

Two shot dead for ‘honour’
F.P. Report

BARIKOT: Two people were shot dead Tuesday in the name of ‘honour’ in Swat district’s Barikot tehsil, police said. The incident occurred in the Najigram area of Barikot tehsil, Swat, where two men were shot dead in what is believed to be an ‘honour’-related shooting. “The incident occurred when a young man, a resident of Maniyar, entered a house in Najigram,” SHO Bacha said.



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Pakistan, Turkiye vow to strengthen partnership

ANKARA (APP): Pakistan and Turkiye on Tuesday expressing satisfaction on the positive trajectory of multifaceted bilateral relations, reiterated their commitment to further deepening bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

Two-day visit to Turkiye. The meeting underscored the enduring fraternal ties between Pakistan and Turkiye and reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

regional and bilateral connectivity to boost trade and enhance people-to-people exchanges, besides deepening cooperation in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and cyber security.

During the discussions, both leaders took note of the follow-up actions taken regarding the decisions of the 7th High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) held in Islamabad on February 13, 2025. Both leaders showed satisfaction on the trajectory of the multifaceted bilateral collaboration between the brotherly countries.

Prime Minister Shehbaz and President Erdogan also discussed regional and global matters and reaffirmed their support of each other on issues of national interest. Two leaders also expressed deep concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza, calling for an immediate ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian assistance to the affected population.

President Erdogan appreciated Pakistan’s consistent support for the Palestinian cause and its humanitarian assistance for Palestine. Both leaders expressed their commitment to further strengthen the strategic partnership between Pakistan and Turkiye, fostering peace, stability, development, and prosperity in the region.

Pakistan delegation included Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister of Information and

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ship, fostering peace, stability, development, and prosperity in the region.

The bilateral ties and cooperation were discussed during the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan here during the former’s

Prime Minister Shehbaz emphasized the importance of enhancing economic collaboration, especially through joint ventures and bilateral investments. He highlighted the potential for cooperation in energy and mining, joint ventures in defence and agri production, enhancing

Pope’s funeral to be held on Saturday

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Pope Francis’ funeral will be held on Saturday in St. Peter’s Square, Roman Catholic cardinals decided on Tuesday, setting the stage for a solemn ceremony that will draw leaders from around the world. Francis, 88, died unexpectedly on Monday after suffering a stroke and cardiac arrest, the Vatican said, ending an often turbulent reign in which he repeatedly clashed with traditionalists and championed the poor and marginalised.

The pontiff spent five weeks in hospital earlier this year suffering from double pneumonia. But he returned to the Vatican almost a month ago and had seemed to be recovering, appearing in St. Peter’s Square on Easter Sunday. The Vatican on Tuesday released photographs of Francis dressed in his vestments and laid in a wooden coffin in the chapel of the Santa Marta residence, where he lived during his 12-year papacy. Swiss Guards stand on either side of the casket.

His body will be taken into the adjacent St. Peter’s Basilica on Wednesday morning at 9:00 am (0700 GMT), in a procession led by cardinals, allowing the faithful to pay their last respects to the first Latin American pope. His funeral service will be held in St. Peter’s Square, in the shadow of the Basilica, on Saturday at 10:00 am (0800 GMT).

US President Donald Trump, who clashed repeatedly with the pope about immigration, said he and his wife would fly to Rome for the service. Among other heads of state set to attend were Javier Milei, president of Francis’ native Argentina, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, according to a source in his office. In a break from tradition, Francis confirmed in his final testament released on Monday that he wished to be buried in Rome’s Basilica of Saint Mary Major and not St. Peter’s, where many of his predecessors were laid to rest.

Francis’ sudden death has set in motion ancient rituals, as the 1.4-billion-member Church started the transition from one pope to another, including the breaking of the pope’s “Fisherman’s Ring” and lead seal, used in his lifetime to seal documents, so they cannot be used by anyone else.

PPP leads protest against Canal project

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah stated on Tuesday during a media briefing at Cardinal House that the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) has protested against the proposed new canal projects on the Indus River and welcomes support from all parties in opposing it.

He urged the people to avoid causing inconvenience and suggested conducting protests at alternative locations instead of on the roads. Murad Ali Shah clarified that the PPP opposed the canal project in the Council of Common Interests in June 2024 and engaged in discussions with the federal government to halt the project, which effectively led to its suspension.

He expressed concern that road blockages caused problems for the public, including ambulances getting stuck and difficulties for those transporting livestock between cities. Murad Ali Shah assured that with public support, the PPP would prevent the construction of these canal projects, and noted that no work has taken place on them since July 2024.

