

**University student killed**  
**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: A tragic incident occurred in a private hostel where a 22-year-old female student of the International Islamic University was shot dead. The incident took place in the jurisdiction of Ramna Police Station. According to the victim's brother, an unidentified man entered the hostel around 12:15 PM. When his sister came out of her room, the suspect forced her back inside.



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**STP leaders booked**  
**F.P. Report**  
THATTA: Police registered a case against Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party (STP) district President Syed Jalal Shah, Hyder Shoro, Hakeem Brohi, and Javed after they allegedly attacked the vehicle of Federal Minister Khehaldas Kohistani in Thatta. The police included sections on defamation, unlawful assembly, criminal intimidation, and obstruction of public duty in the FIR registered at Thatta police station.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on matters related to overseas Pakistanis.

## Vance in India for tough talks on trade

NEW DELHI (AFP): US Vice President JD Vance met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi after a red carpet welcome in New Delhi on Monday, as India bids for an early trade deal to stave off punishing tariffs.

Modi's office said that there had been "significant progress in the negotiations" with the two countries negotiating the first tranche of a trade deal. New Delhi hopes to secure relief within the 90-day pause on tariffs announced by US President Donald Trump this month.

Vance's four-day visit comes two months after Modi held talks at the White House with Trump, who unveiled 26 per cent tariffs on India. An honour guard and troupes of folk dancers greeted Vance after he stepped out into the sweltering sunshine of New Delhi on Monday morning, the start of a four-day tour that will include trips to the historic fort city of Jaipur and the Taj Mahal.

"Ad-Vance-ing" US-India ties, broadcaster NDTV headlined its stories. Modi welcomed Vance to his residence on Monday evening with a bear hug, photographs released by the Indian government showed, and later hosted Vance and his family for dinner. The men discussed boosting "cooperation in energy, defence, strategic technologies and other areas", Modi's office said, without giving further details.

Vance's visit comes during an escalating trade war between the United States and China. India's neighbour and rival faces US levies of up to 145pc on many products. Beijing has responded with

duties of 125pc on US goods. New Delhi has reacted cautiously so far. India's Department of Commerce said after the tariffs were announced, it was "carefully examining the implications", adding it was "also studying the opportunities that may arise".

The two leaders were also expected to discuss China, seen as a challenger in different domains by both governments. The two democracies are also a part of the "Quad" group with Australia and Japan. The US vice president is accompanied by his wife Usha, the daughter of Indian immigrants. Together with their three children, dressed in traditional flowing Indian attire, they visited the Hindu Akshardham Temple in New Delhi.

Modi said during his visit to Washington that the world's largest and fifth-largest economies would work on a "mutually beneficial trade agreement". The United States is a crucial market for India's information technology and services sectors, but Washington in turn has made billions of dollars in new military hardware sales to New Delhi in recent years.

Modi said he "looks forward" to a visit by Trump to India later this year, New Delhi said in a statement, with a potential Quad summit slated. Vance, 40, a devout Catholic convert, arrived in New Delhi a day after meeting Pope Francis in the Vatican. The vice president said his "heart goes out to the millions of Christians all over the world who loved him", after the Vatican announced the death of the pope on Monday.

## Mahrang's detention extended

**F.P. Report**

QUETTA: Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) chief organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch's detention under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance (MPO) was extended for one more month, her lawyer said on Monday.

Lawyer Imran Baloch told media on Monday that he found out about the extension through the administration at Quetta jail and not through an official notification or order. "Mahrang was supposed to be detained for only one month, which would end on Monday," he said. "No notification [about extending detention] was issued by the Home Department, but we were informed through the jail administration, while Dr Mahrang Baloch has also been informed."

Imran added that a decision regarding Mahrang's detention was to be taken by the home department committee, but it extended her detention "to provide her family an opportunity to seek legal remedies".

"We have not received any formal letter or notification about this, so we will submit an application to the department for a formal notice," Imran added. "If we are not provided with the notification, we will approach the court."

## 10 militants killed in Mianwali

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: The Punjab Police and the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), in their joint operation in Makarwal in Mianwali, have killed over 10 militants.

Spokesman for the Punjab Police on Monday said that there were reports of several militants getting injured in the operation, which, he said, was still underway. Security forces continued to confront the remaining militants hiding in the area, he added.

He informed that a local man got injured when the militants shot at his leg. "He was shifted to a hospital," he added. The spokesman informed that all police and the CTD officers as well as personnel, including DPO Mianwali Akhtar Farooq, were safe. He further said that Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr. Usman Anwar had lauded the Mianwali Police for a successful operation that resulted in the deaths of over 10 militants. "He has said that the provincial police are alert and will not relent until the elimination of the last terrorist."

to its own resources," he stated, adding that Sindh's people must be heard when they raise legitimate concerns. He noted that this dismissive attitude from the federal government in the past led to disputes such as the Kalabagh Dam and has now affected other inter-provincial matters.

Hafiz Naem ur Rehman and otherJI leaders echoed similar concerns and agreed on building a coordinated political response. Both parties confirmed participation in a massive rally planned at Minar-e-Pakistan on April 27, urging the people of Punjab to join in support of Palestine. Maulana Fazlur Rehman also mentioned his long-standing relationship of respect with Jamaat-e-Islami and said he had long planned to visit Mansoorah. He added that his recent visit was also an opportunity to express condolences over the passing of veteran JI leader Professor Khurshid Ahmed. Meanwhile, separate reports revealed that the JUI-F Central General Council, chaired by Fazlur Rehman, has opposed forming any alliance with PTI.

The party leadership suggested launching an independent anti-government movement and establishing contacts with other political forces.

among the Muslim Ummah. "There must be a clear and unified stance of the Muslim world on Palestine," he remarked. He also criticized the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for its weak response on the burning issue of Gazans genocide.

Fazlur Rehman also strongly rejected people traveling to Israel via secret routes, calling them seekers of cheap fame. "They are not Pakistan's representatives," he declared. He also commented on the concept of Jihad, calling it a sacred obligation. "Jihad is not like offering prayer—it is subject to strategic wisdom and planning."

Anyone contributing to the cause of Palestine, in whatever capacity, is fulfilling a form of jihad," he said. Referring to those mocking the term jihad, Fazlur Rehman dismissed them as "non-serious and clownish," stating that such ridicule has no impact on sincere believers. Turning to domestic issues, Fazlur Rehman reiterated JUI-F's stance on the controversial Mines and Minerals Bill and raised objections on the issue of water canals.

He also criticized the central government's handling of provincial rights. "Our manifesto is clear—every province has the right

## Fazl announces new platform for Gaza cause

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced the formation of a new platform named "Majlis Itehad-e-Ummat", which would include all religious parties to promote Islamic unity and defend the sanctity of sacred causes like Palestine. Earlier, he met with Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Ameer Hafiz Naem ur Rehman at the JI headquarters in Mansoorah, Lahore. This was first formal meeting between the two major religious parties in six years.

Accompanied by key JUI-F leaders including Rashid Mehmood Soomro, Maulana Amjad Khan, and Aslam Ghauri, Maulana Fazlur Rehman held extensive talks with Hafiz Naem ur Rehman and JI leaders including Liaqat Baloch, Ameer-ul-Azeem, Dr. Farid Paracha, Maulana Javed Kasuri, and Ziauddin Ansari. The meeting focused on the country's prevailing political landscape, with both sides expressing concern over the deteriorating national condition and the urgent need for unity on the issue of Palestine.

Addressing a joint press conference following the meeting, Fazl said that the current situation in Gaza has created deep concern

to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy. From his first greeting as pope — a remarkably normal "Buonasera" ("Good evening") — to his embrace of refugees and the down-trodden, Francis signaled a very different tone for the papacy, stressing humility over hubris for a Catholic Church beset by scandal and accusations of indifference.

After that rainy night on March 13, 2013, the Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio brought a breath of fresh air into a 2,000-year-old institution that had seen its influence wane during the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, whose surprise resignation led to Francis' election. But Francis soon invited troubles of his own, and conservatives grew increasingly upset with his progressive bent, outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics and crackdown on traditionalists. His greatest test came in 2018 when he botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in Chile, and the scandal that festered under his predecessors erupted anew on his watch.

And then Francis, the crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope of the peripheries, navigated the unprecedented reality of leading a universal religion through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City. He implored the world to use COVID-19 as an opportunity to rethink the economic and political

framework that he said had turned rich against poor.

"We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented," Francis told an empty St. Peter's Square in March 2020. But he also stressed the pandemic showed the need for "all of us to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other."

# The Frontier Post

## Govt striving to resolve issues of overseas Pakistanis

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Monday said the government was striving to resolve the issues of overseas Pakistanis on a priority basis and working to provide them more facilities. He was chairing a special meeting on matters related to overseas Pakistanis.

He said the overseas Pakistanis would be given opportunities of investment in Pakistan according to their expertise. Overseas Pakistanis played the role of ambassadors of Pakistan in the outside world, he said, adding overseas Pakistanis rendered great services for Pakistan.

The prime minister said a large number of overseas Pakistanis attended the recently held overseas convention, which showed their trust in the policies of the government. "We salute the true sentiments of overseas Pakistanis and their love and sacrifices for their country," he said adding the overseas Pakistanis had made a name for themselves and their country by

working diligently all across the world.

The prime minister said expatriates worked day and night as professionals in the fields of medicine, education, engineering, and consultancy, and earned legitimately. The government of Pakistan recently in recognition of the services of overseas Pakistanis gave a big package of incentives, he continued.

He said those overseas Pakistanis who performed prominently in different fields and those who sent the highest remittances through the State Bank would be given civil awards in view of their services. The meeting was briefed on the progress regarding the facilities announced by the government and the strategy to implement them. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir, federal ministers, and relevant officials attended the meeting.

**PM to visit Turkiye today:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will be visiting Ankara, Turkiye. During the visit, the Prime Minister

will hold extensive discussions with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on bilateral relations as well as exchange of views on recent developments in the region and beyond.

As longstanding allies and strategic partners, Pakistan and Turkiye maintain a tradition of regular high-level exchanges, reflecting the exceptional bonds of brotherhood between the two nations. The two countries also have an institutionalized leadership-level mechanism in the form of High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) for cooperation and coordination on various issues of mutual interest. The 7th session of HLSCC was held in Islamabad on 12-13 February, 2025. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had co-chaired the 7th session.

The upcoming meeting represents a continuation of this robust dialogue and underscores the shared commitment to further elevate the multifaceted partnership between Pakistan and Turkiye.

## Cop martyred, terrorist killed in polio team attack

**F.P. Report**

MIR ALI: A policeman embraced Martyrdom while one of the terrorists was eliminated in crossfire during an attack on polio eradication team in Azam Warsak area of South Waziristan on Monday.

According to police, militants opened fire using heavy weapons on the anti-polio team and its security personnel. In the ensuing gun battle, which lasted for around 30 minutes, a police constable was martyred.

However, in a befitting response, police killed one of the militants. The dead militant has been identified as Afran. Authorities recovered two national ID cards, three ATM cards, and a mobile phone from his possession. Additionally, a sub-machine gun (SMG), a rocket launcher, and two motorcycles were seized from the fleeing terrorists. The Central Police Office confirmed the incident, stating that a search operation is underway to apprehend the fleeing militants.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the terrorist attack on police officials tasked with protecting an anti-polio campaign

## Security forces eliminate six Khawarij in operations

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: At least six terrorists, including a key commander, were eliminated in two separate operations by security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said ISPR. According to the military's media wing, the operations were conducted on April 20 and 21 in Razmak, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan after receiving intelligence about the presence of terrorists.

Five terrorists were killed in Razmak, while in South Waziristan, the Khawarij commander Zabiullah alias Zakran was neutralized. He was involved in several attacks against security forces and innocent civilians. A large cache of weapons and ammunition was recovered from the terrorists. "Sanitization operations are ongoing to eliminate any remaining threats, reaffirming the forces' commitment to eradicating terrorism from the country," said the ISPR statement.

team in South Waziristan. The attack resulted in the martyrdom of a police constable, prompting the Prime Minister to express deep sorrow over the loss.

In his statement here today, PM Sharif offered prayers for the martyr constable and extended his condolences to the bereaved family, wishing them strength and resilience. He also ordered immediate medical attention for those injured in the attack. Sharif stressed that those who target anti-polio

workers and their security detail are adversaries of both humanity and the nation. He pledged to ensure that the perpetrators face justice and urged the public to resist yielding to such intimidation.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to the continuation of the anti-polio campaign and highlighted the ongoing efforts by the Government of Pakistan and law enforcement agencies to eliminate terrorism from the country.

## Pakistan, UAE sign MOUs to boost trade

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday signed three MOUs to boost trade and strengthen cultural ties between the two countries.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and the UAE's foreign minister expressed satisfaction that the relationship between the two countries has been growing on a good pace.

He especially mentioned that things have been moving faster over the last one year or so. He said leaders and peoples of both the countries want to further develop this relationship. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan said Pakistan is close to our hearts. In his remarks, Deputy Prime

Minister Ishaq Dar said both the countries have old fraternal relations. He said we are working together for the benefit and welfare of our two nations.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Monday held cordial and in-depth discussions. "Besides the focus on further cementing excellent bilateral relations, regional and global issues of mutual interest and concern discussed in a candid ambience," Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

Meanwhile, the PPP leader and Mayor Karachi, Murtaza Wahab demanded that the federal government must immediately withdraw from controversial canals project on River Indus.

Talking to media in Karachi, Murtaza Wahab said that Prime Minister should immediately withdraw the controversial plan to construct six new canals on the River Indus.

Murtaza Wahab was of the view that Punjab provincial ministers mis-handled the canals issue and statements by some ministers worsened the situation. He said that PPP's stance of the issue of canals is very clear.

## PPP to hold talks to end canal project: Saeed Ghani

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Provincial minister Saeed Ghani on Monday said, "We didn't compromise over any issue. PML-N people remove this misconception from their minds". Sindh's Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani was talking to media here. "We will not be convinced over the canal issue".

"We didn't compromise over any matter, the PML-N if thinking that the PPP will be convinced in talks, it won't happen," Sindh's minister said. "The PPP will hold talks for the end of the canal project". "Some people in the PML-N have no positive thinking, we don't know to whom they are serving," Ghani said.

He said they are thinking that the People's Party talking over the issue due to its political compulsion. "We are not talking on the issue because of any political necessity, it is our mandate entrusted by the people," Saeed Ghani said. He said, Sindh is not being given its share of the river's water. He also said that Sindh's gas being supplied to other provinces. "Remove any misconception, if someone has in mind, we have also protested over the Sindh's gas issue." "The people of Sindh have priority right over the gas being produced in the province," he added.

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## Pope Francis passes away at 88

VATICAN CITY (AP): Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change, has died Monday. He was 88.

"At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church," Cardinal Kevin Ferrell, the Vatican camerlengo, said in an announcement. Bells tolled in church towers across Rome after the announcement.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted

to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy. From his first greeting as pope — a remarkably normal "Buonasera" ("Good evening") — to his embrace of refugees and the down-trodden, Francis signaled a very different tone for the papacy, stressing humility over hubris for a Catholic Church beset by scandal and accusations of indifference.

After that rainy night on March 13, 2013, the Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio brought a breath of fresh air into a 2,000-year-old institution that had seen its influence wane during the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI,

whose surprise resignation led to Francis' election. But Francis soon invited troubles of his own, and conservatives grew increasingly upset with his progressive bent, outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics and crackdown on traditionalists. His greatest test came in 2018 when he botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in Chile, and the scandal that festered under his predecessors erupted anew on his watch.

And then Francis, the crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope of the peripheries, navigated the unprecedented reality of leading a universal religion through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City. He implored the world to use COVID-19 as an opportunity to rethink the economic and political



## Pakistan expresses grief over death

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday expressed deep sorrow and grief over the passing of Pope Francis, the head of the Roman Catholic Church. In their messages, both leaders paid tribute to the Pope's profound impact on the world and his unwavering commitment to peace, interfaith harmony, and human dignity. President Zardari expressed his deep sorrow over the Pope's death and paid tribute to his efforts in promoting interfaith dialogue, compassion, and peaceful coexistence.

Francis was elected on a mandate to reform the Vatican bureaucracy and finances but went further in shaking up the church without changing its core doctrine. "Who am I to judge?" he replied when asked about a purportedly gay priest.

The comment sent a message of welcome to the LGBTQ+ community and

those who felt shunned by a church that had stressed sexual propriety over unconditional love. "Being homosexual is not a crime," he told The Associated Press in 2023, urging an end to civil laws that criminalize it. Stressing mercy, Francis changed the church's position on the death penalty, calling it inadmissible in all circumstances.





LAHORE: Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal in a group photograph during his visit to the mausoleum of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Pakistan's national poet, on the occasion of his 87th death anniversary.

## CM launches week-long polio eradication campaign

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday inaugurated the week-long, April 21 to 27, province-wide Polio Eradication Campaign in a ceremony, by administering polio drops to children at the CM House reaffirming the government's unwavering commitment to eliminating the crippling disease from the province.

The ceremony was attended by Minister for Health and Population Welfare Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Secretary Health Rehan Baloch, Provincial Coordinator EOC Sindh Irshad Ali Sodhar, Aziz Memon of Rotary, senior government officials, and representatives from WHO, UNICEF, BMGF, and other partner organizations.

Speaking on the occasion, the CM announced that the campaign aims to vaccinate

over 10.6 million children under the age of five across Sindh, including 2.76 million of them in Karachi alone. The campaign will be driven by a force of 69,724 trained frontline workers, who will go door-to-door, visit schools, shopping malls, and transit points to ensure that no child is left unvaccinated.

Despite the intense heat-wave sweeping across the province, the CM praised the dedication of frontline workers who continue their mission undeterred. "To support their tireless efforts, the government is providing water, ORS sachets, and other essential supplies to help them stay hydrated and healthy in the scorching temperatures," he said.

To ensure the security of vaccination teams and smooth operations, 25,360 police personnel have been deployed across Sindh. In a heartfelt appeal to parents and caregivers, Murad Shah urged everyone to welcome the vaccination teams, emphasising that

every child under five must receive the polio drops. "Polio has no cure. Vaccination is the only way to protect our children from lifelong paralysis," he said.

Building Trust in the Vaccine, the CM also addressed concerns surrounding vaccine safety, assuring the public that this is the same polio vaccine that helped eradicate the virus in most parts of the world. "It is the same vaccine administered to pilgrims before Hajj and Umrah, and it is routinely recommended by paediatricians in private clinics and hospitals," he said.

Shah emphasised that even if a child has been recently vaccinated, it is safe and essential to vaccinate them again during this campaign. The government is also ensuring that the cold chain is strictly maintained so that the vaccine remains potent and effective until it reaches every child, he said.

The chief minister con-

cluded with a powerful message of unity and hope: "Ending polio requires a collective commitment – from leadership to frontline workers, from communities to every household. Sindh stands united in this mission. Let us work together to protect every child and secure a healthier, safer future for generations to come."

Together, we can end polio- and we must not stop until we do. The Chief Minister administered oral polio drops to children to formally launch the campaign. Minister for Health Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho emphasised that "the environmental samples show continued virus circulation. Vaccination remains our only protection. We must continue with even greater resolve."

Citizens are urged to fully cooperate with polio teams. If any child under the age of five has missed their polio drops, families can call the 1166 helpline or WhatsApp at 0346-7776546.

## PM&DC resolves record number of 117,824 cases

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) is proud to announce the successful resolution of a significant number of cases, including those related to teaching experience, post-graduate registration, good standing, foreign local verification and registration certificates etc. One year ago, PM&DC faced substantial backlog issues due to manual operations.

However, thanks to the visionary leadership of President Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj, the organization has undergone a remarkable transformation from manual processes to digitalization, marked by the launch of state-of-the-art online portals. This development represents a major milestone in efforts to dispose of the long-standing backlog of pending cases and registrations for medical professionals across Pakistan.

The innovative portals were expertly designed to streamline the registration and documentation processes, effectively addressing the obstacles that had previously hindered smooth case issuance. The upgraded system has reflected an enhancement in administrative efficiency while

eliminating existing loopholes and bolstering functionality.

In a statement, Prof. Dr. Taj highlighted PM&DC's significant achievement in the functionality of its online portals and digital transformation, indicating that over the past year, the Council received 120,391 cases from across the country, of which 117,824 have been completed and dispatched. He said that only 400 to 500 cases remain pending, mainly due to awaiting third-party verifications.

As of now, PM&DC has received a total of 19,109 applications for full licenses, out of which 19,101 have been successfully resolved. Additionally, 17,693 provisional registration licenses were submitted, with 17,500 resolved. The Council also received 4,5908 renewal applications, and 45,704 of these have been resolved. In terms of postgraduate qualifications, 6,356 cases were received, and 6,222 have been resolved. Finally, 4,342 applications for teaching experience have been submitted, with 4,115 successfully resolved.

With the launch of these online portals, PM&DC has streamlined processes that were previously cumbersome and time-consuming. The digital platform simplifies case submissions and ensures faster reviews

and resolutions, benefiting a diverse range of stakeholders within the medical and dental communities.

"We are thrilled to report this milestone in our ongoing efforts to modernize our operations," Prof. Dr. Taj stated. "This initiative is a crucial part of our broader objective to streamline administrative procedures, ensuring that medical graduates can obtain their necessary certifications without undue delay."

The digitalization system and portals have been designed to be user-friendly, providing a smooth navigation experience while incorporating enhanced security measures to protect applicants' confidential information. PM&DC encourages all professionals to utilize these digital tools for a more efficient experience in case management, positioning the Council at the forefront of digital innovation within the healthcare sector.

The PM&DC Online Portal represents a significant advancement in the digital transformation of PM&DC services. By eliminating the need for in-person interactions and streamlining processes, the portal reduces the potential for human error and enhances overall efficiency within the healthcare sector.

## The Future of Our Earth: Hope and Resilience Among Karachi's Street Children

### Dr. Beenish Sarfaraz

In the bustling streets of Karachi—Pakistan's largest city—exists an often overlooked and highly vulnerable population: street children. These young individuals, forced into homelessness due to poverty, domestic abuse, or abandonment, are among the most marginalized members of society. With over 50,000 children estimated to be living on Karachi's streets, the crisis has evolved from a distant humanitarian concern into an urgent societal challenge.

Street children face a daily struggle for survival, often becoming victims of exploitation, sexual abuse, and substance addiction. Lacking access to formal education, healthcare, or stable shelter, they exist in a world devoid of safety nets. Alarming figures—such as the 63% of street children in Karachi who have experienced sexual

abuse—highlight the gravity of their plight. Substance abuse, particularly glue-sniffing and other inhalants, is widespread, used as a means of temporary escape from their painful realities.

