights activist based in Kabul.

In interviews, several Kabul residents said Taliban-imposed "Islamic punishments" have been selectively enforced, targeting the powerless while exempting those in power.

Taliban leader's decrees banning women's education, restricting their movement, and enforcing dress codes remain in force, along with bans on imagery in the media and compulsory public corporal punishment — measures citizens say are often justified under a distorted interpretation of Islamic law.

Nimroz province villagers find access to clean water

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): After Pajhwok Afghan News report about drought in 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 meaning-

ful, 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."

Baloch also called on other businessmen and philanthropists to consider the arrival of summer and the ongoing drought and to contribute by digging wells and delivering water to remote parts of the province. His initiative was warmly welcomed by inhabitants of the area.

Mohammad Sediq, a resident of the village, told Pajhwok: "I appreciate Baloch for cleaning the well again."

He added: "If Pajhwok hadn't published that report, no one would have known. We would walk two hours and standing in queues for hours just to get water. But now our prob-

lem is solved. We walk only ten minutes to reach the water source."

Meanwhile, Mah Gul, another resident of Molana village whose husband is paralysed and who is responsible for all household chores including fetching water, also expressed her happiness about the well being cleaned and deepened by seven metres, restoring access to clean water.

She said: "May God reward the person who dug the old well deeper and brought water back. I used to walk for two hours every day and my feet ached. Now, thank God, the water is near us."

Mohammad Naeem, another resident of the village, said the issue for him and 80 other families had been resolved, but stressed the need for another well to be dug for better access.

Aiding human trafficking: Minister slams tourism firms



KABUL (TOLOnews): The acting minister of labor and social affairs criticized the activities of certain tourism companies that facilitate visas for neighboring countries for Afghan youth. Abdul Manan Omari said that these companies exploit the needs of young people, subjecting them to numerous challenges and, in effect, aiding in human trafficking.

He also criticized the forcible deportation of Afghan refugees by neighboring countries and urged those young Afghans who live normal lives in the country not to fall for the tricks of such companies.

The acting minister, Abdul Manan Omari, said: "On one hand, they call themselves tourism companies, but on the other, they are human traffickers who simply hang a tourism sign over their shop. Go ask them how many people they have sent on tourist visas and how many of them have returned? Also, is Afghanistan's economy really so good that so many

young people have jobs and just want to go abroad for one or two months of tourism? No rational mind can accept that."

Omari emphasized that the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is working to create appropriate job opportunities for young people both inside and outside the country.

According to him, talks are currently underway with Qatar to facilitate the legal employment of Afghan youth in that country.

"We are currently in preliminary discussions with Qatar. They are offering a salary of \$350 excluding travel, accommodation, and healthcare expenses, but we insist that the amount must be increased," he added.

He also criticized some companies and factories for neglecting workers' rights by assigning excessive workloads with low wages and still not securing any labor rights for them. He called on company and factory managers to respect the rights of workers.

He also criticized some companies and factories for neglecting workers' rights by assigning excessive workloads with low wages and still not securing any labor rights for them. He called on company and factory managers to respect the rights of workers.

Survivor of US airstrike in Wardak demands justice and compensation

MAIDAN WARDAK (TOLOnews): The only surviving member of a family that was killed in a US airstrike in Jaghatu district of Maidan Wardak is seeking justice. Masihur Rahman said that on September 22, 2018, a US airstrike killed twelve members of his family, including women and children.

Speaking to TOLOnews, Masihur Rahman said: "My wife, four daughters, three sons, and four cousins (two daughters of one uncle and two daughters of another) were sitting with my children here when they were all victims of this tragic incident."

According to him, he has clear evidence and documentation of the injustice done to him and is demanding compensation from the US government.

Masihur Rahman said: "An impartial investigation should be conducted into why my house was targeted and bombed. We especially urge the US government, which has committed a grave injustice against us, to urgently compensate me and all other citizens who have suffered similarly."

Relatives of the victims described the scene of the airstrike based on what they witnessed. Rahimullah, a

relative of the deceased family, said: "The house was completely destroyed; nothing remained. His children and my cousins were all buried under the rubble. We retrieved them from under the debris."