He appealed to the

media to refrain from spreading misinformation that could incite the public, and reiterated that the project has been suspended since July 2024. He requested the federal government to formally announce the cancellation of the project, stating that the solution to water issues lies not in constructing new canals but in the efficient use of water and increasing agricultural productivity.

The Chief Minister also expressed condolences on the passing of Pope Francis, describing him as a global spiritual leader and ambassador of humanity. He stated that Pope Francis’ message of interfaith harmony, peace, and service will always be a guiding light.

Murad Ali Shah noted that Sindh has always embraced every religion, nation, and community, and stands in solidarity with their Christian brothers and sisters in this time of sorrow. He referenced the Pope’s recent statement on ending the war in Gaza, commending him as a bold voice for justice and peace.

The Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has also warned that if the controversial canal project proceeds without

Sindh’s approval, people in the province will be forced to take to the street. Speaking to the media after offering condolences at Cardinal House over the passing of Pope Francis, CM Shah emphasised that no project against the interests of the people of Sindh would be accepted.

He stated that regardless of who initiated the project, the Sindh government had not approved it. Since July, no progress has been made on the Cholistan canals, and the PPP has raised strong objections at every level. Shah asserted, “We’re not questioning anyone’s intentions, but we also won’t play into anyone’s hands. This is a collective cause, and we are determined to stop the canal project for the greater good of the country.”

Expressing concern for farmers, Shah noted that Punjab’s farmers may consider not cultivating wheat next year, and stressed the need for adopting modern agricultural technologies, citing China’s higher wheat yield per acre. He also criticised a lack of progress in cotton production and called for fact-checking India’s Indira Canal’s impacts via AI tools like ChatGPT.

PPP senators walk out from Senate session

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party lawmakers staged a walkout from the Senate session on Tuesday to protest against the controversial canal project. The issue on canal is one of the larger issues which the PPP is facing with its ally PML-N.

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Asim Munir and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz inaugurated the ambitious Cholistan project to irrigate south Punjab’s lands on February 15. There have been nationwide protests in the past few months from political parties, including the ruling coalition ally PPP. As the Senate session started today, Soon after today’s, PPP lawmakers walked out.

Speaking on the floor of the Senate, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar said the decision regarding the canal project would be

made according to the Constitution and laws of the country. He said Political Adviser Rana Sanaullah had formally contacted the Sindh government and PPP leadership to assure them that the federal government was committed to resolving the issue through constitutional means. “The decision is clear—nothing will be forced,” he added.

He criticized the Opposition, accusing them of being disruptive and avoiding meaningful discussion. “May be they have no questions to raise, or they lack the courage to listen. But if they want to take part in a productive debate, I along with senior cabinet members are here to answer,” he said. Tarar further said that the issue had already been discussed with coalition partners on the prime minister’s special instructions. He added that a broader multi-party con-

sultation was also being considered to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive solution.

Commenting on the opposition’s recent by-election loss in Tharparkar, the law minister said, “The people of Sindh have rejected you. If this is the kind of politics you want to continue after being defeated, it won’t help the country or democracy.” He urged PPP lawmakers to take part in the parliamentary proceedings, pointing out that they too had submitted a resolution and a call-attention notice regarding the issue. “Let’s sit together and address the matter through proper parliamentary channels,” he said.

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has warned that if the controversial canal project proceeds without Sindh’s approval, people in the province will be forced to take to the street.



SRINAGAR: Paramedics and police personnel carrying an injured tourist at a hospital in Anantnag, Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Saif flays Sindh PA resolution on CRBC project

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information & Public Relations Barrister Dr. Saif has strongly condemned the inclusion of the Chashma Right Bank Lift Canal (CRBC) project in the recent resolution passed by the Sindh Assembly against proposed canal projects and demanded the immediate removal of the CRBC from the resolution.

Dr. Saif stated that the CRBC Gravity Canal Project was approved back in 1991 as part of a plan to construct canals for all four provinces, with funding to be provided by the federal government. While canals were developed in Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was unfairly deprived of its share.

He further added that the Sindh government should pursue its case with the federal government and Punjab, and refrain from interfering with the CRBC project. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has even offered to contribute 35% of the project’s funding, yet it continues to face unnecessary delays, which is an injustice to the province.

ATC Lahore issues arrest warrants for Gandapur

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore has issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and three other senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders in connection with the October 5 protest and violence against police in Lahore.

ATC Administrative Judge Manzoor Ali Gul issued the warrants for CM Gandapur, as well as PTI leaders Hamad Azhar, Saeed Sandhu, and Shehbaz Ahmad, on Tuesday. The channel reported that the arrest warrants were issued upon the request of police, who informed the court that the accused had repeatedly failed to join the investigation despite multiple summonses.