Yet, amidst this bleak backdrop, a lesser-known narrative emerges that of hope, resilience, and psychological strength. Contrary to prevailing assumptions, not all street children are devoid of optimism. Emerging research and fieldwork suggest that many of them, despite their suffering, possess a remarkable ability to remain hopeful and find meaning in their experiences. This narrative invites us to shift from a lens of victimhood to one of resilience and potential.

According to UNICEF, street children are defined as individuals under the age of eighteen who reside or work on the streets without adequate adult supervision or care. Globally, an estimated 150 million children fall into this category. In Pakistan, the

numbers are steadily climbing. In Karachi alone, the population of street children has surged from 12,000 in 2006 to over 50,000 by 2020. This escalating trend calls for immediate policy intervention and community action.

Central to the resilience of these children is their ability to maintain a positive outlook psychological construct associated with well-being, optimism, and purpose. As defined by Ryan and Deci (2001), a positive outlook comprises psychological functioning, fulfilling relationships, and a sense of self-actualization. It enables individuals to navigate hardship with inner strength and direction.

In the lives of street children, this positive outlook is reflected in various subtle yet powerful ways. For some, the street becomes a space of self-reliance where they support themselves and even their families. For others, strength is found in peer connections and communal bonds with fellow

street children. Amid instability, they find moments of joy—through friendships, humor, shared meals, or acts of kindness.

This article serves as a reminder that, as a society, we must work collectively to address the root causes of homelessness and provide solutions that enable street children to access education, healthcare, and the support they need to break free from the cycle of poverty. Through compassion, action, and resilience, we can help turn their hopeful outlook into a reality for a better tomorrow.

Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson, in her pioneering research on positive emotions, emphasizes that resilience is not defined by the absence of pain or suffering. "All emotions—whether positive or negative—are adaptive in the right circumstances," she explains (Fredrickson, 2001). This insight is crucial in understanding the emotional

complexity of street children—young individuals who, despite enduring neglect, trauma, and profound loss, continue to show glimpses of courage, hope, and strength.

Research in developmental and counseling psychology supports the transformative impact of psychosocial interventions on vulnerable children. Studies show that even low-intensity, community-based counseling can significantly improve emotional regulation, reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and foster resilience (Jordans et al., 2010; Tol et al., 2013). Simple acts of listening, validating their pain, and offering consistent emotional support can empower street children to reclaim a sense of identity and hope. Counseling not only helps them process their trauma but also enables them to build coping strategies and envision a future beyond survival.

Dr. Sarfaraz's research uncovered key insights: 1. Teacher acceptance is

## No leniency for rioters: Azam Nazeer Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar has stated that individuals involved in attacking state installations or damaging public property will not be garlanded with flowers and must face legal consequences.

Speaking to the media here on Monday, the minister emphasized that those who set government properties and police vehicles on the fire should not expect leniency. "When you attack installations or burn police vehicles, you won't be welcomed with flowers," he said.

"Those involved in riots or attacks on military installations will be held accountable according to the law, and we will fully respect the court's decisions," he stated, adding that the courts are function-

ing independently and are regularly hearing cases.

He highlighted the contrast in the treatment of political figures, noting that former prime ministers once had to walk to court without VIP protocols, whereas today some individuals enjoy special access. "In fact, nowadays it's almost VIP treatment—doors open, cars come with flags, and people attend bar functions," he added.

Tarar said that the 26th Constitutional Amendment was part of structural reforms aimed at improving the system.

He expressed the view that no further amendments are required at this stage but did not rule out the possibility of future amendments if necessary.

"No one has knowledge of the unseen. If the need arises, all coalition parties and Parliament will come together to decide the way forward," he added. He also acknowledged the positive impact of establishing a constitutional bench, which has helped reduce the burden of daily cases.

Furthermore, he voiced support for judicial infrastructure reforms, advocating for all courts in Lahore to be housed in a single complex, similar to the Karachi model.

"This would benefit both the bar and the judiciary in terms of scheduling, administration, and accessibility," he said. He acknowledged the efforts of Lahore High Court Chief Justice Aalia Neelum in this regard.

## Big screen installed in Peshawar for Zalmi fans to watch matches

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Super League X Peshawar Zalmi in collaboration with Ufone arranged a large screen for Zalmi fans in Peshawar which was widely appreciated by cricket enthusiasts.

A large number of men, women and children gathered at the Hayatabad Sports Complex to enjoy the match between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi King on the big screen.

As PSL matches are not being held in Peshawar, Peshawar Zalmi continued its tradition by installing a big screen in the city.

Fans from far and wide came to enjoy the live action. According to Peshawar Zalmi on the special instructions of Javed Afridi arrangements were made for fans to



travel to Rawalpindi via special buses and for those staying in Peshawar the big screen was set up at the Hayatabad Sports Complex.

The aim was to provide entertainment opportunities to cricket lovers in Peshawar. According to the franchise, similar bus services and big screen

setups will be arranged for the remaining Zalmi matches of PSL X as well. Cricket fans have greatly appreciated the efforts made by Peshawar Zalmi.

## Ombudsman's Korangi office shifts to new location

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Office of the Provincial Ombudsman (Mohtasib) Sindh announces relocation of its Regional Office of District Korangi, Karachi.

The office will be shifted from its current location i.e. Ground Floor, Bungalow No. D-214, Lucknow Cooperative Housing Society, Korangi to new premises situated at the Mezzanine Floor, Plot No. ST-2/10, Sector 23, Korangi Industrial Area, adjacent to the EPA Office near Shan Chorangi, w.e.f 30th April 2025.

This relocation is part of ongoing efforts to enhance accessibility and provide improved facilities to the public for addressing their grievances efficiently and in a citizen-friendly environment.

All residents of Korangi District seeking assistance from the Ombudsman's Office are requested to take note of the new address.

## Naqvi pays tribute to Allama Iqbal on death anniversary

LAHORE (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the mausoleum of Poet of the East Dr Allama Muhammad Iqbal on his death anniversary.

During the visit, the Interior Minister offered Fateha and laid flowers at the mausoleum. He prayed for the national unity, stability, progress, and the prosperity of the nation. He

also offered special prayers for the oppressed Muslims of Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine. He also recorded his impressions in the visitors' book and paid glowing tribute to Allama Iqbal. He said that the nation will always remember Iqbal's contributions with gratitude.

Naqvi said that Allama

Iqbal's message is of hope, unity and self-respect. He added that Allama Iqbal's thoughts are a guiding principles and a key to success in the practical life. The minister paid homage to Iqbal's unparalleled services, describing him as a great thinker who gave the world a universal message of selfhood, unity and brotherhood.

## Unlocking the Power of Teacher Acceptance: A Call for Action Research on Improving Student Well-being

### Dr. Beenish Sarfaraz

"Acceptance is kind of fertile soil that allows a tiny seed to turn into a beautiful flower, that is apt of flattering (Dr. Thomas Gordon)."

When a teacher extends warmth and care toward their students, the effects ripple far beyond the classroom. This simple but powerful act of acceptance can transform a student's emotional health, behavior, and overall academic success. But what happens when teachers fail to convey acceptance or, worse, reject their students?

strongly linked to positive student behavior and higher self-esteem. 2. Gender differences revealed that female students tended to suffer from lower self-esteem and emotional instability, while male students experienced feelings of rejection and pessimism. 3. Interestingly, the study found that discipline alone, whether strict or permissive, didn't significantly affect students' negative behaviors. The emotional connection between teacher and student appeared far more influential.

acceptance is clear, this research emphasizes that other factors—such as parental support and peer relationships—also significantly impact students' well-being. Schools must adopt a holistic approach that goes beyond academic instruction to foster a psychologically supportive environment.

### Why This Research Matters

This research is vital not just for educators but for parents and policymakers. With millions of children out of school and many struggling with mental health issues, understanding the emotional dynamics at play is essential. Schools must cultivate an environment where students feel valued, respected, and supported leading to better behavior, mental health, and academic performance.

### Next Steps: A Call for Action Research

For real-world application, it's important that action research be conducted in classrooms to explore strategies for enhancing teacher-student relationships. The study calls for teacher training and school policies that emphasize emotional connection and support, ensuring students are emotionally and socially equipped for success.

The need for action is urgent. With a significant portion of Pakistan's youth at risk due to educational neglect and emotional distress, the findings of this research provide a crucial foundation for reform. Schools, teachers, and policymakers must work together to ensure that every child receives not only an education but also the acceptance and support necessary to thrive.

### The Education Crisis in Pakistan

Furthermore, UNICEF report, Pakistan is facing a serious education crisis, with 26.2 million children out of school (UNICEF, 2024). This includes 10.77 million children aged 5 to 9 years, with 4.97 million boys and 5.8 million girls. The dropout rates increase at the middle and high school levels, where 4.93 million children aged 10 to 12 years and 4.55 million high school-aged students are not attending school. Alarmingly, 5.95 million children lack access to higher secondary education.

Disparities based on gender, socio-economic status, and geography are stark. In Sindh, 52% of the poorest children (58% of whom are girls) are out of school, while in Balochistan, 78% of girls do not attend school. Additionally, studies show that over 25% of non-enrolled children are concentrated in just 45 tehsils across the country, indicating a severe inequality in educational access.

### A Call for Holistic Approaches

While the role of teacher





PESHAWAR: Chairman Prime Minister's youth programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan addressing a consultation session with Youth on National Adolescent and Youth policy at IM Sciences University

## 62 Bed hospital will usher a new era in Kohat: Shehryar



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a major health-care provision stride, Kacha Paka, Kohat newly built community based hospital named as Az-Zahra will be hosting multi-fold patients by near hamlets along kohat Hangu road villages and towards Kalya ,Aurakzai lower region.

Addressing as a chief guest , Member National Assembly Shehryar Khan Afridi termed it a gift to the people who had to wait for appointment in near by DHQ hospitals of kohat and Hangu.

"It's a major initiative by philanthropist that would serve as a milestone for Bangash triangle region to avail 24/7 emergency

health care services ", he said during his address.

He appreciated that peaceful and dignified residents of region would avail quality health care after getting a sea change in education.

Shafiullah Jan, member provincial Assembly from the constituency, announced new road and electricity schemes in the

upcoming financial year for KachaPaka hamlets.

He shared his jubilation with participants that kohat district hospital is stood second best in a recent monitoring and evaluation report of provincial government.

Speaking as member Board of Directors Khurshaid Anwer Jawadi termed this hospital a timely and urgent requirement to upgrade the basic level of health care facilities for locals chiefly poor and distressed people.

He vowed that simple people would get rid of unqualified doctors and quacks in the area from this health facility. He prayed that women folks would get better chances of health care in new-born and neonatal facilities .

Earlier local and government hospital managers also spoke on the occasion for the need of such health care facility and its massive utility in the region.

## MoU signed between KP-TEVTA and Chinese organization ITMC

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Chinese delegation met with Tufail Anjum, the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Technical Education, during which a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Technical and Vocational Training Authority (KP-TEVTA) and the Chinese organization ITMC.

Tufail Anjum stated that the collaboration between the Chinese organization and TEVTA would significantly promote technical education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He termed the initiative a milestone in enhancing vocational education, stating that the partnership would modernize and digitize technical training across the province.

The signing ceremony and subsequent meeting were attended by the Secretary of Industries, the Managing Director of TEVTA, relevant directors, and the Chinese delegation. During the meeting, it was informed that under the China-Pakistan Joint Education System, the program would facilitate mutual cooperation in vocational education. This includes the introduction of new courses, upgrading of existing curricula, and certification from the Chinese organization.

Additionally, the program will feature cultural exchange initiatives, Chinese language courses, and other short-term training programs. A three-year diploma program will be digitized to include subjects such as Film and Television Management, Small and Medium Enterprises

(SMEs), and Financial Management.

It is noteworthy that the KP Industries Department has already signed formal agreements with three leading Chinese educational organizations in this regard.

While addressing the meeting, the Special Assistant emphasized that this partnership aligns with the vision of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, aiming to elevate technical education to international standards and equip youth with modern trades and tools. He added that this MoU would enable both partners to work collaboratively towards the promotion and digitization of vocational education, ensuring that technical education in the province meets global standards and further strengthens the Pakistan-China partnership.

### 18th Int’l UMR conference from today

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Medical College is set to host the 18th International Undergraduate Medical Research (UMR) Conference on April 22-23, under the theme "United for Health: Research, Policy and Practice." The event aims to bring together undergraduate researchers from across Pakistan and abroad to showcase their work, exchange ideas, and participate in academic competitions and interactive workshops. The two-day conference will feature poster and verbal competitions, research quizzes, and skill-building workshops.

## Today’s youth holds power to transform country’s future: Rana Mashhood

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a significant step towards empowering Pakistan's youth and promoting inclusive development, the Prime Minister's Youth Program conducted a Consultative Session on the National Adolescent and Youth Policy at the Institute of Management Sciences (IM Sciences), Peshawar.

The session was led by Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Program, and attended by students, faculty members, religious scholars, and key stakeholders from various sectors.

During his comprehensive and passionate address, Rana Mashhood emphasized the pivotal role of the youth in nation-building.

He stated that despite the historical challenges faced by Pakistan, today's youth hold the power to transform the country's

future. He noted the resilience of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the face of terrorism, climate change, and economic challenges and praised their determination to move forward with hope and strength.

He stressed that Pakistan was created with a vision of equality, unity, and opportunity, and today, the nation must return to those founding principles.

Referring to the global and regional challenges faced by countries like Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, he underlined the importance of unity and inclusive development to prevent internal discord and ensure national progress.

A key focus of the address was the launch of Pakistan's first National Adolescent and Youth Policy, developed through wide-scale consultation and inclusive planning.

Rana Mashhood announced a 26-city

youth engagement tour aimed at involving youth from all walks of life—including university students, technical workers, madrasa students, and out-of-school youth—in policy development and implementation.

He highlighted key initiatives under the Prime Minister's Youth Program, aimed at empowering young Pakistanis through targeted support and opportunities.

These include the Digital Youth Hub, a comprehensive online platform offering scholarships, internships, job listings, and personalized career guidance; the largest-ever national effort to expand technical and vocational training, preparing youth for global employment markets; the National Employment Policy, which aligns federal and provincial strategies to guarantee decent work opportunities; and a

firm commitment to girls' education, underscored by Pakistan's international agreements with OIC nations to ensure that no child is denied education due to a lack of resources.

Rana Mashhood also emphasized the integration of madrassas into the national mainstream, praising the foundational education provided by these institutions. He called for the rejection of any narrative that creates divisions within the Pakistani society, stressing that unity, discipline, and faith are essential to progress.

He concluded with an impassioned appeal to the youth to rise as ambassadors of peace, education, and progress, stating, "The world fears your potential-show them that Pakistan's flag is held high by a united, educated, and visionary youth."

The event ended with the resounding slogan "Pakistan Zindabad".

## Polio eradication drive starts across KP

PESHAWAR (APP): A large-scale polio eradication campaign has been launched in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Polio Emergency Centre informed on Monday.

As per the details shared by the Center, a total of 35,500 teams have been formed to carry out the campaign, with strict security arrangements in place.

Approximately 50,000 security personnel have been deployed to ensure the safety of health workers and smooth execution of the campaign.

The five-day campaign will be conducted across all 36 districts of the province, while in Peshawar and Khyber districts, it will continue for seven days.

The campaign aims at immunizing approximately 6.53 million children against the crippling disease.

Significantly, the polio campaign is also being held in Upper and Lower South Waziristan after a gap of two years, marking an important step in reaching previously inaccessible areas.

Authorities emphasize the importance of cooperation from the public to ensure every child receives the polio drops.

## Whispers of the Withering Green

(A heartbreaking monologue of a plant)

NOSHABA NASEEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Dr. Rashid Ahmad defends Ph. D thesis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Professor Dr. Rashid Ahmad has successfully defended Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph. D) in Pak Study. He completed his research work under the supervision of Dr. Younus Khan and title of research was "Political Evolution in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2008-2013)". on Monday. Dr. Rashid Ahmad's research provides an in-depth analysis of the political evolution in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the period of 2008-2013. His research work sheds light on the significant changes that took place in the political landscape of the province during this period. The faculty members, students, and researchers present on the occasion congratulated Dr. Rashid Ahmad on his achievement, hailing his dedication, perseverance, and insight as a guiding light for all. They acknowledged that his research work is a testament to his commitment to academic excellence and his contribution to the field of Pakistan Studies.

## Government ramps up efforts to enroll out-of-school children

# Chief Secretary chairs high-level review meeting

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a major push to ensure access to quality education for every child in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chaired a high-level review meeting on Monday regarding the ongoing School Enrollment Campaign 2025.

A detailed presentation was given on the issue of out-of-school children and the strategies being implemented to bring them into the education system. The meeting was informed that approximately 4.9 million children remain out of school across the province, while 9 million are currently enrolled in educational institutions. Special Secretary Education briefed the participants that District Education Officers (DEOs) are specifically targeting clusters with

high concentrations of unenrolled children.

Emphasizing the importance of community participation, the forum was apprised that a comprehensive door-to-door enrollment drive is underway, involving school-teachers and local influencers. Additionally, elected representatives of local bodies, youth volunteers, community elders, and religious leaders are being mobilized to support the campaign at the grassroots level.

The Chief Secretary underscored that robust community engagement and sustained advocacy are pivotal to the success of the enrollment initiative. He further directed DEOs and district administrations to ensure timely updating and submission of accurate enrollment data to facilitate evidence-based planning and decision-making.

To incentivize enrollment and ease the burden

on families, school bags and stationery items are being distributed free of cost to newly enrolled students. Moreover, the government is set to launch the "Taleem Card" initiative in the near future, aimed at further supporting students and families in their pursuit of education.

The meeting also reviewed plans for the establishment of community schools for girls, creation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) corners, and training of teachers in ECE methodologies. It was emphasized that efforts to reduce early dropouts will be strengthened through the effective utilization of Parent-Teacher Councils (PTCs).

The Chief Secretary highlighted that the provision of quality primary education remains a top priority and reiterated the importance of adequate teachers and classroom infrastructure to meet the

demand. He also announced that enrollment figures would henceforth be linked with the performance evaluation of DEOs and head teachers to ensure accountability and results.

The forum was informed that the Elementary and Secondary Education Department is formulating a comprehensive sectoral reform strategy in line with the directives of the Secretaries Committee. In this regard, Deputy Commissioners have been tasked with regularly reviewing district-level progress based on predefined benchmarks.

The Chief Secretary further instructed relevant departments to explore innovative and cost-effective solutions for school infrastructure development in underserved areas. An action plan is also being finalized to address the multifaceted challenges associated with out-of-school children.

He concluded by stressing that the School Enrollment Campaign 2025 and the restructuring of the examination system are key pillars of the government's education sector reforms. With a target of enrolling 1 million out-of-school children this year, the provincial government remains committed to transforming the education landscape and ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

**CS reviews progress on development projects**

A high-level meeting was chaired by Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, to review the progress of ongoing development initiatives, infrastructure projects, and governance reforms across the province.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary was apprised of the status of reform strategies and governance roadmaps, which are being developed in line

with the directives issued in a previous Secretaries Committee meeting. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), comprehensive action plans, and long-term strategies for the next three years are currently under formulation to enhance institutional performance and service delivery.

The forum was informed that significant progress has been made in urban planning, with 16 master plans for various cities across the province finalized, while four are in the final stages of completion. In addition, land use plans have been prepared for six key districts—Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Abbottabad, and Charsadda.

The development of master plans for major tourist destinations is also in the pipeline to harness the province's tourism potential.

The Chief Secretary

underscored the critical need to align the Annual Development Programme (ADP) and strategic development planning with city master plans, ensuring a cohesive and targeted approach to infrastructure development and resource utilization.

On infrastructure development, the Chief Secretary was briefed on the accelerated pace of work on the Peshawar bus terminal, with completion anticipated by June this year.

He was also informed about ongoing efforts to resolve bottlenecks at various Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations in Peshawar to ensure uninterrupted traffic flow.

In a move to enhance transparency and efficiency in procurement processes, it was shared that eight departments have adopted the Electronic Procurement and Disposal System (EPADS), with a total of 42 tenders

uploaded on the portal so far.

The Chief Secretary directed the Communication and Works (C&W) Department to explore modern, innovative construction techniques to achieve faster and more cost-effective project completion, particularly in the construction of schools and hospitals to meet growing public demand.

The meeting also reviewed progress on the Taleem Card initiative—a flagship programme of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department aimed at providing targeted educational support and promoting access to quality education across the province.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the provincial government's commitment to accelerating development, promoting transparency, and ensuring the timely execution of public service delivery initiatives.





## In brief

### Free eye camp at Landi Kotal held F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: As many as two thousand tribesmen of Landi Kotal and its adjacent areas obtained free eye treatment in two days free medical camp concluded here in Ammar Shaheed High School, Landi Kotal last day. The camp was organized by Frontier Corp (FC) North, with assistance of Al-Shifa eye trust. Hundreds of men women and children visited the camp and obtained free medical treatment and some of the patients were suggested to visit Al-Shifa trust eye hospital for free surgeries. According to the organizers, the aim of setting up the camp was to supply free eye care services to the populace. Computerized eye sight checking, medicines, spectacles/glasses and special consultation were provided to the outdoor patient department free of cost in the camp. During the camp patients with corneal opacity, conjunctivitis etc. were treated in the camp. The tribesmen thanked the forces and the Al-Shifa eye trust for providing free medical eye service in the area and asked for initiating such kinds of welfare activities to supply quality treatment to the locals and to remove a sense of deprivation among the tribal society.

### Woman hold protest F.P. Report

LARKANA: A woman protested in front of the press club in Khair Muhammad Arika area of Larkana district against alleged fraud of Rs2 Lac by the bank area manager, on Monday. On that occasion, Sajida Jogi, a resident of Qalandarabad village, said that my place had been washed away in the recent rains. Waited, the affected woman cried and said that after the evening passed, the area manager pushed me out, after which a few days later the representative of the bank came to the village and asked me to return the loan amount, which is a complete abuse of me. Meanwhile, The ruler of this time will be forced, Badah taluka will definitely become" due to the indifference of the rulers, the citizens of Badah marched 45 kilometers from badeh-Larkana against the large population of badah in Larkana district.

### Anti-polio drive kicks off F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: A five-day national anti-polio campaign officially commenced in Hafizabad on Monday, 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 Razaq, 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 Razaq 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. Meanwhile, Prominent political and social figure Sohail Anwar Sahotra has been officially appointed as a member of the Minority Advisory Council Punjab (MACP), according to a notification issued by the Government of Punjab, Human Rights and Minority Affairs Department.

# KKKUK inaugurates vibrant Sports Gala



### F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak today marked the commencement of its highly anticipated Sports Gala 2025 with a lively opening ceremony held on the university grounds. The event was graced by the presence of esteemed faculty, enthusiastic students, administrative staff, and distinguished guests.