"When we arrived, the situation was very bad. The walls were all destroyed. The bomb had been dropped in such a way that the entire garden was filled with debris. The whole village was covered in dust. It was a tragic day — we made an announcement, people gathered, we pulled the martyrs out from under the debris and then laid them to



rest," said Rahmatullah, another relative.

During the 20-year military presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan, families of civilian victims of

numerous tragic incidents are still awaiting justice. However, no decisive actions have been taken by the US or other countries in this regard.

Eleven killed and four injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Russia last week removed the name 'Taliban' from the list of banned groups, a move welcomed by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Also last week, a high-level delegation from Islamabad arrived in Kabul after a delegation from Kabul went to Islamabad at a time when Pakistan has started deporting Afghan refugees.

Casualties
Nearly a dozen people were killed and four others were injured in separate incidents of violence in Afghanistan last week.

Local officials in Kapisa province said a man shot and killed three people, including his wife, and injured himself, a man in Nangarhar killed his wife, and a father shot and killed his son in the same province.

Last week, three people were shot dead in

Kandahar, and three children lost their lives and three others were injured in a landmine explosion in Badakhshan.

In the previous week, seven people had been killed and ten others injured in separate incidents in Afghanistan.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security forces would get killed and maimed every week.

Russia removes Taliban name from banned groups

Last week, the Russian Supreme Court last week suspended the ban on the Taliban movement with immediate effect.

According to reports, the Russian Supreme Court suspended the ban in order to pave the way for normal relations between Moscow and Kabul. A judge of the

Russian Supreme Court made the decision behind closed doors.

Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi and Russian ambassador to Kabul called the development an important for strengthening relations between the two countries.

Similarly, Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid also called the removal of the Taliban name from banned groups an important step and expressed hope for expanded political and economic relations with Russia.

He added that Russian President Vladimir Putin had adopted the right policy towards Afghanistan.

This comes when Russia's special representative for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, has said that a major meeting between Russia and Afghanistan

will be held on the sidelines of the Kazan Forum.

Delegations from Kabul and Islamabad meet amid refugee crisis

Last week, Pakistan's special representative for Afghanistan, Mohammad Sadiq, arrived in Kabul and met with Afghanistan's Deputy Defense Minister Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir and Foreign Minister Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi and attended the seventh meeting of the Joint Coordination Committee between the two countries.

Muttaqi in a meeting with Mohammad Sadiq said that both countries should resolve their issues through dialogue.

Last week, Afghanistan's acting Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi visited Pakistan.

According to reports, he discussed with Pakistani officials strengthening

trade cooperation, resolving transit problems and assessing the situation of Afghan refugees.

Pakistan has started the second phase of deportation of Afghan refugees, with hundreds of families returning to the country every day through Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing.

Muttaqi in a meeting with Pakistan Chargé d'affaires in Kabul Obaidur Rahman Nizamani expressed regret over the deportation of Afghan refugees and their mistreatment and called for a change in this situation.

Similarly, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative in Afghanistan Arafat Jamal, urged Iran and Pakistan not to deport Afghan refugees.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) also expressed concern

over the conditions created by the influx of deportations of Afghan refugees, saying that the forced deportation was further worsening the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

This comes as Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar arrived in Kabul today leading a delegation.

US weapons falling into militants' hands

The Washington Post reported last week that some US weapons in Afghanistan had fallen into the hands of the militants and are being used in attacks and sold.

However, Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, rejected the report said American weapons were safe in Afghanistan.

However, he said these weapons had been available on the black market in the

past. "This does not mean that everyone who has American weapons must have received them from Afghanistan."

He said: "The supply and logistics convoys of the occupying forces and many times these containers had been broken and their weapons and equipment reached the black market."

Fitrat added that all military ammunition and weapons in Afghanistan were safely and securely stored and any kind of their smuggling had been prevented.

Qisas verdicts

Last week, four people were publicly executed in Ghazni, Farah, and Nimroz provinces after being convicted of murders by the Supreme Court.

The United Nations Human Rights Office called the executions a violation of human dignity, and the United Nations

Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said that the death penalty violated the fundamental right to life and must be abolished.

In response, the Supreme Court said the UN Human Rights Office's statement was unfair as those executed were murderers of innocent people.