Police maintained that PTI-backed KP’s CM Ali Amin Gandapur and others are deliberately avoiding the investigation process. The court was told that the PTI leaders are wanted in multiple cases registered at Lari Adda and Musti Gate police stations in relation to the October 5 protest and ensuing violence. The leaders have already been nominated in the FIRs for their alleged roles in the incidents.

It is pertinent to mention that earlier this year, on January 2, the ATC Rawalpindi had cancelled arrest warrants and voided the absconder declaration proceedings against Gandapur in a separate case related to Hassan Abdal.

Gunmen attack on tourists in Pahalgam 28 killed in Indian occupied Kashmir

SRINAGAR (AFP/Reuters): At least 28 people were killed in India-occupied Kashmir when gunmen opened fire on a group of tourists on Tuesday, a senior police officer said, with authorities calling it the worst attack on civilians in years. “At least 28 people have been killed,” the senior police officer in Kashmir told AFP on condition of anonymity, with the toll not yet announced officially.

The attack took place in Pahalgam, a popular destination in the scenic Muslim-majority territory, that draws thousands of visitors every summer as gunmen violence has reduced in recent years. The injured had been rushed to a local hospital, the source said on the condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to speak to the media. One security source put the death toll at 20, while a second put it at 28 and a third at 26. All three spoke on the condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

“The firing happened in front of us,” one witness told broadcaster India Today, without giving his name. “We thought someone was setting off firecrackers, but when we heard other people [screaming], we quickly got out of there saved our lives and ran.” “For four kilometres, we did not stop ... I am shaking,” another witness told India Today. A tour guide told AFP he reached the scene after hearing gunfire and transported some of the wounded away on horseback.

“I saw a few men lying on the ground looking like they were dead,” said Waheed, who gave only one name. Medics at a hospital in Anantnag said they had received some of the wounded, including at least two with gunshot wounds, one with a bullet injury to the neck. The attack took place in an off-the-road meadow and two or three suspects were involved, the Indian Express newspaper reported, citing an unidentified senior police officer.

“The death toll is still being ascertained so

I don’t want to get into those details,” Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said in a post on X. “Needless to say, this attack is much larger than anything we’ve seen directed at civilians in recent years.” The nationalities of the victims were not immediately known. A little-known group called the “Kashmir Resistance” claimed responsibility for the attack in a social media message. It expressed discontent that more than 85,000 “outsiders” had been settled in the region, spurring a “demographic change.”

“Consequently, violence will be directed toward those attempting to settle illegally,” it said. Reuters could not independently verify the source of the message. The regional government of IoK, where Pahalgam is located, told its legislature this month that nearly 84,000 non-locals, from within India, had been given domicile rights in the territory in the last two years. “I strongly condemn the cowardly attack on tourists in Pahalgam, which tragically killed five and injured several,” said Mehbooba Mufti, former chief minister of the region, who heads the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party.

Fighters in the Muslim-majority region have waged an insurgency since 1989. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, although violence has tapered off in recent years. Attacks targeting tourists in IoK have been rare in recent years, but not unknown. The last major attack on visitors in the federal territory took place in June when at least nine people were killed and 33 injured when a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims plunged into a deep gorge after fighters attacked it.

Some major attacks during the height of the insurgency coincided with visits from high-profile foreign officials to India, in likely attempts to draw global attention to IoK. Indian security agencies have said. Tuesday’s attack came a day after US Vice President JD Vance began a four-day, largely personal visit to India.

Aurangzeb assures WB of govt’s commitment

WASHINGTON (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held crucial discussions with global leaders, including top officials from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group, during his visit to Washington. The meetings focused on key issues such as economic reforms, climate resilience, and development projects in Pakistan.

The meetings were held on the sidelines of the 2025 Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group, said a press release issued by the finance ministry here Tuesday.

During his meeting with IMF Managing Director, Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, Minister Aurangzeb thanked the IMF team for reaching a Staff-Level Agreement on the First Review under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and a new arrangement under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). He reiterated Pakistan’s commitment to maintaining the reform momentum and extended an invitation from the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Ms. Georgieva to visit the country.

Meanwhile, during a meeting with President of the World Bank Group, Ajay Banga, the Finance Minister expressed gratitude to the

World Bank for its historical support to Pakistan and commended its leadership in developing a transformative CPF—a decade-long strategic roadmap centered around measurable impacts and outcomes.

He appreciated the World Bank’s ongoing assistance in crafting a comprehensive implementation strategy and action plan to operationalize the CPF while simultaneously enhancing overall efficiency. The Minister also provided a detailed overview of Pakistan’s macroeconomic turnaround and reaffirmed the government’s unwavering commitment to ensuring sustainable economic stability.