The Vice Chancellor of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Professor Dr. Naseer Ud Din, officiated the inauguration. In a symbolic gesture, he kicked off a football, officially declaring the Sports Gala open. The Registrar of the University, Dr. Ghani Ur Rehman, was also present at this auspicious occasion, alongside a

large and spirited gathering of students.

Addressing the attendees, Vice Chancellor lauded the dedication and hard work of the faculty organizers and student organizers who brought the Sports Gala to fruition. He specifically acknowledged and extended his full support to the Sports Incharge for his tireless efforts in organizing the event. He emphasized the importance of sports in fostering a healthy and competitive spirit among students, contributing to their overall development and well-being.

Earlier in the ceremony, the Sports Incharge, Muhammad Ilyas, delivered a warm welcome speech. He expressed his gratitude to all the participants, including adminis-

trative staff, heads of departments and sections, faculty members, students, and other distinguished guests, for their presence and support in making the event a success.

The opening ceremony was a vibrant display of university spirit and enthusiasm, setting the stage for a week filled with exciting sporting competitions and camaraderie. The Sports Gala 2025 promises to be a platform for students to showcase their athletic talents, build teamwork, and foster a sense of community within the university. The responsibilities of stage secretary were skillfully carried out by Lecturer of Communication and Media Studies, Basar Ali, who ensured the smooth flow of the program.

# Joint efforts for orphans care urged

### Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Orphan Day observed Khpal Kor foundation with a special ceremony for orphans and destitute children. The event aimed to showcase the talents of orphans, raise awareness about their rights, and boost their morale. Children presented stage performances, tableaux, speeches on child labor, and participated in painting competitions.

The ceremony was arranged by Qatar Charity, in collaboration with the Khpal Kour Foundation Swat. District Officer Social Welfare Department Saleem Zada and Qatar Charity representative



Gohar Ali, praised the children's performances and thanked Qatar Charity for its continuous support.

"These children can succeed in every field if given opportunities," said Gohar Ali, highlighting the importance of supporting orphans. The event concluded with prize distribution and a

children's awareness walk from the Khpal kour Foundation to the Swat Press Club, carrying banners advocating for orphans' rights, education, and elimination of child labor. The walk drew public and media attention, ending with a powerful message "Orphans deserve our attention and love."

# Delay in constrution of dam: Residents to hold protest

### F.P. Report

WANA: The tribesmen and community leaders have sounded the alarm over a decade-long delay in the construction of the Shakai Dand Dam, warning that the continued inaction is breeding public frustration and could lead to widespread protests if not addressed immediately. Speaking at an emergency press conference at the District Press Club Wana, members of the Shakai Dand Dam Committee condemned the prolonged suspension of work on the crucial water infrastructure project. Committee representative Hamza Wazir revealed that the project was tendered in 2014 and construction began in 2016, but despite an allocated budget of Rs 1.04 billion, only 36 percent of the work has been completed so far.

"The contractor has repeatedly avoided completing the work under various pretexts, deceiving the public while development in the area remains at a standstill," said Hamza Wazir, adding that current security conditions are peaceful and there are no

barriers to progress. He called on Deputy Commissioner Nasir Khan, MPA Ajab Gul Wazir, MNA Zubair Khan Wazir, the consulting department, and Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur to take immediate action to resume and fast-track the stalled project.

Also addressing the media, Maulana Nematullah Wazir issued a warning that a grand jirga will be held in Shakai on the 5th of next month if work does not recommence. The jirga will consider legal measures or even a sit-in protest in front of the Shakai Brigade.

The elders further criticized the delay of other key projects in the area, including Rescue 1122 services, a police station, a higher secondary school, and market beautification schemes, citing these as evidence of administrative neglect. They expressed disappointment that Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah and the Inspector General of Police, during their recent visit to the region, failed to include

Shakai in their itinerary — a move seen as symbolic of the area's marginalization. "Shakai is the fourth tehsil of Lower South Waziristan, and its residents are equally entitled to development," Hamza Wazir stated.

**Livestock dept launches vaccination drive:** Livestock Department has launched an extensive vaccination campaign in the Karikot area and adjacent regions of Tehsil Wana, Lower South Waziristan. The campaign focuses on administering vaccines against Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Enterotoxemia (ETV), both of which pose serious risks to animal health and the livelihood of local farmers.

This proactive initiative is being conducted under the supervision of veterinary experts and is part of the department's broader strategy to safeguard rural economies from the devastating impact of livestock diseases. The campaign aims not only to reduce the mortality rate among animals but also to minimize economic losses faced by cattle owners in the region.

## Special cleanliness campaign in Kohat F.P. Report

KOHAT: Following the instructions of the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, district administration and Water and Sanitation Services Company Kohat (WSSCK) jointly launched a cleanliness campaign in the city.

The campaign was formally inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Ikram and Chairman Board of Directors (BoDs) WSSCK and acting CEO of the company Muhammad Saad here during an event held, said in a statement issued here Monday. The inaugural ceremony was attended by WSSCK board member Shakeel Ahmad Afridi, Deputy General Manager Hafif, Sanitation Head Ammad Bangash and Assistant Engineer Abdul Shaukat.

Deputy Commissioner Abdul Ikram while speaking at the ceremony stated that Kohat is our all home and collective responsibility is to keep it clean and beautiful. He urged masses to cooperate with government institutions to keep the city clean, graceful and elegant.

Acting CEO of the WSSCK said the company will utilize all resources to make the cleanliness campaign successful. He informed on the occasion that a special cleanliness campaign will be carried out in six urban units of the city. The purpose of the campaign is to provide citizens a clean and healthy environment, he added.

Muhammad Saad said the cleanliness drive will be executed phase wise, according to which cleaning of streets and sewerage lines, improvement of sanitation system, and cleanliness of other public places. Acting CEO urged people to actively take part in the special cleanliness campaign and play role in making clean and graceful of houses, shops and surrounding areas.

## Teaching staff threatens protest F.P. Report

BANNU: The FAPWASA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter South Region has threatened to take to the streets if the universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and especially the southern districts do not appoint a permanent Vice Chancellor and if the decisions of the Supreme Court and the High Court are not implemented.

More than forty thousand students of the southern districts are at stake. The degrees of thousands of students have been stopped due to the non-appointment of a Vice Chancellor, which is causing problems. The provincial government is playing with the higher sector. These views were expressed by the Vice Chancellor of the FAPWASA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter, Dr. Nasir Gul Batsa, General Secretary, Professor Dr. Dildraz Khan, while briefing the media after a joint meeting. He said that for the last three years, there has been no permanent Vice Chancellor in most universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In the previous period, a scrutiny committee was formed to appoint Vice Chancellors, who appointed Vice Chancellors after completing its rules and regulations, but the current government had stopped the appointment of Vice Chancellors, which is still pending.

# Tareen inaugurates modern computer and science labs

### F.P. Report

LODHARAN: Jahangir Khan Tareen has said that modern education is the only path to national progress. He emphasized that educational development plays a crucial role in the revival of any country's economy. He made these remarks while speaking at the inauguration of a state-of-the-art computer and science lab, built by the Tareen Education Foundation, at the Girls Section of Khanewal Public School and College University.

He further stated that reforms are also needed in the country's education system. "God willing, I will continue to play my part in providing all possible facilities to students," he added.

Jahangir Khan Tareen, along with Deputy Commissioner Khanewal Dr. Salma Suleman, also



visited Government Boys Model High School Khanewal and interacted with students. On the occasion, Tareen announced the upgradation of five more high and higher secondary schools in Khanewal. He said modern computer and science labs will be established in these schools.

Deputy Commissioner Khanewal Dr. Salma Suleman thanked Jahangir Khan Tareen for providing facilities at Khanewal Public School and other

high schools. She said the district administration will continue working with the Tareen Education Foundation to provide improved educational facilities.

Also present at the occasion were Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Khalid Abbas, Principal of Khanewal Public School and College University Rashid Saeed Rana, CEO, Tareen Education Foundation Akbar Khan, and others.

# Dir resident wins modern car in grand lucky draw

### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Muhammad Amin, a resident of Balambat drove away with a brand-new car, and Shahid Khan from Talash won an Umrah ticket at a grand lucky draw organized by a shopping mall at Timergara here the other day, which attracted more than 20,000 participants from across the Lower Dir district.

The event, held in a transparent and festive atmosphere, featured 70 lucky winners who received prizes worth over Rs. 3 million. Among the giveaways were iPhones, motorcycles, refrigerators, washing machines, ovens, and irons—adding excitement and community spirit to the gathering.

Speaking on the occasion, former provincial minister and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Nawabzada Mehmood Zeb Khan praised the private sector's growing role in creating employment opportunities, especially in regions like Dir.

He said commercial activities were regaining momentum in Timergara following a return of peace to the area, offering a much-needed boost to the local economy. "With the population increasing rapidly, it is no longer feasible for the government to provide public-sector jobs to everyone," he said. "Educated but unemployed youth should explore private-sector opportunities instead of waiting for government positions."

The event was also

attended by PPP Lower Dir President Nawabzada Ahmad Zeb Khan, Sub-Engineers Association of Pakistan President Malik Bashir Ahmad Khan, former National Assembly candidate Alam Zeb Advocate, retired ZTBL manager Syed Muhammad Ishaq Jan, PML-N Lower Dir General Secretary Javed Iqbal Advocate, and noted poet, journalist, and social activist Afser Afghan, among others. The event not only brought smiles to the faces of the winners but also served as a platform to highlight the importance of entrepreneurship and private investment in uplifting local communities.

**Collective efforts for successful school enrolment campaign urged:** 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 here the other day, 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, khatibs, teachers, lawyers and doctors to play their active role in the ongoing enrollment 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.

# Restoration of Hajj flight from Sialkot airport sought

### F.P. Report

SIALKOT: It is with deep concern that the citizens, civil society, and business community of Sialkot and its adjoining regions express their profound disappointment over the exclusion of Sialkot International Airport from the 2025 Hajj flight operations, on Monday.

As Pakistan's first privately owned international airport, Sialkot International has long stood as a symbol of innovation and efficiency, consistently offering world-

class services, including smooth and successful Hajj operations for thousands of pilgrims across the region. Owing to its strategic location and state-of-the-art infrastructure, it has served as the most convenient and reliable hub for intending pilgrims from districts such as Sialkot, Gujranwala, Narowal, Hafizabad, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Wazirabad, Kharian, Lala Musa, and Mirpur (AJK).

The sudden suspension of Hajj flights from this vital airport has sparked widespread concern and

hardship. Pilgrims now face longer travel distances, increased costs, and unnecessary logistical complications in reaching alternative departure airports.

This decision is not only logistically flawed but also inequitable for the thousands of pilgrims who have relied on Sialkot International Airport for safe, accessible, and dignified Hajj travel. It disregards the airport's proven track record in managing Hajj operations with excellence and professionalism.

Experts stress the urgent need for: Stronger regulations and restrictions on energy drink sales and advertising. Educational campaigns targeting youth and parents. Encouraging healthier alternatives like water, fresh juices, and herbal teas. Better labeling on beverage products, clearly stating health risks.

As the marketing of energy drinks continues to glamorize their benefits, it is critical for individuals, especially the youth in Pakistan, to understand the risks they pose. The stories from Pakistani citizens and global scientific findings form a compelling argument: energy drinks are not just lifestyle choices—they are potential health hazards. Until policies catch up, the best defense is awareness, moderation, and informed decision-making.

### Abdullah Khan

**ENERGY drinks, once marketed as quick fixes for fatigue, low energy, and increased alertness, have now become a central topic of concern for public health experts worldwide. While they continue to dominate shelves and appeal to younger generations with promises of enhanced performance and focus, a rising body of research and real-life experiences reveal a darker reality—energy drinks are contributing to chronic illnesses, especially kidney disease.**

In response to the long-term health risks of energy drinks, several countries have implemented regulatory policies. For instance, Kazakhstan began enforcing a ban in January 2025 on energy drink sales to individ-

uals under 21. The policy aims to curb the overconsumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), which are linked to high rates of cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, and kidney complications.

Poland has introduced strict laws prohibiting the sale of energy drinks to minors, and Kyrgyzstan has taken it a step further by banning energy drink advertisements altogether. These actions reflect a growing international concern about the unregulated sale and marketing of these products, particularly to adolescents and young adults.

Academic institutions and public health bodies have echoed these concerns. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public

Health, for example, published research warning against the belief that "natural" or "clean" energy drinks are safe alternatives. These beverages often still contain high levels of sugar, caffeine, and other stimulants that pose significant health risks.

In 2018, Harvard researchers released an article titled "Energy Drinks: Health Dangers Not Worth the Extra Pep," highlighting how these drinks contribute to high blood pressure, kidney dysfunction, and cardiovascular issues. One study from 2023 found that individuals who consumed 10–12 cans of Red Bull over 2–3 weeks experienced a significant increase in blood pressure and creatinine levels, both of which indicate kidney

stress.

In Pakistan, healthcare professionals and individuals are now raising alarms. Personal stories highlight how the consumption of energy drinks—often during times of academic or work-related stress—has led to serious health consequences.

For example, Junaid Ahmed, who returned from Kuwait in 2019, shared that he had never consumed energy drinks before. However, upon regular use, he began feeling constantly tired despite momentary boosts of energy. Medical tests later revealed kidney problems tied to his consumption habits.

Similarly, Shahbaz Ali, a farmer from Punjab, shared that he used to drink two large bot-

tles of Coke and multiple energy drinks daily. It wasn't until he was diagnosed with kidney failure that he realized the damage caused by prolonged overuse.

Dr. Farzana Iqbal, a nephrologist at Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) in Lahore, warns that the high caffeine and sugar content in energy drinks can lead to hypertension, blood pressure instability, and eventual kidney failure. She urges youth to be cautious, as these drinks do not provide sustained energy, but rather mask fatigue temporarily while causing long-term damage.

The health-related issues tied to energy drinks are not isolated incidents—they are part of a growing global health crisis.





KYIV: An elderly woman preparing her Easter baskets to be blessed during celebration of the Orthodox Easter in Krasne village, Ukraine.

## ‘Cancer’ of billion-dollar cyberscam industry spreading globally: UN

BANGKOK (Reuters): Asian crime syndicates behind the multibillion-dollar cyberscam industry are expanding globally including to South America and Africa, as raids in Southeast Asia fail to contain their activities, the United Nations said in a report on Monday.

Criminal networks that emerged in Southeast Asia in recent years, opening sprawling compounds housing tens of thousands of workers, many trafficked and forced to scam victims around the world, have evolved into a sophisticated global industry, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said. Even as Southeast Asian governments have intensified a crackdown, syndicates have moved within and beyond the region, the agency said, adding that a “potentially irreversible spillover has taken place... leaving criminal groups free to pick, choose, and move... as needed”.

“It spreads like a cancer,” said Benedikt Hofmann, UNODC acting regional representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. “Authorities treat it in one area, but the roots never disappear; they simply migrate.” Conservative estimates indicate there are hundreds of large-scale scam farms around the world generating tens of billions of dollars in annual profits, the UNODC said. The agency called on countries to work together and intensify efforts to disrupt the

gangs’ financing.

“The regional cyberfraud industry... has outpaced other transnational crimes, given that it is easily scalable and able to reach millions of potential victims online, with no need to move or traffic illicit goods across borders,” said John Wojcik, a regional analyst with UNODC. The United States alone reported more than \$5.6 billion in losses to cryptocurrency scams in 2023, including more than \$4 million in so-called pig-butcher scams or romance scams designed to extort money from often elderly and vulnerable people.

In recent months, authorities from China, where many of the gangs originate, Thailand and Myanmar have led a crackdown on scam operations in lawless areas of the Thai-Myanmar border, with Thailand cutting power, fuel and internet supply to areas housing scam compounds. But syndicates have adapted, shifting operations between “the most remote, vulnerable, and underprepared parts of Southeast Asia”, especially in Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia, and beyond, exploiting jurisdictions with weak governance and high rates of corruption, the UNODC said.

Raids in parts of Cambodia where the industry is most visible “led to significant expansion in more remote locations”, including the country’s western Koh Kong province, as well as areas bordering Thailand and

Vietnam, the UN agency said. New sites also continue to be developed in Myanmar, it added, a country in the throes of an expanding conflict since the military seized power four years ago.

Spokespeople for the Cambodian government and Myanmar junta did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Syndicates have expanded into South America, the UN agency said, seeking to enhance money laundering and underground banking partnerships with South American drug cartels. They are increasingly establishing operations in Africa, including in Zambia, Angola, and Namibia, and in Eastern Europe including Georgia, the agency said.

Gangs have also rapidly diversified their workforce, recruiting people from dozens of nationalities, according to the agency, reflecting how the industry scams targets across the globe and has sought to evade anti-trafficking efforts. Citizens of more than 50 countries – from Brazil to Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan – were rescued during recent crackdowns on the Thai-Myanmar border. The international community is at a “critical inflection point,” the UNODC said, urging that failure to address the problem would have “unprecedented consequences for Southeast Asia that reverberate globally”.

## ‘US position ruling out NATO membership gives satisfaction’

MOSCOW (Reuters):The Kremlin said on Monday that the position of US President Donald Trump’s administration on ruling out NATO membership for Ukraine gave Moscow satisfaction, but declined to comment on Trump’s hopes for a peace deal this week.

Trump, seeking to be remembered as a peace-maker, has repeatedly said he wants to end the “blood-bath” of the three-year conflict in Ukraine – which his administration casts as a proxy war between the United States and Russia. US envoy General Keith Kellogg said that NATO alliance membership was “off the table” for Ukraine. Trump has said past US support for that was a cause of the war.

“We have heard from Washington at various levels that Ukraine’s membership in NATO is excluded,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. “Of course, this is something that causes us

satisfaction and coincides with our position.” Ukrainian membership of the US-led alliance would threaten Russian interests, Peskov added. “And, in fact, this is one of the root causes of this conflict.”

President Vladimir Putin ordered troops into Ukraine in 2022, triggering the worst confrontation between Moscow and the West since the depths of the Cold War. Former US President Joe Biden, Western European leaders and Ukraine cast the invasion as an imperial-style land grab and repeatedly vowed to defeat Russian forces.

Putin casts the war as a watershed moment in Moscow’s relations with the West which he says humiliated Russia after the Soviet Union fell in 1991 by enlarging NATO and encroaching on what he considers Moscow’s sphere of influence. At the 2008 Bucharest summit, NATO leaders agreed that Ukraine

and Georgia would one day become members. Ukraine in 2019 amended its constitution committing to the path of full membership of NATO and the European Union.

Putin has repeatedly said Russia would be willing to end the war if Ukraine drops its NATO ambitions and withdraws troops from the entirety of four Ukrainian regions claimed and mostly controlled by Russia. Reuters reported in November that Putin was ready to negotiate a deal with Trump, but would refuse to make major territorial concessions and would insist Kyiv abandon ambitions to join NATO.

Trump said he hopes Russia and Ukraine will make a deal this week to end the conflict. “BOTH WILL THEN START TO DO BIG BUSINESS WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, WHICH IS THRIVING, AND MAKE A FORTUNE!” Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

The Russian rouble traded close to 80 to the US dollar on Monday, the highest level against the dollar since June 2024. The rouble has risen by over 40% against the dollar since the beginning of the year on expectations of peace. Asked about Trump’s remarks, Peskov said: “I don’t want to make any comments right now, especially about the timeframe.”

“President Putin and the Russian side remain open to seeking a peaceful settlement. We are continuing to work with the American side and, of course, we hope that this work will yield results.” He refused to comment directly on a Bloomberg report that the United States is prepared to recognise Russian control of Crimea as part of a broader peace agreement. “Work on finding a peaceful settlement cannot take place, and should not take place, in public,” Peskov said. “It should take place in an absolutely discrete mode.”

## US general says allied forces can repel Asia aggression

MANILA (AP): Thousands of allied American and Filipino forces opened annual combat drills Monday that are set to include repelling an island attack to simulate the defense of the Philippine archipelago and seas in a “full-scale battle scenario” that has antagonized China.

The annual Balikatan military exercises between the longtime treaty allies are scheduled from April 21 to May 9 with about 9,000 American and 5,000 Filipino military personnel. Fighter jets, warships and an array of weaponry including a US Marine anti-ship missile system will be involved, US and Philippine military officials said. China has steadfastly opposed such war drills in or near the disputed South China Sea and in northern Philippine provinces close to Taiwan, especially if they involve US and allied forces that Beijing says aim to contain it and, consequently,

threaten regional stability and peace.

“We are ready,” US Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Glynn told a news conference when asked if US and Philippine forces have built up the capability to address any major act of aggression in the Taiwan Straits or the South China Sea after years of joint combat exercises. “Our combined strength... possesses a degree of lethality for a force that possesses an indomitable warrior ethos and spirit,” Glynn said in a speech in the opening ceremony of the annual combat-readiness exercises. “It’s all dedicated to one purpose, to ensure the defense of the Philippines and to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

“All of us want to resolve any regional conflict peacefully but should deterrence fail, we need to be prepared,” said Glynn, who previously helped lead special opera-

tions forces against the Islamic State and served in Fallujah, Iraq. Philippine army Maj. Gen. Francisco Lorenzo said the exercises during Balikatan, meaning shoulder to shoulder in Tagalog, are not aimed at any particular country.

“It’s joint training with the US forces to increase our capability in securing our territory and, of course, it will increase our capabilities and our preparedness and responsiveness to any eventuality,” Lorenzo said. The exercises are set to include a mock allied counter-assault against an enemy attack on an island, the use of a barrage of artillery and missile fire to sink a mock enemy ship, joint navy sails in or near the disputed South China Sea and aerial combat surveillance, according to the Philippine military.

A Philippine military statement described this year’s largescale combat

exercises as “a full-scale battle scenario meticulously designed to rigorously test and enhance the combined capabilities of both nations’ armed forces under the most realistic and challenging conditions.” Aside from US and Philippine military personnel, Australia plans deploy about 260 participants, an Australian military officer said. Several countries including Japan intend to send military observers.

A mid-range missile system, which was deployed to the northern Philippines by the US Army last year, will be used again in the combat exercises, US and Philippine military officials said without offering additional details. China has repeatedly expressed alarm over the missile deployment and demanded the Philippines pull the weaponry from China’s territory, which it said could spark an arms race.

### Three Haitian soldiers warring with gangs are slain

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AP): At least three Haitian soldiers were killed in an apparent gang ambush in a town on the outskirts of Haiti’s capital of Port-au-Prince, Haitian authorities confirmed.

The area of Kenscoff has been under heavy fire in recent days as Haitian law enforcement have warring with the gang coalition known as Viv Ansanm. It’s just the latest explosion of violence as Haitian authorities and foreign forces scramble to rein in gang warfare in the Caribbean nation. Haiti’s government in a post on the social media platform X wrote that the soldiers died “on the front line ... weapons in hand.”