"This is our religion, our legal system, and the demand of our people. Islam is the true religion and we are obliged to practice it. No foreign party has the right to interfere in our Sharia, religion, and judiciary."

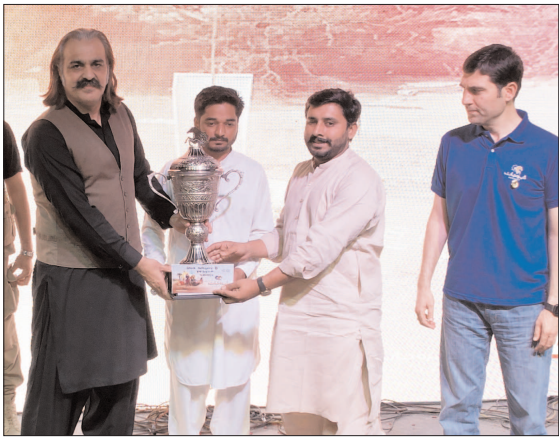
In response to UNAMA's statements, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs said: "The boldness to criticize the provisions of Islamic Sharia is an irresponsible, contrary to UNAMA's mission, and intolerable, and it should not be repeated."

Spectacular Dera Jat Festival concludes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The vibrant and spectacular cultural, traditional, and recreational event Dera Jat Festival 2025 concluded with great fanfare in Dera Ismail Khan. The closing ceremony was held on Sunday evening at the Ratta Kulachi Sports Stadium, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur as the chief guest. During the ceremony, the Chief Minister distributed prizes among participants who showcased exceptional performances in various competitions, including the off-road jeep challenge.

The festival featured an impressive lineup of events such as jeep racing, tent pegging, horse riding, boxing, kabaddi, wrestling, dodda, kodi, and other traditional sports. It also included a cattle show, horse parade, pet exhibition, art display, and numerous other cultural activities. Religious and literary segments were also part of the festivities, including Quran recitation and Naat com-



petitions. In his address at the closing ceremony, Chief Minister Gandapur praised the departments and administration responsible for the successful organization of the festival. He reaffirmed his commitment to continue and further improve the Dera Jat Festival, aiming to promote local culture and tourism.

He stated that the purpose of the event is to highlight the region's culture, traditions, sports, and tourism potential. The enthusiastic participation of artists, athletes, and the general public from

across the country was highly encouraging, he added.

Gandapur emphasized that the successful execution of the festival is proof that the region is peaceful and holds immense cultural, historical, and tourism significance. "Our forces and people have made tremendous sacrifices and bravely faced adversity," he said.

"The peaceful execution of multiple events over the 40-day festival, with massive public participation, sends a strong positive message to the entire world." He pledged to continue promoting

such positive activities, preserving local traditions, and passing them on peacefully to future generations. Gandapur also highlighted that all kinds of sports, literary, and cultural activities have become an integral part of the Dera Jat Festival, offering opportunities to people from all walks of life to enjoy the events and showcase their talents. Acknowledging the critical role of law enforcement, rescue teams, and other security personnel in ensuring the festival's success, he announced a reward of Rs.10,000 for each of them involved.

The Chief Minister concluded by reiterating that all decisions and actions under his administration are being made on merit, in line with Imran Khan's policies. Since taking office, he said, sports events are being held regularly without any reported complaints of bias or unfairness. He urged other departments to maintain the same standards of merit and transparency in their operations.



VATICAN CITY: Members of the clergy walk during the Easter Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Sunday. — Reuters photo

PIA launches direct flight from Lahore to Baku

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Defense and Aviation Khawaja Muhammad Asif has announced that Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will expand its operations to more international destinations in the near future.

He made these remarks while talking to the media at the Allama Iqbal International Airport on Sunday, where he attended a ceremony marking the launch of PIA's new direct flight from Lahore to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

The minister said that PIA is actively engaged with several countries to initiate new flight operations. He added that the number of flights to Baku will be increased, and over time, flights from other cities of Pakistan to Baku will also be started.

"PIA is working towards introducing more international routes to better serve the Pakistani diaspora and boost connectivity," he said.