Earlier, the minister met with the Deloitte delegation and apprised them of Pakistan’s macroeconomic outlook, the government’s sectoral development agenda, and its export-led growth priorities. Both sides explored potential collaboration in energy sector reforms, critical minerals extraction and marketing, privatization, technology, crypto policy, and the operationalization of the Country Partnership Framework (CPF).

Minister Aurangzeb also welcomed Deloitte’s planned visit to Pakistan in May 2025 to further deepen engagement. He also met with Ms. Hela Cheikhrouhou, Regional Vice President of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and dis-

Police thwart terrorist attack
F.P. Report

BANNU: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police successfully thwarted a terrorist attack on the Dharey Pul police post in Bannu. The swift response by police personnel stationed at the post prevented the assault. The CPO reported that a group of 18 to 19 terrorists, some riding eight motorcycles and others crawling toward the post, attempted a coordinated attack.



KARACHI: Health worker administering polio drops to a child. —APP Photo

Teachings of Sufi saints promote peace, tolerance: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday said that the teachings of Sufi saints offer a timeless message of peace, love, and tolerance.

Addressing the Eighth International Conference on “Mevlana Rumi and Hadrat Sultan Bahoo,” Gilani underscored the profound impact of Mevlana Rumi and Hadrat Sultan Bahoo in guiding societies toward ethical, spiritual, and moral development.

He said that while he is often recognised for his political roles, including as former Prime Minister, Senate Chairman, and Founding Chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers Conference (ISC), his true identity lies in his spiritual lineage with the great Sufi saint Hazrat Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA). “I am known as a political worker, but my real identity is rooted in my connection with Hazrat Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani,” Gilani said.

Highlighting the spiritual bond between Sultan Bahoo and Mevlana Rumi, he described their legacy as deeply embedded in Sufi philosophy and service to Islam, noting that they were spiritual leaders and reformers who preached through action, humility, and compassion.

Gilani said that Sufism’s message of brotherhood and nonviolence played a transformative role in spreading Islam across the subcontinent, particularly through the literary, cultural, and humanistic contributions of Sufi saints.

Expressing concern over rising Islamophobia, Gilani said that Sufi teachings can help counter global misconceptions by promoting the true essence of Islam — a religion of love, mercy, and mutual respect.

“Unfortunately, many in the world see Muslims as extremists or terrorists. But our religion teaches affection, patience, and mutual respect,” he said. He urged the international community to view Islam through the lens of its spiritual traditions, which emphasise unity, peace, and coexistence.

Cautioning against the growing intolerance and polarisation in society, Gilani stressed the urgent need to revive core Islamic values of patience and forbearance. “The biggest issue we face today is intolerance. To overcome this, we must reconnect with our religious teachings,” he added.

Govt transfers 11 officers

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has issued notification regarding transfer and posting of 11 officers on Tuesday.

Section Officer Specialized Health and Medical Education, Muhammad Furqan, has been appointed as Assistant Commissioner General Gujranwala. Assistant Commissioner Human Resources Jhelum, Muhammad Nadeem Ahmad, has been directed to report to S&GAD (Services and General Administration Department).

Ali Bajwa, who was awaiting appointment, has been posted as Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Gujranwala against a vacant position. Section Officer Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education, Suleman Mansha, has been appointed as Section Officer, Home Department, against a vacant post. Section Officer Planning and Development Board, Rabia Altaf, has been appointed as Section Officer Admin & Administration Wing, S&GAD, against a vacant post.

Section Officer Tourism and Archaeology, Mansab Saed, has been posted as Section Officer Admin Wing-II, S&GAD, against a vacant position. Section Officer Human Rights and Minorities Wing, Rao Waheed Ahmad, was directed to report to S&GAD.

Section Officer School Education Department, Sajjad Ahmad Qureshi, appointed as Section Officer Human Rights and Minorities Wing, against a vacant post.

Section Officer Property Management and Welfare Wing, S&GAD, Muhammad Iqbal, has been posted as Section Officer I&C, S&GAD, against a vacant position. Section Officer Livestock and Dairy Development, Riaz Muhammad, appointed as Section Officer, Information and Culture Department. Private Secretary Muhammad Anwar has been posted as Section Officer, School Education Department, against a vacant post.

LDA seals 83 properties

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Development Authority (LDA) sealed another 83 properties during a crack-down against illegal commercial buildings and defaulters of commercial fees in various housing schemes and LDA-controlled areas.

LHC issues new SOPs for district courts to curb fake cases

LAHORE (APP): In a landmark move to tackle the growing issue of fraudulent case filings and financial irregularities, Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Ms. Aalia Neelum has issued new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all district courts in Punjab.

According to a LHC press release issued on Tuesday, the new SOPs, approved by the Administrative Committee of the Lahore High Court, make it mandatory for litigants to complete an Information

Sheet at the time of case filing. This form must include the signature or thumb impression of the petitioner, plaintiff, or litigant, along with a photograph. However, physical appearance in court for the photograph is not required; it can be submitted remotely via webcam.