“These soldiers are not just members of our armed forces. They are worthy sons of the Nation, defenders of our sovereignty, whose ultimate sacrifice will never be forgotten. Their commitment is a powerful reminder that freedom and security come at a price, and that this price is sometimes paid in the blood of our bravest,” wrote the Haitian government in a statement. Local media reported earlier in the day that a military reinforcement mission, traveling in an unarmored car, was transporting soldiers to a conflictive area in Kenscoff, when the soldiers were violently targeted by heavily armed men. Video circulating on social media showed soldiers in camouflage pulling bodies out of the truck.

### RAF jets intercept Russian aircraft

MOSCOW (BBC): Two Russian aircraft flying close to Nato airspace were detected by British fighter jets in separate incidents earlier this week, the UK’s Ministry of Defence has said. A pair of RAF Typhoons were scrambled to intercept a Russian Ilyushin Il-20M “Coot-A” intelligence aircraft over the Baltic Sea on 15 April, while another two Typhoons intercepted an unknown aircraft leaving the Kaliningrad air-space on 17 April.

The two intercepts, which took off from Malbork Air Base in Poland, were part of the UK’s contribution to Nato’s enhanced air policing. They were the RAF’s first intercepts since aircraft arrived in the region to begin the defence of Nato’s eastern flank, working alongside Sweden.

The UK’s involvement in Nato’s enhanced air policing is called Operation Chessman and sees personnel from across the RAF deployed to Malbork alongside Sweden, Nato’s newest member. The undertaking follows Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer’s commitment to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP. Minister for the Armed Forces Luke Pollard said that the UK was “unshakable” in its commitment to Nato.

“With Russian aggression growing and security threats on the rise, we are stepping up to reassure our Allies, deter adversaries and protect our national security through our Plan for Change,” he said. Mr Pollard added that the “mission shows our ability to operate side by side with NATO’s newest member Sweden and to defend the Alliance’s airspace wherever and whenever needed, keeping us safe at home and strong abroad”.

This is not the first time RAF jets have been used to intercept Russian aircraft. Last year, two Typhoons based at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland were scrambled after a Russian Bear-F bomber flew over the North Sea. At the time, the MoD said the Russian reconnaissance plane had been detected in the UK’s “area of interest”, but had not been able to enter UK sovereign airspace.

Fifty Russian aircraft were also intercepted by RAF pilots based at Lossiemouth in 2023, when 21 aircraft were intercepted in a 21-day period. In a separate incident in 2023, Typhoon fighters and a Norwegian F-35A fighter aircraft were launched as part of Nato’s response to a Russian aircraft near UK airspace. Incidents like this – known as quick reaction alerts – are not uncommon and involve RAF crews shadowing Russian military aircraft near UK airspace and during operations further afield, if necessary.

## China to retaliate with sanctions on US officials

HONG KONG (AP): China will sanction United States officials, lawmakers and leaders of non-governmental organizations who it says have “performed poorly” on Hong Kong issues, the foreign ministry announced.

The US in March sanctioned six Chinese and Hong Kong officials who it alleged were involved in “transnational repression” and acts threatening to further erode the city’s autonomy. The officials included Justice Secretary Paul Lam, security office director Dong Jingwei and former police commissioner Raymond Siu. In a retaliatory move against Washington, D.C., on Monday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun in Beijing said China strongly condemned the acts, calling them “despicable.” The US has seriously interfered in the affairs of Hong Kong and violated international law principles, he said.

“China has decided to impose sanctions on US congressmen, officials, and NGO leaders who have performed poorly on Hong Kong-related issues,” Guo said, adding the response was made according to the anti-for-

eign sanctions law. He did not provide more details about who is being targeted. Guo also issued a warning about Hong Kong, saying the southern Chinese city’s affairs are not subject to US interference. Any actions considered wrong by the Chinese government that are taken on Hong Kong-related issues will be met with firm countermeasures and reciprocal retaliation, he said.

The tit-for-tat sanctions over Hong Kong’s human rights issues are the latest sign of rising tensions between Beijing and Washington, which are already locked in a trade war that has rattled businesses on both sides. Beijing separately warned other countries on Monday against making trade deals with the US to China’s detriment.

The US sanctions on officials in March were not the first related to the former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997. During Donald Trump’s first presidential term, his government imposed sanctions on Hong Kong and Chinese officials for undermining Hong Kong’s autonomy. In 2021, former President Joe

Biden’s administration slapped more sanctions on officials over Beijing’s crackdown on political freedoms in the semi-autonomous city.

Since China imposed a national security law in 2020 to quell the 2019 massive anti-government protests, Hong Kong authorities have prosecuted many of the city’s leading activists. Media outlets known for their critical reports of the government shut down following arrests of their top management. Dozens of civil society groups disbanded. Over the past two years, Hong Kong authorities have issued arrest warrants for 19 activists based overseas, with bounties of \$1 million Hong Kong dollars (\$128,536) for information leading to each of their arrests. Some of them resided in the US.

The years-long crackdown has drawn criticism from foreign governments, especially because the city was promised its Western-style civil liberties and semi-autonomy would be kept intact for at least 50 years during the 1997 handover. The Beijing and Hong Kong governments insist the law is necessary for the city’s stability.

## 60,000 Americans to lose their rental assistance

WASHINGTON (AP): Moments after Daniris Espinal walked into her new apartment in Brooklyn, she prayed. In ensuing nights, she would awaken and touch the walls for reassurance — finding in them a relief that turned to tears over her morning coffee.

Those walls were possible through a federal program that pays rent for some 60,000 families and individuals fleeing homelessness or domestic violence. Espinal was fleeing both. But the program, Emergency Housing

Vouchers, is running out of money — and quickly. Funding is expected to be used up by the end of next year, according to a letter from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and obtained by The Associated Press. That would leave tens of thousands across the country scrambling to pay their rent.

It would be among the largest one-time losses of rental assistance in the US, analysts say, and the ensuing evictions could churn these people — after several years of rebuilding their lives — back onto the street or back into abusive relationships. “To have it stop would completely upend all the progress that they’ve made,” said Sonya Acosta, policy analyst at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which researches housing assistance.

“And then you multiply that by 59,000 households,” she said. The program, launched in 2021 by then-President Joe Biden as part of the pandemic-era American Rescue Plan Act, was allocated \$5 billion to help pull people out of homelessness, domestic violence and human trafficking. People from San Francisco to Dallas to Tallahassee, Florida, were enrolled — among them children, seniors and veterans — with the expectation that funding would last until the end of the decade.

But with the ballooning cost of rent, that \$5 billion will end far faster. Last month, HUD sent letters to groups dispersing the money, advising them to “manage your EHV program with the expectation that no additional funding from HUD will be forthcoming.” The program’s future rests with Congress, which could decide to add money as it crafts the federal budget. But it’s a relatively expensive prospect at a time when Republicans, who control Congress, are dead set on cutting federal spending to afford tax cuts.

Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters, who championed the program four years ago, is pushing for another \$8 billion infusion. But the organizations lobbying Republican and Democratic lawmakers to reup the funding told the AP they aren’t optimistic.

Four GOP lawmakers who oversee the budget negotiations did not respond to AP requests for comment.

“We’ve been told it’s very much going to be an uphill fight,” said Kim Johnson, the public policy manager at the National Low Income Housing Coalition. Espinal and her two daughters, aged 4 and 19, are living on one of those vouchers in a three-bedroom apartment with an over \$3,000 monthly rent — an amount extremely difficult to cover without the voucher.

Four years ago, Espinal fought her way out of a marriage where her husband controlled her decisions, from seeing her family and friends to leaving the apartment to go shopping. When she spoke up, her husband said she was wrong, or in the wrong or crazy. Isolated and in the haze of postpartum depression, she didn’t know what to believe. “Every day, little by little, I started to feel not like myself,” she said. “It felt like my mind wasn’t mine.”

When notices arrived in March 2021 seeking about \$12,000 in back rent, it was a shock. Espinal had quit her job at her husband’s urging and he had promised to cover family expenses. Police reports documenting her husband’s bursts of anger were enough for a judge to give her custody of their daughter in 2022, Espinal said.

## Midwestern city has long been a federal hub

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP): In her 28 years working for the federal government, Shea Giagnorio provided

day care for the children of US soldiers, training for employees and oversight for safety net programs.

Public service took her from Germany to Alaska to Kansas City, Missouri, where she moved last year for a long-sought promotion. But when she reported to a downtown federal building for work one day last month, her access card did not work. After a co-worker let her into the building, she checked her email: Her entire office had been let go in the latest mass firing ordered by President Donald Trump’s administration.

The 46-year-old single mom has canceled her apartment lease, is selling her new furniture and may have to pull her daughter out of college. She wonders what will happen to the at-risk populations her team helped serve at the Administration for Children and Families, a part of the US Department of Health and Human

Services. “Not only me, but all these peoples’ lives are turned upside down,” Giagnorio said.

The impact of the cuts by Trump appointees and Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency can be found everywhere in the Kansas City metropolitan area, which has long been a major hub for federal agencies about 1,000 miles away from Washington, D.C. Money once promised to the region for public health, environmental, diversity, food aid and an array of other programs has been axed, and thousands of local jobs are in jeopardy. With nearly 30,000 workers, the federal government is the largest employer in the region. One longtime Kansas City economic researcher said he believes the region could lose 6,000 good-paying federal jobs, which in turn would wipe out thousands of others in service industries.

An IRS worker said thousands of her co-workers fear they will lose their jobs, even as they put in

overtime processing tax refunds in a building so crowded that they struggle to find desks. Under pressure, hundreds more agreed this past week to retire early or take a buyout. “It’s a kick in the stomach to people that are doing everything they can to meet what’s required of them,” said Shannon Ellis, a long-time IRS customer service representative and president of the union representing local workers.

At least 238 Kansas City workers had taken the buyout offers and were expected to leave the agency in coming weeks. Ellis noted many of those same workers had been told they were essential and required to work overtime during tax season, some seven days per week. A US Department of Agriculture grant revocation disrupted a historically Black neighborhood’s plan to expand its program growing fresh produce in a food desert. A nearby pantry reduced its monthly grocery allotment for those in need after federal cuts left food banks shorthanded.



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## Boeing 737 MAX first victim of US-China tariff wars

**T**HE first major fallout of the tariff war set off by US President Donald Trump, and the retaliatory tariffs by countries like China, was played out. A Boeing 737 MAX, the latest model favoured by airlines, had returned from China to the factory centre in eastern United States.

Both Boeing officials and the Xiamen Airlines did not speak to the media. But it was evident that the plane and many like it which are ready to be delivered to the customers – the airlines – are caught up in the crossfire of tariffs declared by each country.

President Trump had raised tariffs on Chinese imports to 145 per cent. China hit back with tariffs of 125 per cent. This means that Xiamen Airlines would have had to pay 125 per cent import duty on the basic price of the passenger plane which is \$55 million. That would have a crippling impact on the airline's finances.

And unable to dispose of the plane fitted specially for the private Chinese airline, Boeing would be incurring a huge loss. It can be said that Boeing could sell the 737 MAX to another airline. But this is not easily done. It is not the case of a single plane because an airliner places the order for a fleet.

And with varying degrees of tariffs, this will have a ripple affect across the board in global trade. President Trump would ideally want a Boeing plane to be purchased by foreign airliners without any import duty, and he will say that he would reciprocate with zero import duties for products from foreign countries.

But his argument is that America cannot have zero import duties because that would benefit exporters from other countries. Americans buy more than they sell, and import duties are legitimate charges that an American government can levy on foreign traders. The earnings of exporters to America will be greater because of the dollar's valuation, and it cannot be said of the American goods sold in foreign markets because their currency value is always much less than that of the dollar.

Now this will create more problems than it would solve. That is why, fair rules are what are required and there cannot be currency equivalence. It is generally the case that Americans who earn relatively much higher salaries can buy more than their counterparts in other countries with smaller size of economies.

And it has also to be the case that other countries with their smaller size economies and smaller currency exchange rates compared to the dollar will not be able to buy American goods. American manufacturers may have to make goods which many people in other countries can afford to buy.

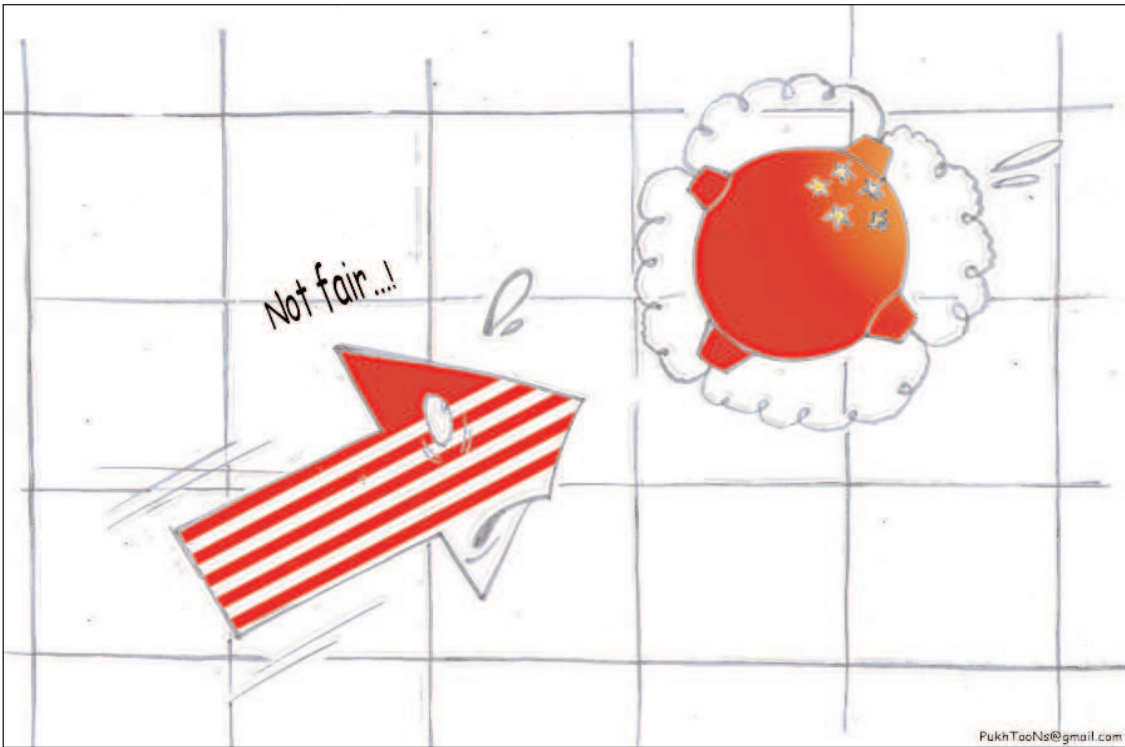
Now this is what China has done. It has managed to make goods which can be sold at cheaper rates and therefore affordable to millions of buyers in various countries. China has managed to evolve economies of scale which enables it to sell far and wide with greater flexibility. American and European manufacturers have not been able to show the price flexibility to the sellers in other countries.

Of course, the West blames China for this unfair advantage – China's ability to manufacture goods at lower costs. But it is not the case that the West is at a permanent disadvantage. While China produces mass goods at lower prices, the Western manufactures are marked by quality and brand, and the rich elites in the world prefer to buy the Western goods.

So, the two – China and the West – exist at two ends of the price spectrum, and each of them command their own market segment. What seems to have happened is that the West has not been able to innovate and create a niche of its own in the global markets.

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## Driven to death: The toll of unchecked heavy traffic in Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

**T**HE surge in road fatalities caused by heavy vehicles in Pakistan is a pressing concern, highlighting systemic failures in governance, regulation, and enforcement. A closer analysis of these accidents reveals a troubling pattern of negligence, corruption, and inefficiency that continues to endanger lives despite existing traffic laws and enforcement measures. The situation demands urgent attention, as the rising number of casualties underscores the dire need for comprehensive reforms in traffic management and regulatory oversight.

Karachi, being Pakistan's economic hub, has witnessed an alarming rise in heavy vehicle-related accidents. The first 37 days of 2025 saw 99 major accidents, resulting in 39 fatalities. A single day, February 6, recorded five deaths, including a father and son in Malir Halt and three others near Millennium Mall. By mid-February, the death toll had reached 108 within just 45 days. Similar trends are observed in Sargodha, where illegal modifications to dumpers contributed to 12 deaths in January, and in Islamabad, where a dumper overturned on IJP Road on March 28, killing four people, including a 15-year-old girl. Larkana also reported multiple fatalities in March due to reckless heavy vehicle movement. The situation is worsening, with such incidents becoming frequent across different cities in Pakistan, further emphasizing the gravity of the crisis.

An analysis of these incidents identifies reckless driving, illegal vehicle modifications, and lax enforcement as key contributors to these tragedies. A bitter reality further aggravating the situation is that many heavy-duty vehicle drivers operate continuously without adequate rest, often under

intense pressure to meet unrealistic delivery schedules. To cope with fatigue, some drivers resort to using drugs and narcotics while driving, which severely impairs their judgment and reaction times, posing grave risks to themselves and others on the road. Many drivers operate without formal training, displaying a blatant disregard for traffic rules.

Unauthorized vehicle modifications, including excessive height adjustments and overloading, further increase the risk of accidents by making vehicles harder to control. The corruption within the transport department allows unfit vehicles to remain on the roads, exacerbating the problem. Despite over 34,000 challans and the arrest of 490 drivers, fatal accidents continue, suggesting that penalties alone fail to act as a deterrent. This indicates a deeper governance failure, where systemic inefficiencies and lack of accountability prevent meaningful change. The persistence of unauthorized heavy vehicle movement during restricted hours highlights weak regulatory oversight and poor coordination between transport authorities and law enforcement agencies.

Responsibility for these recurring accidents is widespread. The transport authorities and local administrations fail to implement and enforce strict regulations, allowing unsafe practices to persist. Trucking companies and vehicle owners prioritize financial gain over public safety, often hiring untrained drivers and neglecting vehicle maintenance. Additionally, reckless driving by individuals exacerbates the issue, making roads unsafe for all users. The absence of modern road safety infrastructure, including surveillance cameras and

smart traffic management systems, further worsens the situation.

In stark contrast, developed nations in the Western world and even Middle Eastern countries have successfully minimized road fatalities through strict enforcement of traffic laws, advanced road safety measures, and technological interventions. In Europe and North America, heavy vehicle operations are strictly regulated, with rigorous licensing requirements, extensive driver training programs, and stringent vehicle fitness standards. Advanced technologies such as speed limiters, automatic braking systems, and GPS tracking are mandatory for commercial vehicles. Enforcement is carried out through automated surveillance cameras, with hefty fines and license suspensions acting as effective deterrents. Moreover, urban planning in these countries includes designated lanes for heavy vehicles and specific time restrictions to reduce congestion and accidents.

The Middle East, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia, has implemented similar measures with remarkable success. Strict road safety laws, electronic monitoring systems, and heavy penalties for traffic violations have significantly reduced accidents. The UAE's intelligent traffic management systems track violations in real-time, ensuring immediate action against offenders. Training programs for heavy vehicle drivers are mandatory, and companies that fail to comply with safety standards face heavy fines or suspension. Additionally, the integration of artificial intelligence in traffic management has further enhanced road safety in these countries.

Pakistan can learn valuable lessons from these

models to control the rising number of accidents caused by heavy vehicles. A multi-pronged approach is necessary, beginning with the strict enforcement of fitness certification for vehicles to ensure that only roadworthy vehicles operate. A crackdown on unauthorized modifications and untrained drivers is essential, coupled with mandatory training programs to instill responsible driving habits. Enhanced surveillance using automated cameras and stricter penalties for traffic violations could further deter reckless behavior. Additionally, investing in intelligent traffic systems and AI-based monitoring could significantly improve road safety.

Urban planning must incorporate dedicated heavy vehicle lanes and time restrictions to minimize congestion and risks. Public awareness campaigns are also vital in educating both drivers and pedestrians about road safety. The government should reconsider licensing policies, ensuring that only qualified and responsible individuals are permitted to operate heavy vehicles. Strict action against corrupt officials enabling unfit vehicles to ply the roads is also crucial.

The increasing fatalities caused by dumpers and heavy vehicles in Pakistan reflect a deeper crisis in regulatory failure, corruption, and lack of accountability. Without urgent and effective interventions, the roads will continue to be unsafe, and more innocent lives will be lost. The situation demands immediate, concrete action to reform traffic governance, enhance enforcement, and promote a culture of road safety in the country. Learning from global best practices and leveraging modern technology will be key to addressing this crisis effectively and ensuring safer roads for all.

## What chance of a sustainable ceasefire?

Chris Doyle

**G**IVEN that the world has meekly accepted that Israel can starve an entire population under its control to collectively punish them as part of its genocide in Gaza, it is hard to envisage an exit from this horror. But if fishing for minuscule crumbs of comfort, one could entertain faint hope for at least a temporary pause, while some may even indulge in extraordinary ill-founded optimism for a permanent ceasefire deal. But what are the chances?

For the Israeli public, the focus is understandably on securing the release of the 58 hostages reportedly left in Gaza, of whom 24 are thought to be alive. They know that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's feverish determination to intensify the Israeli military onslaught on Gaza poses a serious risk to the hostages' lives. Sadly, this does not appear to be the priority of the Israeli government. Netanyahu broke the January deal on March 15, ending six weeks of lower-level hostilities. Israel still killed 170 Palestinians in this period.

This is why the protests in Israel have been so vociferous and the opinion polls show that Netanyahu is not trusted to prioritize the hostages' freedom.

Hamas has its pressures. Protests against it still take place in Gaza. Some

Palestinians allege that these are inspired and organized by Fatah. Even if this is partly true, there is significant dissatisfaction with Hamas' rule and its strategy. Many do not see Hamas as having advanced Palestinian rights or their liberation, while, through its actions, it has given Israel the opportunity to decimate Gaza.

The Palestinians in the Strip are approaching breaking point. They have endured enough already but the Israeli siege reimposed on March 2 has now lasted more than 50 days, the longest such siege in 18 months. The impact is devastating, though a full scientific determination of how much closer the population is to famine has yet to be made. So, how are the talks progressing? The head of Hamas' political bureau, Khalil Al-Hayya, last week presented a comprehensive deal that essentially involved the release of all the hostages in exchange for an end to the war, the release of an agreed number of Palestinian detainees, the lifting of the siege and the start of reconstruction. This has effectively been on the table for months, ever since last July.

Israel offered a 45-day ceasefire in return for the release of 10 hostages. Hamas rejects any partial deals and will only accept an agreement that provides for a permanent end to the hos-

ilities. For any long-term deal, Israel demands a complete Hamas surrender. This is simply not a serious negotiating platform. Another demand of the same ilk is that Hamas gives up all its remaining weapons. Maybe there could be room for this in a deal, but how could anyone be sure that all weapons had been handed in? It is still unlikely. Hamas claims to be defending Palestinians and will just see this as surrender by another name.