Azerbaijani Ambassador to Pakistan Khizr Farhadi also graced the occasion, alongside Secretary of Defence Major General Amir Ashfaq Kayani, Deputy DG Pakistan Airports Authority Sameer Saeed, and CEO PIA Amir Hayat. Lahore Airport Manager Chaudhry Nazir Ahmed welcomed the guests and briefed them about ongoing development projects at the airport.

The ceremony included a cake-cutting event, and gifts were distributed among passengers. The first flight, PK-159, took off for Baku carrying 176 passengers.

Al Qaeda affiliate says it killed 70 soldiers in Benin

COTONOU (Reuters): Al Qaeda affiliate JNIM said it killed 70 soldiers in raids on two military posts in north Benin, the biggest death count claimed by jihadists in the country in over a decade of activity in West Africa, the SITE Intelligence Group said.

The West African state and its coastal neighbour Togo have suffered a series of attacks in recent years as groups linked to Islamic State and al Qaeda have expanded their presence beyond the Sahel region to the north. Reuters could not immediately confirm the report independently.

Benin's army spokesman Ebenezer Honfoga did not respond to calls and messages. SITE quoted a statement by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) on Thursday saying 70 soldiers were killed in attacks on two military posts in Benin's northeastern Kandi province in the Alibori department, more than 500 km (300 miles) from the capital Cotonou.

U.S. group SITE tracks online content from militant groups. The Sahel insurgency took root after a Tuareg rebellion in north Mali in 2012 and spread into neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger before reaching the north of coastal West African countries such as Benin more recently.

NDMA advises caution as severe weather hits

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority's (NDMA) National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) has urged people to follow safety guidelines to stay safe, as a localised weather system over Islamabad and Rawalpindi is expected to bring strong winds, isolated rainfall, and possible hailstorms within the next 8-10 hours.

The NDMA warns that an incoming westerly disturbance is likely to bring heavy rainfall, strong windstorms, thunderstorms, and isolated hailstorms to Pothohar region, Upper Punjab, and Central Punjab during the next 12 hours.

This weather system is expected to significantly impact major urban centers including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Faisalabad. Authorities anticipate several hazardous conditions including strong winds and heavy precipitation that may result in fallen trees and widespread power outages.

The storm system also carries potential for damaging hailstorms and dust storms that could affect infrastructure, damaging rooftops, vehicles, agricul-

tural crops, and power transmission lines. Additionally, significantly reduced visibility caused by dust and rainfall is expected to create dangerous driving conditions, substantially increasing the risk of road accidents.

Residents in affected areas are strongly advised to take necessary precautions by securing outdoor objects, staying updated through NDMA's mobile app Pak NDMA Disaster Alert, and avoiding unnecessary travel. Emergency services remain on high alert to respond to any weather-related incidents.

Emergency services remain on high alert to respond to any weather-related incidents.

Gaza rescuers say Israeli air strikes kill 25

GAZA (AFP): Gaza's civil defense agency reported that Israeli air strikes since dawn on Sunday have killed at least 25 people across the Gaza Strip, including women and children.

Israel resumed its aerial and ground assault on Gaza on March 18, reigniting fighting after a two-month ceasefire that had paused more than 15 months of war in the coastal territory.

"Since dawn today, the occupation's air strikes have killed 20 people and injured dozens more, including children and women across the Gaza Strip," Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the civil defense agency told AFP.

In a separate statement later, the agency reported that five people were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a group of civilians in eastern Rafah.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday vowed to continue the war and bring home the remaining hostages held in Gaza without yielding to Hamas's demands.

"We are at a critical stage of the campaign, and at this point, we need patience and determination to win," Netanyahu said in a statement, rejecting calls from the militants to end the war and withdraw troops from Gaza.

Since Israel resumed its offensive last month, at

least 1,827 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

The overall death toll in the Gaza war has reached 51,201, the majority of them civilians, according to the ministry, figures the UN considers reliable.

The war broke out after Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel in October 2023, which resulted in the deaths of 1,218 people on the Israeli side, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

During that attack, Palestinian militants abducted 251 people, 58 of whom are still held hostage in Gaza, including 34 the military says are dead.

Trump slams 'weak' judges as deportation row intensifies

WASHINGTON (AFP): The clash over President Donald Trump's bid to exercise unprecedented powers in deporting migrants deepened Sunday as he again bashed the judiciary, while a top Democrat warned the country was "closer and closer" to a constitutional crisis.