Moreover, the Information Sheet must contain the litigant’s Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) number and mobile phone number on the first page. The step comes in response to a

surge in fake and fictitious cases being filed in district courts across the province using forged documents and false identities. These scams enabled fraudulent withdrawals of public funds from the government treasury, using the names of genuine litigants.

The action has already been initiated against individuals involved in such schemes on the orders of the chief justice. The newly introduced SOPs are aimed at preventing further misuse of the judicial system and safeguarding public funds.

CM's education reforms spark revolution in Punjab

RAWALPINDI (APP): Raja Muhammad Hanif, Chairman of Punjab CM’s Inspection Team, has said that Punjab is witnessing an “education revolution” under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, who has made education a top priority.

Speaking at the annual prize distribution ceremony at Government Girls

Higher Secondary School, Amarpura on Tuesday,

Raja Hanif appreciated CM Maryam for her vibrant approach, including policy improvements. He emphasized that PML-N’s leadership treats education as a national priority.

Highlighting the vision of CM Punjab and PM Shehbaz Sharif, he said that government schools now

rival private institutions.

He urged parents to prioritize education, especially for girls, citing initiatives like scholarships, transport, and infrastructure upgrades.

Raja Hanif distributed the prizes among the top positions holding students and also commended teachers and parents for their role in building an educated society.

Polio vaccination campaign to continue from April 21 to 27

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that the Sindh government has launched the polio vaccination campaign from April 21 to April 27 with the aim to protect children across Sindh from the crippling disease of polio and secure their future. He emphasized the significance of this campaign and appealed to the citizens to fully cooperate in this national cause, said a statement on Tuesday.

He stated that we must prioritize the health and safety of our children because not only are they the most important to us, but they are also the bright future of the country. He further added it is our collective duty to participate in it. The goal of this campaign is not just to eradicate polio, but also to lay the foundation for a healthy and secure generation, he said.

Mayor Karachi mentioned that during the polio vaccination campaign, health workers across the province would go door-to-door to administer polio

drops to children so that no child is left without this vital vaccine. He stressed the importance of this vaccination in combating a global issue like polio, emphasizing that the Sindh Government has provided all the necessary resources to make this campaign successful and ensure that every child is protected from this dangerous disease.

The Mayor Karachi urged citizens to fully support and cooperate with the polio health workers visiting their homes. He warned that any negligence or carelessness during this campaign would have severe consequences in the future. On the other hand, if we all participate in this campaign, we can guarantee a better and safer future for our children.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab, concluded by stating that a strong and healthy family forms the foundation of a stable and developed Pakistan. He appealed to all citizens to support this campaign so that Pakistan can be made polio-free. Our col-

lective cooperation will help provide better and healthier lives for Pakistan’s future generations.

KMC finalizes auction process for nine cattle markets ahead of Eid-ul-Azha: Mayor Karachi, Barrister Murtaza Wahab was briefed on Tuesday that the auction process for nine cattle markets has been finalized and award letters will be issued shortly. The Mayor was chairing a high-level meeting to review the preparations for cattle markets in connection with Eid-ul-Azha at the Mayor’s Office here.

Senior Director Veterinary, Iftexhar Ahmed, briefed the participants and Barrister Murtaza Wahab regarding the auction process for nine cattle markets. The designated locations for these markets include District Central: Sunday Car Bazaar, 11-D, New Karachi, KMC Ground near Samanabad Police Station, District West: Northern Bypass Slaughterhouse, Surjani Town, Cattle Colony, Surjani, Malir / Bin Qasim

SACM visits jails

LAHORE (APP): Special Assistant to the Chief Minister (SACM) of Punjab, Rashid Iqbal Nasrullah, visited the Central Jail and District Jail in Lahore on Tuesday.

He was warmly received by IG Prisons, Mian Farooq Nazir, and the DIG Prisons Lahore, Chairman Task Force for Prisons, Abdul Manan, along with other senior officers, also accompanied him. The IG Prisons briefed the SACM on the current facilities and ongoing developments in Punjab jails. A detailed review was conducted regarding the progress of the Zakat and Ushr Department’s schemes aimed at supporting inmates.

Rashid Iqbal said that the Zakat Department is actively assisting in the release of prisoners involved in minor offenses. He emphasised the government’s commitment to improving prison conditions and rehabilitation opportunities under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

The special assistant personally interacted with inmates and inspected the living conditions. He issued immediate instructions to ensure the consistent availability of cold drinking water for prisoners.

Highlighting the provincial government’s reform agenda, Rashid said that efforts are underway to introduce educational programmes and skill development initiatives for young inmates. He reiterated the government’s resolve to take all possible steps for the welfare and rehabilitation of prisoners across Punjab.