If Israel and Hamas are not close to a deal, what about the brokers? One issue is that Steve Witkoff, US President Donald Trump's key man on the issue, is also engaged in the Russia-Ukraine talks and the talks held on Iran. It is too early to say whether this erstwhile businessman has any talent for brokering such international deals to end conflicts, but the idea of sorting out three of the most serious issues on the planet in a matter of weeks would be too much for anyone.

Trump is sticking to his lines. He still parrots his plan, as he did when meeting Netanyahu for a second time early this month, that Gaza was an "incredible piece of important real estate" that should be under American control.

This line makes it nigh impossible for Arab brokers to move forward. Much as Egypt and Qatar would both wish to secure a sustainable

ceasefire, inflammatory comments from the White House only serve to empower the most militaristic and genocidal tendencies in Netanyahu's Cabinet, while discouraging any trust that could result in a sustainable deal. Palestinians still fear that the real agenda is to force them out of Gaza or to kill those who refuse — in short, ethnic cleansing or genocide.

European powers remain inactive, with France perhaps the exception. President Emmanuel Macron has said France will hold an international conference in June alongside Saudi Arabia. He has indicated Paris might recognize a Palestinian state. "We must move toward recognition and we will do so in the coming months," he said. If he does, will other European powers like the UK follow suit? Only a united front will count. The Palestinians in Gaza cannot wait. Famine is unfolding in plain sight. The humanitarian crisis is more severe than at any time over the last 18 months. More than two-thirds of Gaza is under evacuation orders and Israel is using about 30 percent of the entire Strip for buffer zones it states it will not leave.

A faint chance exists that a short-term pause may be possible. But what is really needed is a sustainable ceasefire and that looks further off with each passing day.

## What crackdown on pro-Palestine voices means for US rights

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

**M**A H M O U D Khalil, a C o l u m b i a University graduate student detained by America's Immigration and Customs Enforcement, last week eloquently wrote from his cell that "rights are granted to those who align with power." This poignant statement came soon after a judge ruled that the government had met the legal threshold to deport the young activist on the nebulous ground of being a threat to "foreign policy."

"For the poor, for people of color, for those who resist injustice, rights are but words written on water," Khalil further lamented. The plight of this young man, whose sole transgression appears to be his participation in the nationwide mobilization to halt the Israeli genocide in Gaza, should terrify all Americans. This concern should extend even to those who are not inclined to join any political movement and who possess no particular sympathy for — or detailed knowledge of — the extent of Israel's atrocities in Gaza or the US' role in bankrolling this devastating conflict.

The perplexing nature of the case against Khalil, like those against other student activists such as Turkish visa holder Rumeysa Ozturk, starkly indicates that the issue is purely political. Its singular aim appears to be to silence dissenting political voices. Judge Jamee Comans this month confirmed the legality of the Trump administration's decision to deport Khalil with an uncritical acceptance of the language employed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Rubio had previously written to the court, citing "potentially serious foreign policy

consequences" stemming from Khalil's actions, which he characterized as participation in "disruptive protests" and "antiseptic conduct." The latter accusation is the reflexive rejoinder to any form of criticism leveled against Israel, a tactic that was prevalent long before the current catastrophic genocide in Gaza.

Those who argue that American citizens remain unaffected by the widespread government crackdown on freedom of expression must reconsider. Last week, for example, the government decided to freeze \$2.2 billion in federal funding to Harvard University. Beyond the potential weakening of educational institutions and their impact on numerous Americans, such financial measures also coincide with a rapidly accelerating and alarming trend of targeting dissenting voices within the US. Also last week, Massachusetts immigration lawyer Nicole Micheroni, a US citizen, publicly disclosed receiving a message from the Department of Homeland Security requesting her self-deportation. Furthermore, oppressive new bills are under consideration in Congress, which could grant the Department of Treasury expansive measures to shut down community organizations, charities and similar entities under various pretenses and without adhering to standard constitutional legal procedures.

US visa applicants who have spent "any length of time in an official or diplomatic capacity" in the Gaza Strip since Jan. 1, 2007.

In pursuing these actions, the US government is effectively replicating some of the draconian measures imposed on the Palestinians by Israel. The crucial distinction, based on historical experience, is that these measures tend to undergo continuous evolution, establishing legal precedents that swiftly apply to all Americans and further compromise their already deteriorating democracy.

Americans are already grappling with their perception of the country's democratic institutions, with a disturbingly high 72 percent believing that US democracy is no longer a good example for other countries to follow, according to a Pew Research Center survey from April 2024.

The situation has only worsened in the past year. While US activists advocating for justice in Palestine deserve unwavering support and defense for their profound courage and humanity, Americans must also recognize that they, and the remnants of their democracy, are equally at risk.

"Our defense is in the preservation of the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere," is a timeless quote associated with Abraham Lincoln. Yet, every day that Khalil and others spend in their cells awaiting deportation stands as the starkest violation of that very sentiment. Americans must not permit this injustice to persist.



# How the deportation of a Salvadoran man has become a hinge point in US history

**THE** saga of Kilmar Abrego Garcia has become about more than one undocumented migrant's plight in a Salvadoran jail and is now one of those rare cases that resonate in history and dictate the character of America itself.

The deported Maryland resident's fate is turning into a defining test of Donald Trump's mass expulsion program and of Democrats' ability to frame an opposing argument on the politically tricky issue of immigration, which normally favors the president and his party.

The Abrego Garcia case and related matters could be the catalyst of a constitutional collision between an administration that brooks no restraints on its power and the authority of the judiciary to check an unfettered president.

The ultimate outcome of this critical legal battle could hinge on whether the conservative Supreme Court majority is willing to risk a showdown with the president, which it has seemed keen to avoid.

The administration admitted in court that Abrego Garcia was deported because of an administrative error, ignoring a judge's ruling that he couldn't be sent back to his native El Salvador, where his life could be in danger. But officials are refusing to return Abrego Garcia to the US, arguing they lack power to force El Salvador to do so.

Officials are also choosing to interpret the Supreme Court's ruling that the Trump administration must "facilitate" his return as a unanimous endorsement of the administration's position. They argue that because Abrego Garcia is in the custody of a foreign government, they have no power to return him.

The White House insists Abrego Garcia is a terrorist; a member of the notorious MS-13 gang, who will never be brought back to the US. But it has failed to produce definitive evidence to prove these claims. It has instead been maligning Abrego Garcia's character by highlighting a domestic dispute with his US-born wife and a claim he was involved in human trafficking. But Abrego Garcia was not prosecuted in either case, and his wife has dismissed the allegations against him.

Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen visited El Salvador last week. Abrego Garcia was brought out of custody to

meet him, wearing civilian clothes, in a photo op apparently staged by the Trump-allied government to embarrass the visiting Democrat.

"The subject at hand is that he and his administration are defying a court order to give Abrego Garcia his due process rights," Van Hollen told CNN's Dana Bash on "State of the Union" on Sunday. "They need to put up or shut up in the courts."

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Stephen Collinson

Trump and the White House over his visit. The president called him a "fool," and the case has prompted some Democrats, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, to suggest the party would be better off hammering Trump on the economy, an issue that may matter more to voters. But Van Hollen defended his stance. He told CNN's Bash, "I don't think it's ever wrong to fight for the constitutional rights of

The Trump administration's mass deportation program — a centerpiece of the president's 2024 election campaign — is now embroiled in multiple legal challenges.

It seems inevitable that the policies, which have already landed before the Supreme Court, will return there for final adjudication in a moment of historic importance.

In the early hours of Saturday, for instance, a majority on the high court temporarily blocked the administra-

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removals. He was the first judge to find "probable cause exists" to hold administration officials in criminal contempt.

The key concerns about the use of the Alien Enemies Act come down to the lack of opportunities for detainees to challenge the action against them in court. This impression — that basic constitutional rights and legal procedures that underpin the republic are being infringed — is crystalized by the Abrego Garcia case and is why Trump opponents like Van Hollen regard it as so critical.

In a key twist in the drama last week, a federal appeals court knocked back the administration's request to overrule a Maryland federal judge, Paula Xinis, in the Abrego Garcia case. Xinis is growing increasingly frustrated with the administration's delaying tactics and defiance after she ordered it to follow the instructions of the Supreme Court and "facilitate" his return.

In a ruling Thursday, the US Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit denied the government's emergency motion to stay Xinis' order pending appeal. Writing for the appeals court, Judge Harvie Wilkinson said the administration's assertion of "a right to stash away residents of this country in foreign prisons without the semblance of due process" should be "shocking not only to judges, but to the intuitive sense of liberty that Americans far removed from courthouses still hold dear."

Wilkinson, an appointee of former President Ronald Reagan, warned of a situation in which two branches of government were "grinding irrevocably against one another in a conflict that promises to diminish both."

"If today the Executive claims the right to deport without due process and in disregard of court orders, what assurance will there be tomorrow that it will not deport American citizens and then disclaim responsibility to bring them home?" Wilkinson asked. "And what assurance shall there be that the Executive will not train its broad discretionary powers upon its political enemies?"

The ruling encapsulated this perilous moment in American history, and the question of whether the judiciary — one of the last effective checks on Trump's power — will constrain or enable a president who sees few limits on his authority.

— CNN

## Trust in America virtually zero over Iran nuclear deal talks

Michael Jansen

Trump's contact with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the Ukraine war.

Israel observed a two-month ceasefire in Gaza from January 19th, the day before Trump entered the White House, until March 18th, but has not halted its attacks or blockade on Gaza since then and has refused to ceasefire. While Trump boasts that Witkoff has a "great friendship" with Putin, his war on Ukraine continues.

Since Trump pulled out of the Iran deal, the political situation in the region has changed considerably. During both the first Trump administration, the presidency of Joe Biden, and the first weeks of Trump's second term, the US has demonstrated that it is not a reliable partner, opening the door to China and Russia. This culminated in China-brokered Saudi-Iranian reconciliation in March 2023 after six years of estrangement. Total US political and military support for Israel's brutal war on Gaza triggered by Hamas' October 7th, 2023, has

enough 60 per cent enriched uranium to enrich to 90 per cent and build at least six nuclear bombs. Thanks to Trump, Trust remains non-existent, particularly in Tehran. During these talks between Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's man has been inconsistent. While the first round on April 12th was deemed "constructive" by both sides, ahead of the second round, Witkoff flip-flopped. Having agreed that Iran could continue "enrichment at 3.67 per cent for civil purposes," he posted on social media on the 15th that "Iran must stop and eliminate its nuclear enrichment and weaponisation programme."

Iran has repeatedly said over many years that it has no intention of manufacturing nuclear weapons and the IAEA has reported that it has not done so. Witkoff also demanded that Iran allow "verification" of its ballistic missile arsenal, a demand

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**While Iranian and US envoys have held two rounds of indirect negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme and a third has been set for April 26th, a new deal will have to take into consideration the advances made by Iran since Trump pulled out. Ahead of Saturday's round, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi — who took part — warned that Iran is close to having the ability to make nuclear weapons. He told the French daily Le Monde, "It's like a jigsaw puzzle. They have the pieces, and one day they can put them together. There is a way to go to achieve this, but they are not far from it. We have to accept that. In the last four years, we have seen a remarkable acceleration." The IAEA estimates Iran has accumulated enough 60 per cent enriched uranium to enrich to 90 per cent and build at least six nuclear bombs. Thanks to Trump, Trust remains non-existent, particularly in Tehran. During these talks between Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's man has been inconsistent. While the first round on April 12th was deemed "constructive" by both sides, ahead of the second round, Witkoff flip-flopped.**

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Iran has rejected. Tensions ratcheted up after March 30th when Trump threatened to bomb Iran if no agreement has been achieved.

Araghchi said Iran is prepared to address US concerns about its nuclear programme but would not discuss its right to enrich uranium for civil purposes. This right was granted in 1968 when Tehran signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It must be pointed out that the US gave Iran its first nuclear reactor in 1958 under the US Eisenhower administration's "Atoms for Peace" policy.

If talks progress to detailed technical levels, it is doubtful that Witkoff, as Trump's envoy to multiple crises, will have the time and expertise to deal with Iran's nuclear programme. Witkoff is a property developer worth an estimated \$2 billion and a Trump golf buddy. Although Witkoff has no diplomatic experience, Trump made him envoy in ceasefire talks between Hamas and Israel and

angered both Arab rulers and the Arab people. It is notable that Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister Prince Khaled Bin Salman paid a visit to Tehran — the first in decades by such a senior official — ahead of the second round of nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington. At the same time, Russia offered to mediate in the currently Oman-brokered indirect talks between the US and Iran.

Following Araghchi's visit to Moscow ahead of the second round, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov declared, "The Russian Federation remains ready to do everything within our capabilities to contribute to the settlement of the situation by political and diplomatic means." His statement came in response to the suggestion by an Iranian lawmaker that Russia and China could become joint guarantors of a new deal between the US and Iran. Thanks to erratic Trump external guarantees could be necessary.

## The Hawaii of Israel: How Trump legitimised a longstanding Israeli vision

**ON** April 7, United States President Donald Trump met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for a second time since his inauguration. Speaking to the media, Trump doubled down on his earlier comments about the Gaza Strip, describing it as an "incredible piece of important real estate".

Trump also repeated his suggestion that the Palestinians should leave the Strip "to different countries" and claimed that people "really do love that vision. ... A lot of people like my concept."

Days later, about 70 percent of Gaza had been turned into a "no-go zone" for Palestinians. Confirming that Israel is working "in accordance with the US president's vision, which we seek to realise", Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz declared Israel's intention to "seize" more territory, adding that "wilful passage" will be given to Palestinians who want to leave.

It is by now clear that Trump's statements on Gaza have had the effect of legitimising a longstanding Israeli vision of ethnic cleansing of the

Strip. What the US president calls "my concept" is in fact not his at all.

Over decades of Israeli occupation and colonisation of the Gaza Strip, there have been multiple plans to empty out or disperse the Palestinian population in a bid to secure full control over this part of Palestine. The power of colonial practices has also been tested. For example, to draw Israeli settlers and thereby help transform Gaza's demographics, the Strip was at one point even promoted as the "Hawaii of Israel".

Left out of Israeli war aims in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the Gaza Strip emerged out of the 1949 Armistice Agreements under Egyptian military rule. Constituting only a small part of what until then had been the Gaza District of Palestine, the Gaza Strip was home to two groups of Palestinians: the local population and refugees — people who had been forced off their land as Israel expanded its territorial reach during the war.

As the guns fell silent, the Gaza Strip became known in Israeli policy circles as the "job unfinished" — a slice of land

next to the Egyptian border that Israel's leaders would like to control, preferably without its Palestinian population.

Israel's first attempt to take Gaza by force occurred in 1956. But under pressure from US President Dwight Eisenhower, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion had no choice but to withdraw and put an end to the Israeli occupation. The botched attempt taught Israel an important lesson: To redraw the map of the Middle East and to make its territorial expansionist agenda a success, Israel needed American support and approval.

The 1967 Arab-Israeli War was far more successful in this regard. Through conquest and occupation, the Gaza Strip was brought under direct Israeli rule. This opened the door to revitalise "transfer" — the forced displacement and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Seen as both necessary and permissible or, in Ben-Gurion's words, "an important humane and Zionist idea", transfer was recognised as an effective tool to advance Zionist colonisation of Palestine.

Trude Strand

In the following years, as noted by Palestinian historian Nur Masalha, transfer acquired different labels. These included "population exchange", "Arab return to Arabia", "voluntary emigration" and "rehabilitation" with different Israeli governments taking different approaches.

One approach was Defence Minister Moshe Dayan's "open bridges", which allowed Palestinians in Gaza to leave for other countries in search of work. Another was to open offices in Gaza's refugee camps to organise and pay for travel and passports for Palestinians willing to "voluntarily migrate", which in effect turned the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs into a "global travel agency".

Regardless of the approach, Israel's policy objective remained the same: to create a drive in Palestinians to leave the Strip. "I want them all to go, even if they go to the moon," Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol said. Expressing Israeli frustration, Eshkol articulated the feeling of being stuck with what was considered the prob-

lem of Gaza. After all, only the Palestinian population there — and the sizeable refugee population in particular — stood in the way of full Israeli annexation.

In response to Israel's Gaza "dilemma", its politicians also looked for more comprehensive solutions. This led to an almost continuous flow of plans for the "rehabilitation" of Palestinians outside the Strip. Starting immediately after the 1967 war, a variety of potential destinations came up. These included the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, Iraq, or even as far afield as Canada and Australia.

Despite Israeli efforts and elaboration of plans — and much to the disappointment of Israel's decision-makers — the initiatives came to naught as the number of Palestinians leaving the Strip remained limited. And given other considerations, including moral, legal and diplomatic ones, the plans to displace a large number of Palestinians from Gaza were left in the drawer.

But as Israeli politicians turned to examine their menu of choices in

the post-October 7, 2023, era, "voluntary emigration", or forced displacement, re-emerged. Gone was any sensitivity to international opinion and potential reactions. Instead, Trump has led the way, making statements on Gaza that in effect turn decades of Zionist ideology and practice into official American policy.

By means of his policy stance, the US president has legitimised a longstanding Israeli vision of ethnic cleansing in the Strip. In the process, his articulation of policy has moved ever closer to the strand of Revisionist Zionism that viewed Palestinians as aliens in their own land and, therefore, "transferable".

In arguing that Palestinians need to go to make Israel and the region safe, Trump has departed from the internationally shared principle that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip — as elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory — have legitimate rights to self-determination in their land. As such, Trump brings to mind Revisionist Zionist ideologue Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who argued that "when the Arab claim is confronted with our Jewish

demand to be saved, it is like the claims of appetite vs the claims of starvation" with "transfer" inextricably linked to Jewish rights to the land.

The cynical promises of a better future for people who are left with nothing but their land after a brutal war of erasure and plausible genocide must be taken seriously. The legitimacy Trump has given to Israeli plans poses a threat in the here and now, but it could also outlast his presidency.

That is because he has offered US presidential sanction of ethnic cleansing as an acceptable tool. This leaves the door open for Israel — in the near or distant future — to pursue "transfer", "rehabilitation" and "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians, whether in Gaza or the West Bank.

Furthermore, the American president has repeatedly communicated US support for illegal land seizures and colonisation.

Suggesting Gaza (and Greenland) could become "US territory", he has reintroduced and validated ideas that most leaders of the world had put on the scrap heap of history.

Finally, Trump has shifted the US position away from the premise of

working towards a two-state solution. In fact, considering his statements, there appears to be a fundamental disregard for Palestinians in Gaza and their collective right to self-determination.

Looking at current US policy against historical record, Trump's "Riviera of the Middle East" seems a curious combination of Zionist ethnic cleansing under the "transfer" model and the colonial ideal of the "Hawaii of Israel".

It is no wonder Trump has been cheered on by Israeli leaders as he calls for the forced depopulation of the Gaza Strip and its transformation into fully fledged colonial territory — annexed or otherwise. After all, Trump's ideas follow in the footsteps of Zionist leaders from Ben-Gurion to Netanyahu, under whom transfer has been the preferred but diplomatically and legally challenging option all along.

With Trump going out in front, such challenges could turn into tomorrow's opportunities. It remains the task of other states to stand up against Israeli-American normalisation of continued ethnic cleansing and colonial land grabs in Palestine.

— Aljazeera





# PSX witnessed bullish trend, gains 1,067 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 1,067.79 points, a positive change of 0.91 percent, closing at 118,383.38 points as compared to 117,315.59 points on the last trading day.

A total of 672,443,910 shares were traded during the day as compared to 425,121,963 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs36.424 billion against Rs34.495 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 451 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 252 of them recorded gains and 158 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 41 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Cnergyco PK with 103,028,410 shares at Rs8.55 per share, Power Cement with

62,587,267 shares at Rs13.54 per share and Bank of Punjab with 42,587,808 shares at Rs11.42 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs99.00 per share closing at Rs23,099.00 whereas runner-up was Atlas Honda Limited with Rs43.39 rise in its share price to close at Rs1,116.13.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs184.70 per share price, closing at Rs3,012.30, whereas the runner-up Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs98.86 decline in its per share price to Rs7,001.14.

**Gold prices surge by Rs.8,100, reach all time high to 357,800 per tola**

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs8,100 on Monday and was sold, all time high, at Rs3,57,800 against its sale at

Rs349,700 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs6,944 to Rs306,755 from Rs299,811 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat increased by Rs6,366 to Rs281,202 from Rs274,836.

The rates of per tola silver increased by Rs24 to Rs3,441 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs21 to Rs2,950.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$69 to \$3,395 from \$3,326 whereas that of silver went up by \$0.22 to \$32.77, the Association reported.

**Rupee sheds 15 paisa against US Dollar**

The Rupee on Monday depreciated by 15 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.86 against

the previous day's closing of Rs280.71.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.90 and Rs282.40, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs5.27 to close at Rs324.44 against the last day's closing of Rs319.17, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen went up by 02 paisa and closed at Rs1.99, whereas an increase of Rs4.23 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs376.61 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs372.38.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 04 paisa each to close at Rs76.46 and 74.85 respectively.



ISLAMABAD: Delegation of China Mobile Communication led by Chairman Yang Jie after meeting with Minister for Information and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where five ships, Mol Presence, SSL Brahmaputra, Sotka, Donna Alexandra and Orion Saint carrying Container, Lentils, Soya Bean Seed and LNG berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal-1, Grain Terminal and Engro Elengy Terminal respectively Sunday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Gulf Barakah, AB Oliva, Jipiro Neftis and Nave Estella carrying Container, Palm oil, Chemicals and Gas Oil also arrived at outer anchorage during last 24 hours.

A total of eight ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, SSL Brahmaputra and Twin Delight left the port Monday morning, while three more ships, Kashi, Aquavita Bay and Maritime Guardian were expected to sail.

Cargo volume of 149,460 tonnes, comprising 140,259 tonnes imports cargo and 9,201 export cargo carried in 1,256 Containers (1,130 TEUs Imports & 126 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 11 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them six ships, Gulf Barakah, Georgios-P, Valianta, Zahra, Jipiro Neftis and Annita scheduled to load/offload Container, Cement, Palm oil, Chemicals, Gas oil and Coal were expected to take berths at QICT, MW-2, LCT, EVTL, FOTCO and PIBT are respectively, while two more container ships, SM Mahi and MSC Sarah-V are due expected to arrive at Outer Anchorage today (Tuesday).

## Salt exports surge by 40 per cent

BEIJING (INP): Pakistan's salt exports to China witnessed a significant increase in the first quarter of 2025, rising by 40% compared to the same period last year. This was reported by China Economic Net (CEN) on Monday, quoting the latest data from the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC).

Ghulam Qadir, Trade and Investment Counsellor of Pakistan's Embassy in Beijing told CEN that from January to March 2025, Pakistan exported over 13.64 million kilograms of salt to China worth \$1.83 million, whereas last year in the same period it was \$1.30 million.