The latest events followed a dramatic intervention by the Supreme Court in the pre-dawn hours of Saturday to temporarily block Trump's use of an obscure law to deport Venezuelan migrants without due process.

Trump lashed out Sunday on his Truth Social platform, not specifically naming the high court but slamming the "WEAK and INEFFECTIVE Judges and Law Enforcement Officials who



are allowing this sinister attack on our Nation to continue, an attack so violent that it will never be forgotten!"

Samuel Alito, one of two conservative high-court justices to vote against the halt, called the emergency ruling by the court's majority "legally questionable."

"Literally in the middle of the night, the Court issued unprecedented and legally questionable relief... without hearing from the opposing party," Alito wrote in his

dissent. The court's order at least temporarily halted what rights groups warned were imminent deportations of Venezuelan migrants being held in Texas, who have been accused of being gang members.

More broadly, the decision temporarily prevents the government from continuing to expel migrants under the 1798 Alien Enemies Act — last used to round up Japanese-American citizens during World War II.

The Trump administration has been butting heads with federal judges, rights groups and Democrats who say he has trampled or ignored constitutionally enshrined rights in rushing to deport migrants, sometimes without the right to a hearing.

China's US envoy urges end to trade war

DUBAI (Reuters): China's ambassador to the United States, Xie Feng, has urged Washington to seek common ground with Beijing and pursue peaceful coexistence while warning that China stood ready to retaliate in the escalating trade war. Speaking at a public event in Washington on Saturday, details of which were posted on the Chinese embassy's web site, Xie said tariffs would devastate the global economy and drew a parallel between the Great Depression and tariffs imposed by the US in 1930.

Referring to concepts in traditional Chinese medicine like the need to balance the opposing forces of

yin and yang, Xie said harmony should guide relations between the world's two largest economies.

"A good traditional Chinese medicine recipe usually combines many different ingredients which reinforce one another and creates the best medical effect," he said.

"Likewise, the earth is big enough to accommodate both China and the US," he said. "We should pursue peaceful coexistence rather than collide head-on, and help each other succeed rather than get caught in a lose-lose scenario."

The trade war has all but frozen the mammoth trade between the world's two

largest economies with tariffs over 100 percent in each direction and a suite of trade, investment and cultural restrictions.

China's top shipbuilding association on Saturday attacked a US plan to apply port fees on China-linked ships.

While Japan, Taiwan and others are already in talks or preparing to negotiate with Washington over President Donald Trump's "Liberation Day" tariffs, there is currently no high-level dialogue planned with China.

Trump said on Friday the US is having good conversations privately with China amid the two countries' trade war.

Accountability Committee clears KP Speaker of illegal appointments

PESHAWAR (APP): The Internal Accountability Committee of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has given a clean chit to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati, dismissing allegations of illegal appointments in the provincial assembly.

According to a report issued by committee member and prominent legal expert Qazi Anwar Advocate, the accusations were initially made by former Senator Azam Swati. However, he failed to substantiate his claims or provide any concrete evidence to the committee.

Interestingly, the report clarifies that the Azam Swati in question is not the same individual who was previously jailed, emphasizing that this is a different person with the same name.

The report further notes that the appointments in question were either made

before Babar Swati's tenure or were carried out in accordance with the rules.

The committee report concluded that the allegations appear to be politically motivated, stating that Babar Swati is being targeted for his loyalty to party leadership.

Showcasing the best of Pakistan's tourism to the world

Pakistan Pavilion shines at MATTA Fair 2025

F.P. Report

KUALA LUMPUR: The Pakistan Pavilion at MATTA Fair 2025 has officially opened with great enthusiasm, captivating visitors with the vibrant culture, natural beauty, and rich heritage of

Pakistan. The pavilion offers a comprehensive glimpse into Pakistan's diverse tourism landscape—from the majestic mountains of the north to the tranquil beaches of the south.

Jointly organized by the Pakistan Tourism

Development Corporation (PTDC) and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), in collaboration with the Pakistan Mission in Malaysia, provincial tourism departments, and private sector partners, the initiative aims to promote

Pakistan as a premier travel destination on the global stage.