Committee to probe negligence at PFSA

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Home Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Mengal has taken serious notice of the alleged negligence by staff at the Punjab Forensic Science Agency (PFSA) and a high-powered fact-finding committee has been constituted to investigate the matter thoroughly.

According to a spokesperson for the Punjab Home Department, the committee will be headed by the additional secretary for Internal Security. Other members include the director of Administration at PFSA and the section officer for Autonomous Bodies from the Home Department.

The inquiry was ordered following reports involving the dismissal of a PFSA employee and the alleged theft of a pistol. The fact-finding committee has been directed to submit a comprehensive report within 48 hours. The investigation will cover all aspects of the incident, including statements from the accused former employee as well as current staff.

The committee will determine those responsible and propose recommendations to ensure evidence protection and the implementation of a foolproof system in the future. These measures are part of the committee’s Terms of Reference (ToRs). Speaking on the issue, Home Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Mengal emphasised, “The Punjab Forensic Science Agency is a symbol of national credibility.

Raouf Mazou, Muqam discuss ongoing repatriation of Afghan refugees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Assistant High Commissioner Operations UNHCR Raouf Mazou and Representative in Pakistan, Philippa Candler, called on the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engr Amir Muqam, at the Ministry on Tuesday.

During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of

mutual interest, with a particular focus on the ongoing repatriation of Afghan refugees, said a press release.

The Minister highlighted that the Government has initiated the repatriation process of Afghan Refugees in a respectful and dignified manner.

He reiterated Pakistan’s commitment to supporting Afghan nationals during their return to their homeland, emphasizing the

importance of international cooperation in facilitating their resettlement.

“The international community must play a constructive role in ensuring the successful reintegration of Afghan refugees into their society,” the Minister stated. Raouf Mazou acknowledged Pakistan’s longstanding hospitality, commending the country for hosting millions of Afghan refugees for over 45 years.

Anti-canal protests disrupt petroleum products supply

KARACHI (INP): The anti-canal protests in Sindh disrupting the supply chain affecting supply of petroleum products to Punjab and interior of Sindh.

The Oil Companies Advisory Council (OCAC), in a letter addressed to the Chief Secretary of Sindh informed that around 800 oil tankers have been stranded at various places in Larkana and Sukkur regions. In view of the current situation supply of petroleum products to Punjab and interior of Sindh could be affected, OCAC letter read.

OCAC has apprehended shortage of petroleum products in view of the situa-

tion. The sit-ins being

staged on Sindh’s highways against the approval of controversial canals projects on the Indus River, which has been seen as a threat to the province’s water resources.

Moreover, around 250 containers of potatoes bound for export markets have now been stranded at Sindh’s entry points due to ongoing sit-in protests blocking major highways.

These containers, are unable to reach the port due to road blocks. Fruit and Vegetable Exporters have warned that the delay could severely damage the perishable goods, especially since potatoes require constant temperature control, main-

tained through generators.

“If the containers do not reach the port on time, there is a real threat of the entire consignment being spoiled,” said Waheed Ahmed, patron-in-chief of the association. “The situation could lead to financial loss. He said that the damage will not be limited to exporters. “If the export orders are cancelled, it’s not just exporters who will suffer — farmers across the country will bear the brunt too.”

Exporters urged the Sindh government to step in immediately and ensure that containers carrying export-bound goods are safely transported to the ports.

2600 kg of Opium seized from Afghan National's shipment

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) confiscated 2600 kg of opium at the Karachi Port, which was being sent to Canada in containers under Afghan Transit Trade, said ANF spokesperson here Tuesday.

The ANF, Port Control Unit (PCU) stopped the Afghan Red and Black Resonant consignment at the Badruddin Yard Karachi port and seized opium tactfully mixed in the dry fruit (Kismish).

The item was cleared by the Afghan Customs and was to be smuggled to Canada from Pakistan via the Chaman border.

The ANF-PCU team checked the goods at the South Asia Pakistan Terminal and recovered drugs worth millions of rupees. The opium was recovered from 260 cartons of a total of 1816 cartons, and 10kg was recovered from each carton.

The shipment was

booked by Sultan Muhammad Sultani S/O Noor Muhammad, resident of Qandahar, Afghanistan, to Muhammad Export and Import Company Canada.

The owner of the shipment was a resident of Afghanistan, whose details had been shared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the Afghan Government for his arrest.

The ANF had registered a case, and further investigation was underway.



LAHORE: PHA workers improve the sanitation system by collecting dry leaves from trees during a cleanup of a local park near the tomb of Nadira Begum historic site in Lahore. —APP Photo

NCCI becomes independent authority

LAHORE (APP): In response to the growing threat of cybercrime, the government of Pakistan has officially transformed the former Cyber Crime Wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) into an independent authority known as the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA).