The sharp increase highlights the growing trade cooperation between the two countries under the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and reflects China's rising demand for high-quality industrial and edible salt. He said Pakistan is exporting salt to China under three categories, edible salt, pure sodium chloride and other salt.

Industry experts attribute Pakistan's export growth to improved logistics, competitive pricing, and enhanced quality standards adopted by Pakistani exporters. The rise in salt export is also driven by China's increasing industrial consumption, particularly in the chemical, pharmaceutical, and food processing sectors.

# ICCI strengthens global ties via expos

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has emphasized the need for a future-oriented roadmap to steer Pakistan towards sustainable development. Talking to different business leaders who visited the Chamber here on Monday, he underscored the critical importance of political stability and policy continuity in placing the country on the path to progress and prosperity.

Highlighting the vital role of youth in national development, Nasir Mansoor urged the younger generation to equip themselves with modern skills aligned with evolving global demands.

"Our youth are key stakeholders in shaping Pakistan's future," he said, stressing the need for introspection and identifying the root causes behind the nation's lag in various sectors.

Commenting on the recent 29% tariff imposed by the United States on certain Pakistani exports, the ICCI President expressed concern over the possible adverse economic implications. He urged the authorities to proactively engage with US counterparts to resolve the issue and simultaneously introduce domestic relief measures such as tax breaks, subsidies, and export incentives to support the business community.

ICCI President reaffirmed ICCI's commitment to policy advocacy and

facilitating a business-friendly environment. He stated that the Chamber continues to serve as a bridge between the business community and the government, working to improve the ease of doing business in the country.

He noted that ICCI maintains strong communication with embassies of friendly nations and their respective chambers of commerce to strengthen international ties. "Several international business conferences and expos are in the pipeline, aimed at connecting local investors with overseas counterparts," he added.

The ICCI President concluded by reiterating the Chamber's resolve to promote economic growth through strategic collaboration and visionary planning.

# Adib Rizvi bags prestigious medical award

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Country's iconic surgeon and philanthropist Prof Adib Rizvi has been conferred the prestigious award of British Medical Journal for his meritorious services and contribution in the field of medical sciences of the South Asian region. BMJ (British Medical Journal) is a leading British medical journal being published for more than a century honors medical professionals, researchers and medical institutions every year for carrying out exceptional services in the world of medical sciences.

The Special Recognition Award recognizing services were held at a ceremony where Dr Sanjay Nagra, Co-Chair of the BMJ Advisor Board conferred the award.

He read out citation paying rich tributes to Dr Rizvi and highlighted his pioneering role in establishing a model of equitable and accessible healthcare system in a developing country like Pakistan by introducing a unique model of partnership between the government and the community.

In his tributes the Co Chair also commended Rizvi's unwavering commitment for delivering free and high quality medical treatment to population at large with respect and dignity and without any discrimination of cast, color or religion.

Dr Nagra received the award on behalf of Dr Adib Rizvi who spoke to audience on zoom expressed his heartfelt gratitude to journal for its immense contribution towards the promotion of medical education and allied research. He

asked the editorial board to support and encourage other health institutions in the region to replicate the model SIUT for the betterment of health care of population at large. He said political animosities should be set aside for the betterment and well being of the deprived population.

Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation was established in Civil Hospital Karachi by Dr Adib Rizvi and his colleagues some five decades ago has now emerged as a state of the art medical institution of the country with special focus in the field of urology, nephrology, transplant and other branches of related. Dr Zulfiqar Bhutta another Pediatrician from Pakistan also spoke along with Kamran Abbasi Editor BMJ who also attended the event on zoom.

# 30th Textile Asia Exhibition concludes in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD (INP): The 30th Textile Asia Exhibition has successfully concluded in Faisalabad with significant international participation, positioning Pakistan as an emerging hub for textile innovation in Asia. The event, supported by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), attracted exhibitors and visitors from multiple countries including China, Turkey, Germany, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, Korea, Russia, and Malaysia.

The exhibition served as a platform to accelerate exports and promote industrial development in Pakistan's textile sector. Modern

machinery, smart fabrics, and sustainable industrial solutions formed the core components of the displays, reflecting the industry's current technological trends and future direction. Industry experts have described Textile Asia 2025 as the most comprehensive and effective exhibition related to textile and garment machinery in the region.

The event highlighted Pakistan's growing capabilities in textile manufacturing while facilitating business connections between local manufacturers and international markets.

"This year's exhibition has created significant

opportunities for knowledge transfer and technological advancement in our textile sector," said a representative from the organizing committee, who emphasized the exhibition's role in modernizing Pakistan's textile industry.

Foreign participants showcased advanced technologies designed to improve production efficiency and product quality while reducing environmental impact. Local manufacturers had the opportunity to explore these innovations firsthand, potentially influencing future investment decisions.

The exhibition also fea-

tured specialized pavilions focused on digital printing technologies, energy-efficient machinery, and automation solutions that align with global sustainability standards increasingly demanded by international buyers.

Attendees noted that the event reflected a strategic push to position Pakistan's textile industry more competitively in global markets through technological upgradation and sustainable practices. The organizers reported substantial attendance from industry professionals, business owners, and potential investors throughout the exhibition period.

# CDNS attain Rs1140b savings target by start of last quarter

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 1140 billion in fresh bonds and attained 69.09 percent of the annual target for the ongoing first month of last quarter of the current fiscal year, from July 1 to April 15, 2025. The senior official of CDNS told APP on Monday that the CDNS has set an annual target of Rs 1650 billion for the current Fiscal Year, 2024-25, which

will promote the country's saving culture.

Similarly, the CDNS has set a target of Rs170 billion in investments in Islamic finance for the Current Fiscal Year, which will lead to the growth of the Islamic economy in the country.

Replying to a question, he said that the CDNS has realized a target of Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds and exceeded 100 per cent of the annual target in the last fiscal year 2023-24, from

July 1 to June 30.

National Savings has set an annual target of Rs1.7 trillion for the year 2023-24; it is encouraging that this year, "We surpassed the 100 per cent of the annual target."

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the previous fiscal year 2022-23, he said. He said it was an Rs200 billion additional annual target than the target

of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22.

The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the financial year (2021-22) which will promote a savings culture in the country, he said, adding that given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to further improve the savings culture. The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced.

At this time, Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS, which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added.

The official said that the directorate had set a target of Rs 75 billion for the new financial year 2023-24 for Islamic finance bonds.

Replying to a question, he said the CDNS aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector.

# PTCL Group posts 22% revenue growth in Q1 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): PTCL Group, Pakistan's leading telecom and ICT services provider, has reported a 22% year-on-year revenue growth for the first quarter of 2025, reflecting strong performance across its business segments.

The announcement was made during a Board of

Directors meeting held in Islamabad. PTCL Group President and CEO Hatem Bamatraf said the group's continued growth reinforces its position as the country's top integrated telecom service provider.

The Group's robust performance solidifies its position as Pakistan's top inte-

grated telecom service provider. PTCL Group's revenue grew by 22% YoY to Rs 61.8 billion, enabled by robust growth in consumer segments, notably fixed broadband, and mobile data, complemented by significant contributions from enterprise and carrier wholesale services.





## In brief

## Pakistani Golfers compete in Japan's C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two promising young Pakistani golfers showcased their skills at The Royal Junior Golf Championship this week, marking a significant milestone for Pakistan's junior golf program. According to a press release issued here, Shahmeer Maajid and Sara Amin Khan represented their country at the prestigious tournament held at Nippon Kabaya Ohayo Country Club from April 18-20, 2025. In the Boys Under-18 category, Shahmeer Maajid finished 37th overall, shooting a total of 24 over par across three challenging rounds. Despite facing stiff competition from top junior golfers across Asia, Maajid demonstrated resilience and competitive spirit. Sara Amin Khan competed in the Girls Under-18 division, securing the 42nd position with a final score of 30 over par. Her participation highlights the growing talent in Pakistan's junior golf development program. The tournament, supported by the R&A, Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation, and Nippon Kabaya Ohayo Holdings Inc., attracted top young golfers from across the Asian continent. The Pakistan Golf Federation (PGF) expressed pride in the athletes' performance, emphasizing their commitment to developing young golf talent through international exposure and competitive opportunities.

## Hockey team begins intensive training camp

WAHH CANTT (APP): The Pakistan Hockey Team has started a training camp at the POF Sports Complex in Wah Cantt, a significant step in preparation for upcoming international competitions. The camp, which will run until April 24, 2025, aims to equip the national squad with advanced skills and tactical prowess, reported by APP correspondent. The POF Sports Complex is renowned for its state-of-the-art facilities, including a recently installed AstroTurf in the Hockey Stadium. The complex provides an ideal environment for training and competitions. The team will be trained by experienced coaches, including Olympian Tahir Zaman, Muhammad Usman, and Zeeshan Ashraf. A 25-player squad has been selected for the camp, comprising goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders, and strikers from various departments and organizations. The camp will focus on enhancing the team's skills and tactical abilities, preparing them for international competitions. The team's performance will be closely watched as they gear up for upcoming challenges.

## National Games to be held at year end

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) has decided to postpone the 35th National Games, initially scheduled in May this year. According to the private channel, a decision to this effect was taken in a key meeting of its executive committee held in Lahore on Monday. As per inside sources, the games will now be organized in November or December. The meeting was chaired by POA President Arif Saeed and attended by General Secretary Khalid Mahmood, along with several key office-bearers from various national sports federations.

## Karachi Kings thump Peshawar Zalmi in last-over thriller

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Karachi Kings beat Peshawar Zalmi by two wickets in a last-over thriller of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 at National Stadium on Monday.

Set to chase 148, Tim Seifert was dismissed by Luke Wood on the very first ball of the innings on a golden duck.

The left-arm pacer also got rid of James Vince (11) in the third over to dent the Kings in their chase.

Saad Baig then joined skipper David Warner, and the two took the side to 42 when the former was castled by Ali Raza after scoring nine off eight balls.

Irfan Khan made 10 while Mohammad Nabi scored 14 as David Warner remained firm at the other end.

The Karachi Kings' skipper's innings came to an end in the 17th over after scoring a match-winning 60 off 47 balls.

Khushdil Shah then took on the chase and remained unbeaten on 23 as the side chased down the target on the third ball of the last over. For the Zalmi, Luke Wood picked up three wickets, while Ali Raza took two wickets.

Earlier, Peshawar Zalmi set a 148-run target for the Kings in the 11th game of the PSL 10. Babar Azam and Saim Ayub opened the innings for the Zalmi after Karachi Kings put them to bat first.

Saim fell to Mir Hamza after scoring just four runs, bringing Tom Kohler-Cadmore to the crease to join their skipper.

His innings was also a brief one as he was dismissed after scoring just seven runs, with the scoreboard showing 36/2 in 6.5 overs. Mohammad Harris then arrived at the crease and stitched a 31-run partnership with Babar Azam to take Peshawar Zalmi to 67 in 10 overs.

Babar was dismissed after scoring 46 off 41 balls. Hussain Talat made 18 while Mitchell Owen fell to Khushdil Shah after scoring just five runs. Alzarri Joseph remained unbeaten on 24 off 13 balls as Peshawar finished at 147/8 in their 20 overs.

For Karachi Kings, Abbas Afridi and Khushdil Shah took three wickets each while Mir Hamza and Aamer Jamal picked up a wicket each.

Both sides have decided to field the same sides for the PSL 10 game from their previous clashes.

Peshawar Zalmi: Babar Azam (c), Saim Ayub, Mohammad Harris (wk), Tom Kohler Cadmore, Hussain Talat, Mitch Owen, Abdul Samad, Luke Wood, Alzarri Joseph, Arif Yaqoob, and Ali Raza.

Karachi Kings: Tim Seifert (wk), David Warner (c), James Vince, Saad Baig, Khushdil Shah, Irfan Khan, Mohammad Nabi, Aamer Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Hasan Ali, and Mir Hamza.

Kings are placed third on the points table, with two wins from their last four games, while the Zalmi sit in fifth place, having won one of their last three games.

## Ostapenko stuns Sabalenka to win Stuttgart title

STUTTGART (AFP): Jelena Ostapenko stunned world number one Aryna Sabalenka in straight sets to win the WTA event in Stuttgart on Monday, securing the ninth title of her career.

Ostapenko, unseeded and ranked 24th in the world heading into the final, won 6-4, 6-1 to win her first title on clay since her 2017 French Open triumph.

The Latvian cruised to victory, converting her first match point to lift her first WTA singles trophy since February last year.

"It's great to share the court with you -- you're a champion," Ostapenko said to Sabalenka in her on-court interview.

Three-time Grand Slam champion Sabalenka has now lost four finals in Stuttgart in the past five seasons.

"I'm sure you hate me now because you wanted this car so badly, but I'm sure you'll get it another time," Ostapenko added of the car tournament winners receive as a



bonus prize.

The 26-year-old Sabalenka, who won the 2024 US and Australian Opens, is still waiting for her first tournament victory on clay since the 2023 Madrid Open.

"You were a better player than me, that's all there is to it," Sabalenka said.

Ostapenko broke her opponent in the very first game of the match to set the tone.

She did the same in the opening game of the second set, which appeared to break Sabalenka's resistance, with the Belarusian growing increasingly frus-

trated. At one point, Sabalenka fell to the clay, but signalled to her opponent and the umpire that she was not injured.

The tournament win completes an impressive week for Ostapenko in Germany.

She defeated five-time Grand Slam winner Iga Swiatek, ranked second, in the quarters before a straight-sets victory over Ekaterina Alexandrova in the semi-finals.

Ostapenko will climb six places in the WTA rankings to 18th after her first win over Sabalenka at the fourth attempt.

## Korir wins men's Boston Marathon, Lokedi upstages Obiri



BOSTON (AFP): Kenya's John Korir stormed to victory in the Boston Marathon on Monday, while compatriot Sharon Lokedi trumped defending champion Hellen Obiri in the women's race.

Korir, whose victory in the 2024 Chicago Marathon in a time of 2:02:44 made him the sixth fastest marathoner in history, clocked 2hr 04min 45sec for the win, overcoming a fall right at the start.

The 28-year-old's feat emulated that of his brother Wesley Korir, the now-Kenyan politician having won in Boston in 2012 on his first attempt in five appearances.

"I was aiming to win Boston and I had promised my brother that I was going to win," said Korir.

Tanzania's 2017 world bronze medalist Alphonse Felix Simbu was second, just holding off Kenya's Cybrian Kotut in a photo-finish in 2:05.04.

The first American home was Conner Mantz in fourth, missing out on a podium place by just four seconds, a time that was also just eight seconds off Ryan Hall's fastest US marathon time ever.

With five inside 2:06, nine inside 2:08 and 12

inside 2:09, it was the deepest men's race in Boston Marathon history.

Lokedi timed 2:17:22 in the women's race, outpacing Obiri by 19sec, with Ethiopian Yalemsef Yehualaw rounding out the podium.

She smashed the previous course record of 2:19:59 set by Ethiopia's Buzunesh Deba in 2014.

Lemma DNF

The men's field included 21 sub-2:09 runners, but none could get close to Kenyan Geoffrey Mutai's course record of 2:03.02 set back in 2011, even though Korir's winning time was the second fastest in the race's 129-year history.

US Olympian Mantz took the lead group of 21 runners through the 5km mark in 14:20 in a marathon which first saw men compete back in 1897 -- and women in 1972.

By the 10km mark, hit in 28:52, defending champion Sisay Lemma had taken up the front running and the pack fell to 16 5km later.

Rory Linkletter led Lemma through halfway in 1:01.52, but the pace proved too much for the Ethiopian, who promptly dropped out just after 1:19 on the road.

Coming to the business

end of the race, Korir, Mukhtar Edris, Daniel Mateiko and two-time winner Evans Chebet were all in the running in a lead field 13 deep, Mantz doing the majority of the pace setting.

Korir made his move around the 34km mark, surging to take a lead he would never cede.

He quickly built it up to nearly a minute as the others scrambled not only to reel him in but also fight for podium spots.

Korir held his nerve as Kotut and Simbu surged through themselves to stage their own mini-battle for second place, Mantz doing well for fourth as Edris faded into fifth spot.

Obiri had been looking to become the first woman since 1999 to win three consecutive Boston Marathon titles, something only four women have ever done.

Only Deba had broken 2:20 pace in Boston, but a group of 14 remained on track for that mark at the halfway point.

The pack split, but Obiri had not counted on Lokedi's electric finish, the 31-year-old pulling clear at the death for a new Boston record, with 32,000 participants on the heels of the elite runners.

"It feels so good, so great. I can't believe it, I'm so excited," said Lokedi, who won the 2022 New York Marathon on her debut at the distance and was fourth at last year's Paris Olympics.

"I have finished behind Hellen so many times, but this time I told myself it wasn't going to happen again. I fought and wanted it so bad. I loved every part of this race."



KARACHI: Babar Azam picked up pace after a patient start.

## Lionesses claim title with 5-3 victory

KARACHI (APP): The Lionesses of the Field emerged victorious in the final match of the Dr. Shah's Five-A-Side Women's Hockey Tournament, defeating Pearl Pioneers 5-3 in an intense showdown at the Olympian Hanif Khan and Dr. Junaid Ali Shah Sports Complex in Gulshan-e-Iqbal.

Organized by the Karachi Hockey Association (KHA) Women's Wing in collaboration with the Karachi Hockey Association, the tournament concluded with a high-energy final where both teams displayed remarkable skill and determination.

The closing ceremony was graced by Chief Guest Dr. Syed Imran Ali Shah, who distributed prizes among the winning and runner-up teams. The event was presided over by Sindh's Secretary for Sports and Youth Affairs, Abdul Aleem Lashari.

Dr. Imran Ali Shah praised the female athletes for their performance, saying, "Girls are no less than anyone when it comes to sports. I was truly impressed by their performance today and will continue to support women's hockey." He also highlighted his brother Dr. Junaid Ali Shah's pivotal role in reviving the KHA grounds and promoting the sport by installing AstroTurf in 2016.

Secretary Abdul Aleem Lashari assured continued government support for KHA and emphasized the growing interest of young girls in hockey. He also confirmed that the under-construction hostel at the KHA facility will be completed on time.

KHA President Imtiaz Ali Shah reflected on the organization's journey from disrepair in 2016 to its current peak, crediting former president Dr. Junaid Ali Shah for the revival. "He worked day and night to bring back hockey to this ground and faced formidable challenges," he said.

President of the KHA Women's Wing, Asma Ali Shah, acknowledged the efforts of Imtiaz Ali Shah, calling his leadership a guarantee for the continued success of women's hockey in Karachi. She reiterated her commitment to providing a strong platform for female players to excel nationally and internationally.

Several prominent personalities from the sports community attended the event, including former MNA Rehan Hashmi, Olympians Hanif Khan, Kaleemullah, Iftikhar Syed, Wasim Feroz, and Nasir Ali, as well as officials and coaches from the national hockey circuit.

Emerging Player awards were presented to Samina Tabassum, Nida Anjum, Mah Noor, Rija Moiz, Humna Nadeem, Iman, and Gulnaz Gulam Nabi for their outstanding performances during the tournament.

## Azan Ali aims for World Champion title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani young squash player Azan Ali Khan has set his sights on becoming a World Champion, saying his goal demands extensive hard work for which he is ready.

"Squash is my family's game. I'm the nephew of International Champion Jahangir Khan. My father trained Hamza Khan, a world champion, and he was also a coach. I've learned from him," he said while speaking on a private news channel.

Azan who clinched the gold medal in the Under-17 category at the 2025 Australian Junior Open Squash Championship in Melbourne, Australia, Open



bringing pride to Pakistan's sporting community, was of the view that initially, the challenging times weren't too difficult. I didn't lose a single game, although I had a slight pain in gall bladder and took painkillers to manage it.

The Australian Junior Open Squash

Championship took place from April 13 to 17, in Melbourne, Australia, featuring 64 players from 11 countries.

"My next target is to become a world champion, which requires more sponsors. Currently, I'm supported by Muslim Hands, PM Youth Program, and K2 Squash. Winning matches like Jahangir Khan's is tough and demands extensive hard work and support, he said.

"Rehan Tahir, Rana Mashhood and Javed Gilani sir are helping me with sponsorship, but I need more to participate in tournaments and improve my ranking," he said.

## Serie A games postponed after death of Pope Francis

PARIS (Agencies): Monday's four scheduled matches in the top flight of Italian football have been postponed following the death of Pope Francis.

The Vatican announced on Monday morning that Pope Francis had died at the age of 88, having recently been discharged from hospital following five weeks of treatment for an infection.

Four Serie A matches - Torino v Udinese, Cagliari v Fiorentina, Genoa v Lazio and Parma v Juventus - had been scheduled to be played on Easter Monday, which is a national holiday in Italy.

The matches will instead be played on Wednesday, 23 April and kick off at 17:30 BST.

Pope Francis was elected to lead the Catholic Church in 2013, replacing Pope Benedict XVI.

The 88-year-old was a known football fan and had supported Argentine side San Lorenzo since he was a child.

A tribute from the club read: "Our hearts ache. Pope Francis has left this world, but he will never leave our hearts."

"An honorary member of our club, his passion for San Lorenzo always moved us especially, and

unites us in a constant prayer for his soul.

"He celebrated every achievement with us with enormous generosity, receiving the delegations that visited him in the Vatican during his papacy."

A number of Serie A clubs also posted tributes to the Pope following his passing.

"A loss that deeply saddens our city and the entire world," a Roma statement read.

"His faith, his humility, his courage and his dedication have touched the hearts of millions of people, making him a moral reference of our time."

## Bangladesh's resilient fightback in first Test against Zimbabwe



SYLHET (AFP): Bangladesh ended the second day of the first Test against Zimbabwe on Monday trailing by only 25 runs after spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz took five wickets to restrict the visitors to 273 in their first innings. It was a comeback for Bangladesh after a disappointing first day when skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto won the toss in Sylhet and decided to bat first.

However, his batters failed to capitalise and were bowled out by an impressive Zimbabwe attack for a modest 191. Zimbabwe then piled on the misery by racing to 67-0 by the end of play on the first day. Starting from a commanding position, both Zimbabwe openers fell early on the second day to aggressive pace bowling by Nahid Rana.

Ben Curran was the first to go on 18 and his partner Brian Bennett, who hit an aggressive 64-ball 57, was removed soon after with the score on 88-2. Sean Williams (59) was the only Zimbabwe batter to reach fifty. Wessly Madhevere (24), Nyasha Mayayo (35) and Richard Ngarava (28) all failed to build bigger scores. Off-spinner Mehidy took the key wickets of Williams, Mayayo and Ngarava to finish with 5-52 on a wicket that was expected to help the pace bowlers.

Nahid took 3-74 with aggressive bowl-

ing in support of Mehidy. Starting the second innings with an 82-run deficit, Bangladesh lost Shadman Islam on 4 to Blessing Muzarabani with the score on 13.