Throughout the event, the Pakistan Pavilion attracted a large number of international delegates, travel enthusiasts, and tourism professionals. Visitors had the opportunity to explore the country's unique adventure tourism, cultural richness, historical treasures, and warm hospitality.

The pavilion also served as a networking hub for travel operators, offering opportunities for B2B meetings and partnerships to strengthen inbound tourism and foster international collaboration.

The participation at MATTA Fair 2025 reflects Pakistan's commitment to positioning itself as a welcoming, adventurous, and culturally rich destination for global travelers.



Russia, Ukraine accuse each other of breaking one-day Easter ceasefire

MOSCOW / KYIV (Reuters): Russia and Ukraine blamed each other on Sunday for breaking a one-day Easter ceasefire announced by President Vladimir Putin, with both sides accusing the other of carrying out hundreds of attacks.

Putin, who ordered thousands of Russian troops into Ukraine in February 2022, ordered Russian forces to "stop all military activity" along the front line in the three-year-old war until midnight Moscow time (2100 GMT) on Sunday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia was pretending to observe the Easter ceasefire, but had in fact continued hundreds of artillery attacks on Saturday night, with more assaults on Sunday.

Zelenskyy wrote on the X social media platform that Russia had launched 26 assaults from midnight until midday local time (0900 GMT).

"Either Putin does not have full control over his army, or the situation proves that in Russia, they have no intention of making a genuine move toward ending the war, and are only interested in favourable PR coverage," Zelenskyy's post said. Earlier he said the

Russian army "is trying to create a general impression of a ceasefire", while continuing to inflict losses on Ukraine's front line.

Russia's Defence Ministry said Ukraine had broken the ceasefire more than 1,000 times, inflicting damage to infrastructure and causing some civilian deaths.

The ministry said Ukrainian forces had shot at Russian positions 444 times while it had counted more than 900 Ukrainian drone attacks, including attacks on Crimea and on the Russian border areas of Bryansk, Kursk and Belgorod regions.

"As a result, there are deaths and injuries among the civilian population, as well as damage to civilian facilities," the ministry said.

Ukraine's military said earlier on Sunday that activity on the front line had decreased. Some Russian military bloggers also said military activity along the frontline has substantially decreased.

Reuters was unable to immediately verify the battlefield reports from either side.

The apparent failure to observe even an Easter ceasefire shows just how hard it will be for U.S. President Donald Trump to achieve his aim of clinch-

ing a lasting deal to end what he calls the "blood-bath" of the war in Ukraine.

The U.S. will walk away from efforts to broker a peace deal unless there are clear signs of progress soon, Trump and his secretary of state, Marco Rubio, said on Friday.

Trump, who says he wants to be remembered as a peacemaker, has repeatedly warned of the escalation risk of the war - which his administration now casts as a proxy conflict between the U.S. and Russia, echoing Moscow's stance.

Last month, after Ukraine accepted Trump's proposal for a 30-day truce, Putin said crucial issues of verification had not been sorted out. Both Moscow and Kyiv have agreed to a moratorium on attacks on energy targets and at sea, which each accuses the other of breaking.

Zelenskyy reiterated that Kyiv was willing to extend the ceasefire for 30 days but said that if Russia kept fighting on Sunday, so would Ukraine.

Putin told his top general, Valery Gerasimov, to be ready to respond "in full" if Kyiv broke the truce.

Russia controls just under one-fifth of Ukraine, including Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014, and the regions of Luhansk,

Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.

Putin, when announcing the ceasefire before heading to an Orthodox Easter service, said the truce would show whether or not Ukraine was ready or able to implement peace. Putin thanked Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping and leaders from the BRICS group of emerging economies for attempts to mediate.

The European Union reacted cautiously to Putin's ceasefire declaration, saying Moscow could stop the war immediately if it wanted to.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric reiterated U.N. support "for meaningful efforts towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that fully upholds Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity".

Easter falls on the same day this year for Orthodox and Western churches, and Zelenskyy urged Ukrainians not to give up hope that peace will one day return.

"We know what we are defending. We know what we are fighting for," he said in a social media video, wearing a traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirt and standing in front of Kyiv's main church, Saint Sophia Cathedral.