According to the FIA spokesperson, the newly established NCCIA has been granted full authority to prevent, investigate and

take action against cyber-crime incidents across the country. This move marks a significant shift in Pakistan’s approach to digital security and law enforcement in the online realm.

The agency will focus on tackling a wide range of cyber offenses, including online fraud, harassment, digital blackmail, identity theft, fake websites, social media crimes and other illicit cyber activities. With the formation of NCCIA, the FIA’s

Cyber Crime Wing has officially been dissolved. All cybercrime-related investigations, complaints, and matters will now be handled exclusively by the NCCIA. Citizens are advised to contact the NCCIA instead of the FIA for any cyber-related concerns.

For reporting cyber-crimes or suspicious online activities, the public can reach out to the NCCIA via their helpline: 051-9106691 or email: helpdesk@nr3c.gov.pk.

**Mobilink Bank**

PUBLIC NOTICE **AUCTION OF GOLD**

Branch:	Peshawar	Auction Date:	28-04-2025	Branch code:	0016	Time:	10:30 AM
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Finance facilities were extended by Mobilink Bank against the security of deposit and pledge of gold to the customer mentioned below. The customer who has neglected and failed to repay the finance extended to them by Mobilink Bank along with the markup thereon.

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Haroon Khan	17301-2792200-9	House No. 9, Street No. 2, Post Office Ashrafia Colony, Tube Well Chowk, Mohallah Afghan Colony, Peshawar	6.2	1 Kanthi

Notice is hereby given to the customer in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to Mobilink Bank within 1 day of the publication of this notice, Mobilink Bank shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customer to make the payments.



PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati meets DG NAB Farmanullah at his chamber.

Establishing WHO Satellite Regional Training Center MoU signed Between KMU and Pasteur Institute of Tunis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, and the Pasteur Institute of Tunis have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at establishing a WHO-supported Satellite Regional Training Center for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, in collaboration with the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR).

The agreement was formalized during the 5th International Public Health Conference held at KMU. This partnership marks a significant advancement in promoting

implementation research and public health training across EMRO countries. The new training center will be established at KMU's Institute of Public Health & Social Sciences (IPH&SS), where, under the supervision of the WHO-TDR Global Training Centre in Tunis, certified courses, diploma programs, mentorship, and research support will be provided.

Renowned academician and Vice Chancellor of KMU, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq (Sitara-i-Imtiaz), will serve as the Principal Investigator of the project, while Dr. Khalid Rehman (Director, IPH&SS) and Dr. Sheraz Fazid (Head, Department

Epidemiology & Biostatistics) will serve as Co-Principal Investigators. Dr. Wafa Kammoun will represent the Pasteur Institute of Tunis.

On this occasion, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq described the partnership as a historic milestone for Pakistan's public health sector. He stated that this collaboration would play a key role in promoting evidence-based policymaking and strengthening health systems across the region.

The declaration of KMU as a WHO Satellite Regional Training Center for the Eastern Mediterranean is not only a great honor but also a major achievement for Pakistan's health and edu-

cation sector.

This center will offer training, research support, and professional mentorship, benefiting health professionals across the region and helping to improve public health policy and practice. "We are proud to be part of this global initiative aimed at health research and capacity-building. We extend our gratitude to WHO, TDR, and all our collaborators for their trust and support," said Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq.

This initiative is in line with the WHO-TDR mission to strengthen research capacity in low- and middle-income countries to tackle pressing health challenges.

No official figures released Yet for KP budget 2025-26: Muzzammil

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Muzzammil Aslam, has stated that the recent media reports regarding the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 are entirely baseless. He clarified that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Department has not released any figures related to the upcoming budget.

In an official statement issued from his office, Mr. Aslam said that the budget figures for the new fiscal year will begin to surface in May. He further assured that, similar to the ongoing fiscal year 2024-25, the next budget will also be a surplus budget.

The Advisor emphasized that work is actively underway on the preparation of the upcoming budget, and it is premature

to announce any final figures or dates at this stage. He added that, like the current fiscal year, the next budget of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be people-centric, development-oriented, and historic in nature.

In a separate statement, Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on Finance Muzzammil Aslam, has reacted to the wheat crisis in Punjab and Pakistan. He stated that the Chief Minister of Punjab has crippled the farmers, leading to the lowest wheat production in the country's history this year.

Muzzammil Aslam highlighted that it is generally estimated Pakistan will need to import wheat worth \$3 to \$4 billion this year. He further said the economic exploitation and financial loss suffered by farmers across the country exceeds Rs 900 billion, with Punjab's farmers alone bearing losses over Rs 600 billion.