His opening partner Mahmudul Hasan Joy soldiered on to 28 in an unbeaten 44-run partnership with Mominul Haque, on 15, to end the day at 57-1. Shanto must now hope that they can make the most of the friendly home conditions to set an imposing target for the visitors.

Bangladesh have been formidable on the slow and spin-friendly home pitches but have several veterans missing. They have won eight of the 18 Tests against Zimbabwe, their highest total against any Test side, including four of the past five. The second and final Test will be played in Chattogram from April 28.

Day 2 scores: 1st innings: Bangladesh 191 all out (Mominul Haque 56, Najmul Hossain Shanto 40; Blessing Muzarabani 3-50, Wellington Masakadza 3-21)

1st innings: Zimbabwe 273 all out (Brian Bennett 57, Sean Williams 59; Mehidy Hasan Miraz 5-52, Nahid Rana 3-74)

2nd innings: Bangladesh 57-1 (Mahmudul Hasan Joy 28 not out, Mominul Haque 15 not out; Blessing Muzarabani 1-21).





## In brief

### IRSA releases 103,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 103,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 172,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1429.53 feet which was 27.53 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 50,300 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1120.70 feet, which was 70.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 58,500 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 57,800, 38,000, 29,000 and 7,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 28,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 27,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Missing girl found dead

RAWALPINDI (APP): A 7-year girl gone missing on Sunday was found dead in an under-construction house in the jurisdiction of Mandra, Khan Police Station on Monday. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the Mandra Police was informed at 9:15 p.m. yesterday about the missing of the girl. The police along with the family immediately launched a search for the girl. However, the girl's body was found in the under-construction house on Monday morning which was shifted to the hospital for post-mortem. The Assistant Superintendent of Police Gujar Khan reached the spot to supervise the police, which collected evidence from the scene. The spokesman said the cause of death would be determined in the light of the post-mortem report. Investigations were being conducted from all angles and the facts of the incident would be brought to the fore, he added. Meanwhile, City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani has taken notice on the incident and sought a report from the ASP Gujar Khan. He also ordered immediate investigation of the incident and arrest of the accused involved.

### RDA seals warehouse of food outlet

RAWALPINDI (APP): The enforcement squad of Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) here on Monday sealed a warehouse of the famous food outlet Saviour Foods at Kallar Road, Rawat. According to an RDA spokesperson, the action was taken on the directives of the Director General (DG) RDA, Kinza Murtaza, over violations of building bylaws. He said that the warehouse was functioning without proper approvals and was in clear violation of existing zoning regulations. The DG RDA reiterated RDA's commitment to upholding the city's development and urged all commercial entities to adhere strictly to legal requirements and obtain the necessary approvals. She said that the action follows instructions from the Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, who has mandated a zero-tolerance policy on encroachments and illegal developments. The RDA also calls on the public to cooperate in preserving encroachment-free areas and contribute to making Rawalpindi's streets safer, more accessible, and free of unnecessary congestion, she added. The operation was conducted by RDA Building Superintendent Shafiq Ur Rahman, Shahzad Mahmood, Asim Nawaz, Building Surveyor Aamir Malik and others.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, attends and addresses the Annual Hajj Conference 2025. —APP Photo

## PMYP distributes 600,000 laptops to students

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant stride towards bridging up the digital divide, the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) has successfully distributed a total of 600,000 laptops to students across all phases. This initiative has been a game-changer, enabling students from underprivileged backgrounds to gain access to digital resources and tools that were previously out of reach. According to available data, the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme has reached a major milestone, with 600,000 laptops distributed across all phases by the end of Phase-III.

The laptop distribution breakdown revealed a regional disparity, with

Punjab receiving the largest share at 39.06 percent, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at 14.78 percent, and Sindh at 15.37 percent.

The federal capital garnered 13.40 percent, while Balochistan received a smaller share. Meanwhile, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan accounted for 2.51 percent and 0.86 percent respectively, it stated. With this achievement, the scheme is now poised to take a significant leap forward with the approval of Phase-IV, further expanding its reach and impact.

The program has not only enhanced students' academic performance but also opened up new avenues for them to

explore and learn. The laptop distribution program has been instrumental in empowering students, providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to compete in today's digital landscape.

The PMYP's laptop distribution program has been a resounding success, with far-reaching implications for the country's education sector. By providing students with digital tools and resources, the program has helped level the playing field, ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed.

As the program continues to make a positive impact, it's clear that the future of education in the country is looking brighter than ever.

## ICT admin kicks off anti-polio drive

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Monday launched a seven-day anti-polio campaign in the Federal Capital, aiming to vaccinate 461,125 children upto the age of five years.

According to the spokesman of ICT administration here, the district administration has launched a week-long anti-polio vaccination drive as part of efforts to eliminate the disease from the country. The campaign will run for seven days, during which health workers will go door to door to administer oral polio drops to children upto the age of five years.

He said that all preparations for the campaign have been completed. Assistant commissioners from all zones of the capital took part in morning school assemblies on the first day of the campaign to raise awareness among students and parents. Officials said that during the campaign, more than 461,000 children across Islamabad will be given the polio vaccine. Special focus will be given to urban slums, border areas with Rawalpindi, and locations with high population mobility.

To ensure wider coverage and coordination, polio teams from Islamabad and Rawalpindi will work jointly in the areas along the border of the two cities. This collaborative effort aims to prevent any missed cases, especially in transit and high-risk zones. Vaccination teams will also be present at major bus terminals and other public spaces. Camps will be set up at points where families and children frequently travel, ensuring that those on the move are not left out of the drive.

Health workers have been directed to reach every home in the capital. The administration emphasized that no child should be missed. Authorities said they have mapped all areas and organized teams accordingly to make sure the coverage is complete.

On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon directed that all vaccination teams must be provided full security. Police and other law enforcement personnel have been tasked to escort the teams and ensure their safety, especially in sensitive areas.

The DC also urged parents to support polio teams and allow their children to be vaccinated. He said cooperation from families is essential to successfully eliminate the virus from the region. The polio campaign is part of a nationwide effort to fight the spread of the poliovirus, which still poses a threat to children in several parts of the country. While significant progress has been made, health officials say continued vigilance is necessary to ensure a polio-free future.

Meanwhile, the Islamabad administration has also asked community leaders and school officials to play their part in spreading awareness and encouraging participation. Authorities said that awareness efforts are key to countering misinformation and building trust in the vaccine. In the coming days, district officials will monitor the progress of the campaign through regular field visits.

## Pakistan values growing ties with Rwanda: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Monday said that Pakistan deeply values its relationship with Rwanda, noting that bilateral ties have strengthened steadily over time.

During a meeting with Rwanda's Foreign Minister, Olivier Jean Patrick Nduhungirehe, the chairman said that Pakistan has shared a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a strategic partnership with the East African Community (EAC), and Rwanda's support in this regard holds great importance.

He said that NADRA has completed digital identity documentation projects in Nigeria, Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, and Pakistan is ready to offer similar services to Rwanda.

Gilani said that the establishment of the Pakistani Resident mission in Kigali in 2021 and the inauguration of Rwanda's High Commission in Islamabad in 2024 have given a new dimension to bilateral relations.

He highlighted the first round of Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) held in Kigali in January 2025 and the visit of a parliamentary delegation led by Rwanda's Senate President to Pakistan in October 2023 as significant milestones.

He added that both countries cooperate with each

other at international and regional forums. The formation of the Pakistan-Rwanda Friendship Group by Rwanda's Senate is a commendable step.

The Chairman Senate highlighted the importance of Parliamentary cooperation and observed that a Parliamentary group has been constituted to pave the way for more interaction and bilateral exchanges.

He also extended invitation to his Rwandan counterpart to visit Pakistan. Gilani also informed that Rwandan side about the SIFC forum and said that the platform offers one window solution for trade and investment. The Chairman said that Pakistan places high importance on economic relations with Rwanda. Currently, Pakistan is the largest importer of Rwandan tea and is now exploring possibilities for importing coffee, avocados, pulses, and beans.

He added that Pakistan produces some of the world's best rice, textiles, surgical instruments, pharmaceutical products, and footballs, all of which can find a strong market in Rwanda. Since football is the most popular sport in Rwanda, the import of globally renowned Pakistani footballs can also be considered.

In addition to trade, there are vast opportunities for cooperation in the fields of education, science, technology, and investment. The Chairman appreciated the participation of Rwandan entrepreneurs in the Health, Engineering, and Minerals Show (HEMS) held in Lahore. He informed that Rwandan diplomats are receiving training at Islamabad's Foreign Service Academy, and so far, 11 diplomats have benefited from this program.

Two Rwandan candidates are currently undergoing training under the Pakistan Technical Assistance Programme (PTAP) at the Pakistan Railway Academy, Walton, Lahore.

Pakistan is also willing to offer training facilities to Rwanda in the banking and postal sectors. Four seats reserved for Rwandan students under PTAP have not yet been utilized.

Rwanda's Foreign Minister Olivier Jean Patrick Nduhungirehe agreed with the views of the Chairman Senate, thanked him, and said that friendly relations with Pakistan are a matter of pride for Rwanda. He expressed a desire to further enhance bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

He appreciated Pakistan's hospitality and sincere efforts to promote mutual interests and assured that Rwanda would further strengthen high-level engagements and parliamentary exchanges with Pakistan in the future.



RAWALPINDI: A vendor displays mosquito nets to attract customers at Bara Market. —APP Photo

## Minister Pirzada chairs Executive Board Meeting of FGEHA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada presided over the 40th Executive Board meeting of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) on Monday.

The meeting agenda included finalizing the disposal of FGEHA's commercial properties under the revised Joint Venture (JV) and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Rules 2025, and reviewing progress on key housing projects including Park Road, EFPRO, and F-14/F-15 projects. Other items discussed were the reimbursement of delayed completion charges submitted by the allottees of sub-sector G-14, and the endorsement of the HR Committee's recommendations. The agenda also included revisions in possession charges for FGEHA specified areas and approval of condominium law and rules for apartment buildings.

It was decided that eleven high-value commercial plots located in Mauve Area, G-

13/4, G-14/2, the Skyline Project in Islamabad, Sky Gardens in Rawalpindi, and Cantt Station, Karachi will be offered through a mixed model comprising PPP, lease-operate, and open auction modes, in accordance with the revised JV Rules 2025.

This approach, inspired by previously successful models, aims to serve wider public interests and promote sustainable community development. The proposed commercial developments and land use include five-star hotels, international hospitals, IT tower, shopping mall, international school, apartment complexes, and mixed-use properties. The integrated model is expected to stimulate economic activity and maximize long-term public asset value.

During the review of the Park Road Project, the board approved revisions in the land-sharing formula and layout plan, ensuring alignment with public welfare goals and legal frameworks. The board also approved the revision of possession charges for

FGEHA specified areas and the reimbursement of delayed completion charges of sub-sector G-14.

Moreover, the board decided to share the draft Condominium Act and Rules with the ICT Administration through the Ministry of Interior before presenting them for the federal cabinet. The board also endorsed the abolishing of redundant posts in FGEHA, while deferring the creation and upgradation of few posts to resubmit this item with detailed justifications.

On this occasion, Minister Pirzada directed the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Housing & Works, to investigate and submit a detailed report regarding staffing in subordinate bodies. He emphasized strict compliance with the Prime Minister's directives on organizational rationalization. The minister instructed that all loopholes hampering implementation be identified to ensure accountability and efficiency within the ministry and its attached organisations.





### 115 more Afghans freed

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said 115 more Afghan citizens returned to their homeland on Monday after being released from prisons. Citing border officials in Kandahar's Spin Boldak town, the ministry wrote on X the 115 Afghans, who spent one to three days in jails, had been arrested in various parts of Pakistan. After receiving humanitarian assistance, the returnees were transported to their respective native areas, the ministry added.

### Gang of robbers busted

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Security forces have arrested a six-member gang of armed robbers in Baraki Barak district of Logar on Monday. Police spokesman said that detainees had long been involved in thefts but eventually arrested in the Yahya Qala area. The gang, led by an individual named Jams-hid, had been involved in a series of robberies targeting houses, shops, vehicles, and other properties across various parts of the province over an extended period.

## Kazakhstan pledges \$500 to Afghan railway sector

KABUL (Pajhwok): Kazakhstan has pledged a \$500 million investment to develop the Torghundi-Herat railway segment in Afghanistan, marking a major step in strengthening economic ties between the two countries.

Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar met with Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister Serik Zhumangarin to discuss a wide range of economic cooperation initiatives, including a significant investment in Afghanistan's railway infrastructure.

According to a statement from the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, the two sides explored opportunities to enhance bilateral cooperation in trade, transit, agriculture, mining, transportation, and banking.

Key topics included facilitating visa issuance for Afghan businesspeople, resuming direct flights

between Kabul and Astana, and boosting trade ties.

Mullah Baradar emphasized the historical and cultural bonds between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan, noting their positive impact on expanding commercial relations and attracting investment.

He highlighted that since the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), trade relations between the two countries have steadily strengthened.

Baradar reaffirmed Afghanistan's commitment to enhancing economic and trade ties with Kazakhstan and other regional countries. In this context, a draft roadmap was recently signed between Kabul and Astana, aiming to increase bilateral trade volume to \$3 billion.

He expressed optimism that implementing the roadmap would significantly improve cooperation in trade, agriculture, mining, transportation, transit, rail-

ways, and industry.

Baradar also welcomed Kazakhstan's interest in Afghanistan's mining sector and offered to sign agreements related to the quarantine and preservation of agricultural products, as well as livestock development.

In a bid to boost regional connectivity, Baradar announced that the IEA is in the process of establishing a company to facilitate imports and exports via rail. This initiative will be formally presented to the Kazakh side soon.

Afghanistan has also shared with Kazakhstan a draft agreement proposing a joint coordination center with Iran, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan to streamline cooperation in industrial, commercial, and transportation sectors.

Baradar stressed the importance of easing visa procedures for Afghan traders, resuming direct flights between Kabul and Astana,

and ensuring Afghanistan's active participation in the upcoming regional economic forum.

In response, Deputy Prime Minister Zhumangarin affirmed Kazakhstan's support for a stable and independent Afghanistan.

He acknowledged progress made under the current Afghan administration and noted that bilateral economic and trade relations had expanded in light of these developments.

Zhumangarin expressed his country's readiness to invest \$500 million to begin work on the Torghundi-Herat segment of the Torghundi-Herat-Spin Boldak railway project.

He also revealed plans to establish a logistics and transport company in Herat to manage project operations.

Additionally, Kazakhstan expressed interest in launching an internet cable initiative to improve access to affordable internet in



Afghanistan. Kazakh investors, he said, are eager to invest in Afghanistan's mining, oil, and gas sectors. Technical teams have already arrived in Kabul to assess potential opportunities.

The Kazakh side reiterated its commitment to facilitating visa issuance for Afghan traders, resuming direct flights, strengthening banking ties, and expanding collaboration in

the health and education sectors.

Deputy Prime Minister Baradar warmly welcomed Kazakhstan's pledges, particularly the \$500 million investment in the railway

project and the establishment of the logistics firm. Deputy Prime Minister Baradar assured full support from the Islamic Emirate to ensure the success of these joint efforts.

## Iran urges Afghan migrants to follow national laws

KABUL (TOLONews): Gholam Reza Najari, deputy ambassador of Iran in Kabul, said that his country's policy toward Afghan migrants is based on the possession of legal documentation.

In an interview with TOLONews, he said that Afghan migrants in Iran are expected to comply with Iranian laws to prevent any challenges in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The deputy ambassador in Kabul stated: "We respectfully urge Afghan migrants residing in Iran to observe Iranian domestic laws and regulations to avoid potential legal consequences and prevent any strain on diplomatic relations between our two nations."



Meanwhile, some Afghan migrants who are living legally in Iran have shared their concerns about the challenges they face.

Hadi Hosseini, an Afghan migrant in Iran, said: "A new law has been enacted this year that requires migrants to obtain an exit permit, giving

them only 15 to 20 days to leave Iran. Another issue relates to education: those with census registration cards can send their children to school only up to ninth grade; beyond that, further education is not allowed."

Enayatullah Alkozai, another Afghan migrant in Iran, stated: "Their rights

are not being upheld. Many cannot leave their homes to earn a living. In many cases, their families remain in Iran while they themselves are deported."

Nazar Nazari, a migrant rights activist, said: "These migrants should not be viewed through a different lens. The treatment they receive must be consistent and in line with international migration laws."

Just a day earlier, the acting minister of labor and social affairs criticized travel agencies facilitating visas to neighboring countries. He stated that these agencies, by exploiting the desperation of young people, are creating significant challenges and are in effect contributing to human trafficking.

## Traders struggle amid export halt, poor market

TAKHAR (TOLONews): Dried fruit traders in Takhar say exports from the province have declined significantly. According to them, major challenges include lack of a viable domestic market, inadequate storage facilities, and halted exports.

Almonds, walnuts, pistachios, dried mulberries, dried apricots, plums, cherries, and sour cherries are among the dried fruits produced in Takhar. While they meet local demands, they are also exported to other provinces and abroad. However, some types of dried fruit now have neither export nor domestic markets.

Misbahuddin, a dried fruit trader in Takhar, told TOLONews: "The level of sales did not meet my expectations. I don't know the reason — perhaps the closure of Pakistan's routes or something else."

Samiullah, another local trader, said: "Fruits like walnuts, dried apricots, and cherries weren't exported from Takhar. We bought them, but now they're left with us."

Some dried fruits purchased for export are rotting due to lack of proper storage or transport options. Sellers urge the caretaker government to facilitate exports.

Sami, a dried fruit seller in Takhar, said: "We don't have cold storage or proper places to store our goods. If dried fruits sit for a year, they go bad."

Meanwhile, the Takhar Department of Industry and Commerce acknowledged traders' challenges and assured efforts to market these goods.

Suhail Yuldash, director of export development at the department, said: "Takhar is undoubtedly a key fruit-producing province. Production and orchards are growing here, but this year, compared to last, we've seen a drop in exports."

According to traders, if export opportunities remain limited, their financial losses will be severe.

## Kabul, Tehran agree to expand agri cooperation

KABUL (Pajhwok): Iranian Ambassador in Kabul Alireza Bigdeli has expressed his country's readiness to strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan in agriculture and livestock sectors.

He met Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Maulvi Sadar Azam Usmani, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MoAIL) said.

A statement from ministry said both sides emphasized the need to enhance joint efforts and pledged to implement collaborative programmes in the future.

Ambassador Bigdeli noted Iran's increasing

need to import meat and agricultural products. "At present, we even import meat from faraway countries like the United States. It would be much more sensible to source these products from our neighbouring country, Afghanistan."

He also expressed Iran's willingness to cooperate in setting up a joint cooperation commission, facilitate Afghanistan's participation in the Iran Expo 2025, support livestock breeding programmes, construct slaughterhouses, establish quarantine facilities, ease export and import procedures, promote investment opportunities and introduce modern

irrigation systems.

In response, Deputy Minister Usmani said Afghanistan was carrying out economic assessments regarding meat exports to Iran.

He highlighted the caretaker government's serious efforts over the past three years to halt poppy cultivation and underscored the importance of alternative livelihood initiatives in partnership with neighbouring countries.

"Such programmes will help strengthen Afghanistan's economy while also protecting neighbouring countries from the harmful effects of drug smuggling," he added.

## Third training round: 10 pilots graduate from Air University

KABUL (TOLONews): Ten pilots from the Afghan Air Force, under the Ministry of Defense, have graduated from the ministry's Air University.

According to Air University officials, the new graduates have completed their practical training on C-208 aircraft and Mi-17 helicopters.

Naqibullah Muqim, chief of staff of the general command of the Air Force, during the graduation ceremony encouraged the pilots to further strengthen their professional skills.

He stated: "The profession of piloting is a complex and sophisticated field that requires intelligence. Learning and studying in this profession never ends, and you must always continue your education in this area."

Meanwhile, Makhdoom Abu Bakr Ghaffari, chief of staff of the Air University, announced the reconstruction of educational sections at the university during the ceremony.

He said: "Today we are witnessing the graduation ceremony of ten pilots from the first round of practical flight training with C-208



aircraft and Mi-17 helicopters under the Air Defense and Air Force Command."

Aziz Rahman Mansoor, Deputy Minister for Religious Sites and Mysticism at the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs, emphasized the importance of strengthening the country's defense and air forces, and called for the protection of the current system.

The newly graduated pilots also expressed their readiness to defend Afghanistan's airspace.

Aziz Rahman Mansoor said: "Just as Jihad was once obligatory, now defending this system — achieved through sacrifice — is also an obligation. We

must build a capable defense force."

Idris Wahidi, a newly graduated pilot, said: "We are committed to serving our country with honesty and sincerity through our profession."

According to the Ministry of Defense, this is the third graduating batch from the Air University that has completed practical training for Mi-17 helicopters and C-208 aircraft.

## Triumphant U-19 squad returned

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Under-19 national squad returned from Nepal to Kabul on Monday after qualifying for the ICC Men's U-19 World Cup 2026.

The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) wrote on its Facebook page the triumphant U-19 team landed in Kabul this morning.

The ICC U-19 World Cup Qualifiers featured Afghanistan, Oman, Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and hosts Nepal.

Afghanistan defeated Oman, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in their first three matches.

Afghanistan's final encounter against Nepal was scheduled for April 19, but the game was rained off.

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

## Herat children perform for world circus day celebration



HERAT (TOLONews): World Circus Day was celebrated in Herat with performances featuring circus, acrobatic, and sports displays by children, organized by the Afghanistan Educational and Training Center.

According to statistics from the center, over 2,500 boys and girls across 20 provinces are currently

enrolled in its educational programs.

Wahid Isar, head of the Educational and Training Center in Herat, told TOLONews:

"We work on both educational and recreational programs. Our main focus is on fun-based activities such as circus, acrobatics, gymnastics, and theater. We also conduct sports

training with these children."

Some of the children said that learning circus arts and physical activities has helped strengthen their mental and physical capabilities.

They said that although they've trained for months, lack of facilities has hindered their progress.

Younes Karimi, a student, said: "Our biggest problem is the lack of facilities. We want the resources to be provided so we can continue practicing."

Wali Ahmad Akbari, another student, said: "Our performances today included circus, acrobatics, and gymnastics."

The goal of these circus and sports programs is to support the mental and physical development of children.

Abdul Rahim Radmanesh, a circus instructor, told TOLONews: "We help children learn how to plan for big things from a young age. The focus is on building their physical and mental strength and boosting their confidence so that when they go on stage, they do so with energy and self-assurance."

The Afghanistan Educational and Training Center has been operating for more than two decades, and aims to develop children's abilities through circus, sports, and acrobatic performances.

## Amid global turmoil, gold prices up by 39 per cent

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of gold have surged by nearly 39 percent this year, fuelling concerns among prospective couples.

Analysts and jewellers attribute the increase to ongoing global conflicts, including the wars between Israel and Hamas, Russia and Ukraine, as well as declining confidence in the US dollar.

In late April 2024, one gram of Arabian gold was sold for 4,200 afghanis in Kabul. As of the same period in 2025, the price climbed to 6,250 afghanis per gram, representing a spike of nearly 39 percent.

### Gold prices surge globally

According to global market data, on April 20, 2025, the price of one ounce of gold stood at

\$3,327, compared to \$2,392 on the same date last year.

This indicates an increase of over 39 percent on the international market as well.

### Factors behind the increase

Mohammad Fawad, the owner of a jewellery shop in Kabul, told Pajhwok Afghan News the price of gold had consistently risen over the past year.

He cited the wars in Palestine, Syria, and Ukraine, along with the devaluation of the US dollar, as key drivers.

"Since the war between Israel and Hamas, as well as the unrest in Syria, the price of gold has been climbing. Another major factor is the declining public confidence in the US

dollar.

"BRICS nations — which now number 32 — are working on launching a common currency to rival the dollar, and this has led to a fall in its value while boosting gold prices," he explained.

According to Fawad, many governments and European banks have started purchasing gold instead of holding US dollars, further fuelling the rise.

Haji Zakir Arshan, a jeweller in the Mashal Trade Market, pointed out: "The gold rate is influenced globally, not by our domestic situation. Fortunately, Afghanistan's security is now stable. However, global turmoil drives up gold prices. At present, major world powers are investing in gold bars and keeping them in banks instead of

relying on cash reserves."

Since 2021, he noted, instability in the Middle East had caused global gold prices to rise.

"Now, one ounce of gold is priced above \$3,200, and it's expected to reach \$4,000. In the past, countries prioritised crude oil, but gold never loses its value, hence the current stockpiling trend."

Haji Omar Haidari, an adviser to the Jewellers' Union in Kabul, held a similar view. "Gold prices have gone up significantly over the past year due to political and economic factors — particularly the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East."

Haidari added: "During times of conflict, warring and even non-warring nations tend to accumulate

gold. This trend was evident in 2024, and it continues even today."

Economic analyst Abdul Nasir Reshtia also cited wars, political friction and general instability in countries like Russia, Ukraine, Palestine, Israel and recent tensions involving Iran and the United States as contributing factors.

"Countries are now hoarding gold in their central banks instead of dollars. This shift in demand is a key reason behind the price hike," he commented.

As demand for a commodity increased, the economist argued, its market price rose accordingly.

Pajhwok reports indicate gold prices have shown an upward trended throughout the previous solar year and into April this year.

However, the upward trend intensified over the past four months, following the tariff war triggered by US President Donald Trump's announcement.

Since Trump returned as US president in January 2025, his administration has imposed a flurry of tariffs, leading to increased global prices, including that of gold.

### Public concerns

Farzana Ahmadi, a resident of the Dar-ul-Aman neighbourhood of Kabul, expressed concern at the continuous hike in gold prices.

She deplored her fiancé had been unable to buy the gold demanded by her family, even though their engagement took place four years ago.

"My in-laws are strug-

gling financially and can't afford to buy gold. My fiancé is now pondering over going abroad to earn money," she said.

Similarly, Nargis Stanikzai, a resident of the Kart-e-Naw locality of Kabul, said: "I went to the market to buy gold after saving money with great hardship. Everyone says gold is a woman's true asset."

"I wanted to invest, but the prices were so high that I couldn't even afford low-karat gold," she said, adding gold, as a valuable metal, had been treasured since ancient times.

Zabihullah, another Kabul resident, also highlighted the impact of high gold prices on weddings, noting many families were facing financial challenges due to the rising cost jewellery.





ISLAMABAD: Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, the most senior judge Supreme Court, taking oath as Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan.

# PHC seeks govt response in seven missing persons' cases

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Acting Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice SM Attique Shah has sought reports from the federal and provincial governments regarding the disappearance of seven individuals, including Muhammad Usman, a computer operator at the Ministry of Interior, on Monday.

PHC heard petitions related to the disappearance of seven individuals from different areas, including Muhammad Usman, Abu Baker, Anees, Abdul Qadir, Shams Rehman, Osama, and Ali Sher.

Acting Chief Justice S.M. Atique Shah has directed the federal and provincial governments, as well as the relevant parties, to submit reports on the disappearance cases. The counsel Amin u Rehman Yousafzai advocate argued that Muhammad Usman is a computer operator at the Ministry of Interior, was taken away by police and individuals in white clothes from his home in Pahari Pura, and has been missing for the past seven months.

Usman's father appeared in court and pleaded that his son was innocent and had not committed any crime, and that his family was patriotic and loyal to the country. The court has issued notices to the federal and provincial governments, as well as the relevant parties, seeking reports

on the disappearance cases. The court will review the reports and take further action accordingly.

The court was also informed about other disappearance cases, including those of Abubaker, Anees, and Abdul Qadir, who were taken into custody by CTD officials despite having been granted bail. Shams Rehman, who was also granted bail, was re-arrested by CTD officials. Osama, an Imam-e-Masjid at a local mosque in Charsadda, and Ali Sher, a marble businessman, were also taken away.

**Court directs promptly disposal of unlawful detention cases:** The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued a directive to all subordinate courts (district & session courts) to prioritize and prompt disposal of unlawful detention and illegal custody cases. The court's decision aims to ensure that citizens' rights are protected and that to ensure delivery of timely justice, on Monday.

According to a circular issued by the Registrar of the Peshawar High Court, all District and Sessions Judges and Judicial Magistrates have been instructed to expedite the disposal of petitions related to unjust detention and illegal custody. The circular emphasizes that the liberty of citizens is a fundamental right and that any violation of this right will not be tolerated.

The Peshawar High Court's direc-

tive is a significant step towards protecting citizens' rights and ensuring that the justice system functions effectively. The court's decision is expected to have a positive impact on the lives of citizens who are often subjected to unlawful detention and harassment by law enforcement agencies.

The circular issued by the Peshawar High Court makes it clear that there will be no compromise on the liberty of citizens. The courts have been directed to ensure that citizens are not detained without lawful justification and that their rights are protected in accordance with the Constitution and law.

The Peshawar High Court's directive is expected to be implemented in letter and spirit by all subordinate courts. The District and Sessions Judges and Judicial Magistrates have been instructed to take prompt action on petitions related to unlawful detention and illegal custody, and to ensure that citizens' rights are protected.

The Peshawar High Court's decision is a welcome step towards ensuring that the justice system functions effectively and that citizens' rights are protected. The court's directive is expected to have a positive impact on the lives of citizens and to promote a culture of justice and fairness in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

# Major reforms, increased budget for education uplift in 2025: KP Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Education, Faisal Khan Tarakai, has announced the launch of several multi-purpose public welfare projects in the education sector for the upcoming year.

Addressing an Annual Development Programme (ADP) review meeting on Monday here, he stated that the education budget will be significantly increased and long-term planning has been put in place to benefit all students across the province. Minister Tarakai emphasized that 70% of the newly established schools will be reserved for female students, and 30% for male students, under a new education plan. Efforts will also be made to reduce the number of out-of-school children while ensuring quality education for those already enrolled.

He shared that Rs. 326 billion had been allocated to the education department this year, with spending described as highly satisfactory. Of the 99 projects in progress, 96 were locally funded. He instructed officials to prioritize funding for projects nearing completion and to finalize their PC-1 for the initiation of new plans. The meeting was attended by Secretary Education Masood Ahmed, Special Secretary Qaiser Alam,

Education Advisor Mian Saaduddin, Director Education Naheed Anjum, and other senior planning officials.

The Education Minister directed the Human Capital Investment Project (HCIP) team to ensure that the benefits of the scheme are immediately delivered to the public. He emphasized the use of high-quality construction materials and asked for a comprehensive plan to be presented promptly. Highlighting 17 new initiatives for this year, he mentioned the provision of free textbooks and school bags, the establishment of a Girls Cadet College in D.I. Khan, solarization of schools, development of model schools, and the Rented Building Schools Programme for primary, middle, and high levels. He further instructed that the construction work at Girls Cadet College Mardan should be completed before the start of the new academic session in September and the college should shift to its newly constructed building.

The Minister also called for the swift completion and activation of ERRA schools and directed that each school be visited by the M&E section to prepare detailed reports, including a comprehensive strategy for their completion. Focusing on education in the merged districts, he directed profiling of all schools in these areas, assessing how many were affected by

terrorism, and identifying those without proper buildings. A detailed report with proposals must be submitted, he said.

Minister Tarakai reiterated that education is a top priority for the government. The recruitment and training of teachers and provision of high-quality free education facilities to students remain key objectives. During the briefing, officials shared the roadmap for improving quality and governance in education. Planned initiatives for the new year included establishment of 50 girls' schools, creation of 100 new primary schools, upgradation of 150 schools to the next level, construction of 80 primary schools in merged districts, rehabilitation of 200 schools, construction of 500 additional classrooms, renovation of 300 schools.

Besides, provision of science equipment to 300 schools, construction of 1000 Early Childhood Education rooms, construction of 50 examination halls in high and higher secondary schools and provision of various facilities in 200 girls' schools. In addition, the governance component will include the establishment of offices for District Education and Education Monitoring Authorities in both settled and merged districts, as well as a comprehensive survey of out-of-school children.

# Iran to brief China as it accuses Israel of 'undermining' US nuke talks

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran says it will brief China this week in advance of a third round of talks with the United States on its nuclear programme, as Iranian officials separately accused Israel of seeking to "undermine and disrupt the diplomatic process".

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will visit Beijing on Tuesday to discuss the latest talks with the administration of US President Donald Trump on the country's nuclear programme, spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Monday. The trip echoes "consultations" Iran held with Russia last week, before the second round of direct US-Iran talks was held over the weekend. A third round of talks between Araghchi and US envoy Steve Witkoff is scheduled to take place in Oman on Saturday.

Araghchi has previously said Tehran always closely consults with its allies, Russia and China, over the nuclear issue. "It is natural that we will consult and brief China over the latest developments in Iran-US indirect talks," Baqaei said. Russia and China, both nuclear-armed powers, were signatories to a now-defunct 2015 deal between Iran, the US and several Western countries intended to defuse tensions around Tehran's nuclear programme.

The 2015 deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

(JCPOA), from which Trump withdrew in 2018, saw Tehran curtail its nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief. The US and Israel have accused Iran of seeking to use the programme to develop nuclear weapons. Tehran has staunchly denied the claim, saying the programme is for civilian purposes.

On Monday, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed close ties between Beijing and Tehran, but did not confirm the Iranian minister's planned visit. "China and Iran have maintained exchanges and contacts at all levels and in various fields. With regard to the specific visit mentioned, I have no information to offer at the moment," Guo Jiakun, spokesperson for the ministry, said. Israel's war in Gaza has seen Iran pull closer to Russia and China. Recent diplomatic moves surrounding the US-Iran talks have further underscored the strengthened ties. Araghchi met his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, last week, just before his second round of negotiations with Witkoff.

On Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed off on a 20-year strategic partnership treaty agreed earlier this year with his Iranian counterpart, Masoud Pezeshkian. Meanwhile, Iran's already fraught relations with Israel and its "ironclad" ally, the US, have

nosedived amid the war. Since taking office, Trump has reinstated a "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign against Tehran, while repeatedly threatening military action if a new nuclear deal is not reached.

Speaking on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Baqaei accused Israel of trying to disrupt the nascent negotiations to open the way for military action. In comments carried by the AFP news agency, he declared that Israel is behind efforts from a "kind of coalition" to "undermine and disrupt the diplomatic process".

"Alongside it are a series of war-mongering currents in the United States and figures from different factions," the spokesman said. Last week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated that Israel would not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. His statement came a day after The New York Times reported that Trump had dissuaded Israel from striking Iran's nuclear sites in the short term, saying Washington wanted to prioritise diplomatic talks.

Baqaei added that "consultations must continue" with countries that were party to the JCPOA. Iran has gradually breached the terms of the treaty since Trump abandoned it, most notably by enriching uranium to levels higher than those laid out in the deal.

## Justice Mansoor Ali Shah takes oath as Acting CJP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The most senior judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, was sworn in as the Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan on Monday.

The oath was administered by Justice Muneeb Akhtar during a formal ceremony at the Supreme Court. The appointment comes as Chief Justice Yahya Afridi embarked on an official visit to China, where he will lead Pakistan's delegation at the 20th Conference of Chief Justices of Supreme Courts of SCO Member States in Hangzhou from April 22 to 26, 2025.

Justice Afridi is accompanied by a high-level delegation including Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Shahid Waheed, Zafar Jan (District & Sessions Judge, Gwadar), and Ms Nadia Gul Wazir (Senior Civil Judge, Lakki Marwat).

During the conference, an important MoU is expected to be signed between the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Supreme People's Court of China, focusing on enhancing bilateral judicial cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity building.

Chief Justice Afridi is also scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with the Chief Justice of Iran, and following the SCO engagements, he will travel to Istanbul to attend the 63rd Anniversary of the Turkish Constitutional Court at the invitation of its President, Kadir Özkaya, from April 24 to 27.

## Trump stands behind Hegseth

WASHINGTON (Reuters): President Donald Trump said on Monday that he stood behind US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, after reports that he shared details of a March attack on Yemen's Houthis in a message group that included his wife, brother and personal lawyer.

The revelations that Hegseth used the unclassified messaging system Signal to share highly sensitive security details for the second time come at an uncertain moment for him and the Pentagon, where senior officials were ousted last week as part of an internal leak investigation.

"Pete's doing a great job. Everybody's happy with him," Trump said. Asked if he remained confident in Hegseth, Trump said: "Oh totally." "Ask the Houthis how he's doing," Trump said. The US military, under Trump, has ramped up its bombing campaign against the Iran-backed Houthi group. In the second chat, Hegseth shared details of the attack similar to those revealed last month by The Atlantic magazine after its editor-in-chief, Jeffrey Goldberg, was included in a separate chat on the Signal app by mistake, Reuters reported.

The second chat included about a dozen people and was created during Hegseth's confirmation process to discuss administrative issues rather than detailed military planning. Among them was Hegseth's brother, who is a Department of Homeland Security liaison to the Pentagon. Hegseth's wife, Jennifer, a former Fox News producer, has attended sensitive meetings with foreign military counterparts, according to images the Pentagon has publicly posted.

A person familiar with the matter told Reuters that Hegseth had been counseled against sharing information on insecure systems like Signal before he did so last month. The Pentagon Inspector General's office announced earlier this month that it was opening a probe into Hegseth's use of the unclassified commercial texting application to coordinate on the highly sensitive March 15 launch of US strikes on Houthis.

Speaking to reporters at the White House on Monday, Hegseth slammed the media and former employees. "I have spoken to the president, and we are going to continue fighting on the same page all the way," Hegseth said. Hegseth narrowly secured enough votes to become defense secretary, after fierce opposition from Democrats and even some Republicans.

# Pakistan, Rwanda vow to deepen trade, defence ties

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Rwanda on Monday vowed to strengthen bilateral cooperation across different sectors, including trade, defense, technology, and diplomacy, to build a mutually beneficial partnership and exploit the existing growth potential.

The bilateral ties were discussed during the "in-depth" discussions between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar and Rwanda's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Ambassador Olivier Jean Patrick Nduhungirehe, who was on his first official visit to Pakistan from April 21-22.

Following their delegation-level meeting and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of diplomatic training, the two foreign ministers expressed satisfaction over the strengthening bilateral relations and reiterated their commitment to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in the priority areas like trade, investment, defense, diplomacy, and people-to-people exchanges.

In his remarks, Deputy Prime Minister Dar said that Pakistan attached great importance to its relations with Rwanda as the country established its High Commission in Kigali in 2021 and Rwandan High Commission would be inaugurated during the ongoing Rwandan foreign minister's visit. He said that offering a promising market for Rwandan products, Pakistan was among the largest importers of Rwandan tea and was actively exploring further imports of Rwandan coffee, avocado, pulses, and horticulture products.

Similarly, he said that Pakistan's exports in pharmaceuticals, textiles, rice, surgical instruments, agri-tech, and sports goods had strong potential in Rwanda. Citing great potential for collaboration in information and communication technology, the deputy prime minister said that Pakistan was keen to partner with Rwanda in digital transformation, e-governance, fintech, and innovation platforms for youth. He said Pakistan looked forward to

the continued engagement of Rwandan businesses, including at the upcoming Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference and Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa in May 2025. Highlighting the frequent high-level exchanges between the two countries, DPM Dar said that the bilateral cooperation on the multilateral front also remained robust, with both supporting each other's candidatures at the UN and other international fora.

In his remarks, Foreign Minister Olivier J.P. Nduhungirehe said that besides signing an MoU on diplomatic training, both sides were considering other MoUs in different fields to deepen cooperation. He said that his delegation comprised representatives from different institutions, including the Rwanda Development Board and the trade ministry as a testament to Rwanda's desire to do business with Pakistan and attract Pakistani businesses to explore Rwanda.

He said both sides desired to work together in many sectors such as trade, investment, education, and defense. He said currently, Rwandan exports to Pakistan stood at USD 26 million and expressed keenness to explore joint projects. Pakistan's exports to Rwanda in the fields of trade, industry, and health were around USD 100 million.

The Rwandan foreign minister also emphasised bilateral cooperation in tourism and sports, particularly cricket as the game was highly popular on both sides. The minister said that Pakistan and Rwanda shared the same resolve for world peace with both countries in the top five of troop-contributing countries in UN peace-keeping.

He lauded Pakistan's contribution in finding a solution to conflicts on the African continent while currently being a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Highlighting the ongoing peace efforts to end the 30-year-old conflict in the eastern DRC region and the appointment of facilitators, the foreign minister said Rwanda would continue supporting this process and expressed the hope for the revival of peace in the coming months.

# Putin says he is open to direct peace talks with Kyiv

MOSCOW (Reuters):

Russian President Vladimir Putin, under pressure from Washington to show willingness to make peace in Ukraine, proposed on Monday bilateral talks with Kyiv for the first time in years, and said he was open to more ceasefires after a one-day Easter truce.

Putin said fighting had resumed after his surprise 30-hour ceasefire, which he announced unilaterally on Saturday. Both sides had accused each other of violating Putin's truce, which Kyiv had largely dismissed from the outset as a stunt. Washington said it would welcome an extension of the truce. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky called for it to be extended into a 30-day ceasefire protecting civilian targets.

US President Donald Trump, who has vowed to end the three-year-old war swiftly, has reoriented US policy away from its staunch support of Ukraine toward accepting Russia's account of the war, but has so far won few concessions from Moscow. Russia rejected a Trump proposal last month for a full 30-day ceasefire, which Ukraine had accepted. US officials held parallel talks with both sides in Saudi Arabia, but they agreed only to limited pauses on attacks on energy targets,

which they accuse each other of violating.

Speaking to a Russian state TV reporter, Putin said Moscow was open to any peace initiatives and expected the same from Kyiv. "We always have a positive attitude toward a truce, which is why we came up with such an initiative, especially since we are talking about the bright Easter days," Putin said.

Asked about Zelensky's proposed 30-day truce on civilian targets, he said: "This is all a subject for careful study, perhaps even bilaterally. We do not rule this out." His spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, later confirmed that Putin was referring to the possibility of direct talks with Ukraine. The two sides are not known to have held any such talks since a failed peace effort in the early months of the war three years ago.

"When the president said that it was possible to discuss the issue of not striking civilian targets, including bilaterally, the president had in mind negotiations and discussions with the Ukrainian side," Peskov said, according to Interfax news agency. There was no immediate response from Kyiv to Putin's remarks. A spokeswoman for President Volodymyr Zelensky did not immediately respond to a

request for comment.

Zelensky said early on Monday that his forces were instructed to continue to mirror the Russian army's actions. "The nature of Ukraine's actions will remain symmetrical: ceasefire will be met with ceasefire, and Russian strikes will be met with our own in defense. Actions always speak louder than words," he said on social network X.

Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio both announced on Friday that Washington could walk away from peace talks in Ukraine altogether if the sides do not make more progress within days. Trump struck a more optimistic note Sunday, saying that "hopefully" the two sides would make a deal "this week."

Russia has yet to row back from any of its major demands, including that Ukraine cede all the land Putin claims to have annexed and accept permanent neutrality. Ukraine says that would amount to surrender and leave it undefended if Moscow attacks again. Asked about Trump's remarks on a possible peace deal soon, Peskov told a daily conference call with reporters: "I don't want to make any comments right now, especially about the timeframe."

# China warns countries not to strike trade deals with US

BEIJING: China has warned countries seeking exemptions from United States President Donald Trump's tariffs not to strike deals at its expense. Beijing's warning comes as dozens of US trade partners are scrambling to negotiate relief from Trump's trade salvos, including steep "reciprocal" tariffs that have been paused until July.

"Appeasement cannot bring peace, and compromise will not earn respect," a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce said on Monday. "Sacrificing others' interests to obtain so-called exemptions for temporary selfish gains is akin to negotiating with a tiger; it ultimately leads to failure for both parties and harms everyone involved."

While China respects countries' efforts to resolve their trade disputes with the US, they should also "stand on the side of fairness and justice" and "on the correct side of history," the ministry said. "It is particularly important to emphasise that China firmly opposes any party achieving deals at the expense of Chinese interests," the spokesperson

said. "Should such a situation arise, China will not accept it and will resolutely take reciprocal countermeasures." The ministry issued the statement after Bloomberg News last week reported that the Trump administration intends to push countries seeking relief from tariffs to reduce their trade with China. US officials are discussing plans to pressure trade partners to stop importing excess goods from China and impose duties on imports from specific countries with close ties to the Asian giant, Bloomberg reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

While Trump announced a 90-day pause on his "reciprocal" tariffs on imports from dozens of countries, his administration has ramped up its trade war with Beijing by hiking import taxes on Chinese exports to as high as 145 percent. China, which has pledged to "fight to the end" if Washington continues to escalate the trade spat, has hit back by imposing duties of 125 percent on US exports.

US Treasury Secretary

Scott Bessent has said that more than 70 countries have reached out to express interest in negotiating trade deals. Japanese officials last week visited Washington to begin talks aimed at securing relief for key exports, including cars and steel, while officials from South Korea are due to kick off ministerial-level negotiations on Thursday.

Despite escalating his trade salvos against China, Trump said last week that he expects to ultimately seal a "very good" trade deal with Beijing. In its statement on Monday, China's Ministry of Commerce accused the Trump administration of engaging in "hegemonic politics" and "unilateral bullying" under the pretence of "reciprocity".

"If international trade reverts to the 'law of the jungle', all countries will become victims," the spokesperson said. "China is willing to strengthen solidarity and coordination with all parties, jointly resist unilateral bullying, safeguard legitimate rights and interests, and defend international fairness and justice." — Aljazeera