Criticizing the Punjab government's response, he said that Uzma Bukhari, who he referred to as the "drama theatre regulator", has said that the farmers will get a compensation of Rs 5,000 per acre — an amount that doesn't even cover the cost of a single bag of fertilizer or three days of a farmer's wage.

He added that the government announced subsidies for about 500 tube wells to convert to solar energy, but once the farmers realized the actual costs, they neither bought tractors nor solar systems. He continued, "They claim the total subsidy is Rs 11.5 billion, yet the total farmer losses exceed Rs 600 billion." On top of that, Aslam criticized the government's incentive scheme for high-yield wheat growers, allocating a mere Rs 100 million. "To put things into perspective, even a Rs 1 per 50kg increase in the wheat price amounts to Rs 500 mil-

lion," he said.

He accused the Punjab Chief Minister of favoring the elite through middlemen — announcing interest-free loans worth billions for flour mills and licensed grain holders, and agreeing to store their wheat in government warehouses with rent paid by the state.

Aslam pointed out that the Chief Minister herself has admitted that wheat should be sold once prices improve — which he claims is a clear acknowledgment that the current low-price narrative only serves to benefit middlemen at the cost of farmers.

He concluded by saying that good news for farmers will soon be announced by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "It should be remembered," he noted, "that for the first time in history last year, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government directly purchased wheat from farmers."

DG NAB KP meets Speaker KP Assembly

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Director General NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Farmanullah, met with the Speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Babar Saleem Swati, at the Speaker's Chamber in Peshawar today. The meeting focused on the overall performance of NAB in the province, transparency in the accountability process, and measures aimed at restoring public trust in the institution.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were also held on the functioning of the Accountability Facilitation Cell established within the KP Assembly. The Speaker expressed satisfaction over the Cell's performance, stating that it plays a vital role in enhancing institutional coordination and promoting good governance.

Matters related to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) were also discussed. The Speaker reaffirmed his commitment to further strengthen the PAC, ensuring it becomes more proactive, empowered, and result-oriented. He added that the Assembly would undertake all necessary legislation in this regard to enhance financial oversight and transparency.

Speaker Babar Saleem Swati lauded the professional capabilities of DG NAB and appreciated the role of NAB as a key institution in the fight against corruption. He expressed hope that NAB would continue to discharge its duties with integrity and dedication.

Work on electric feeder completed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Independent Electric Feeder to Small Industrial Estate Abbottabad-II has completed with a cost of around Rs.700-million. Small Industries Estate Abbottabad-II under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Small Industries Development Board. Ali Amin Gandapur, Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, will inaugurate the said estate properly. The said Industrial estate is comprised of 461-kanal. There are 172-Plots allotted to the Potential Industrialists for setting up their factories.

According to a press release, this estate will provide employment to around 20,000 to 25,000 people. The establishment of a new industrial zone at Havelian Haripur will create employment and business opportunities in Hazara Division, particularly in the Hazara District.

Out of 174, majority factories will produce granite and marble. Hazara is famous for its marble and granite.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister on Health, Ihtesham Alil chairing a high level meeting of Khyber Medical University.

Meeting discusses issues faced by tourism dept

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Standing Committee No. 37 on Culture, Tourism, Archaeology and Museums was held at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Secretariat under the chairmanship of the Committee Chairperson and Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Sharafat Ali.

The session was attended by honorable Members of the Provincial Assembly Samiullah Khan, Arbab Muhammad Usman, Zar Alam Khan, Murtaza Khan Tarakai, Rajab Ali Khan Abbasi and Jala Khan, with that Senior official from the Culture, Tourism, Archaeology, and Museums Department, along with representatives from other relevant departments, were also present.

The committee discussed in detail the ongoing issues affecting the performance of the Tourism Department, particularly the overlapping of rules and responsibilities with the Forest Department, Local Government Department, and Environment Department.

Members of the committee expressed concern over the lack of coordination among these departments, which has been hampering effective planning and execution of tourism initiatives across the province. The committee emphasized the need for institutional clarity and interdepartmental coordination to enhance efficiency and avoid duplication of work.

To address these concerns, the committee directed the relevant departments to prepare and submit a comprehensive plan within 15 days, clearly outlining solutions for resolving the overlapping of roles. The plan should focus on creating a coordinated framework that facilitates smooth functioning and clearly defines the responsibilities of each department. The committee also cautioned that in the event of failure to submit the required plan within the given timeframe, the committee will issue its own directions to ensure the matter is appropriately resolved.

Furthermore, the committee issued directions for the overall betterment of tourism and improved public service delivery. These included instructions for upgrading infrastructure and basic facilities at tourist sites, ensuring safety and security measures for tourists, promoting environmentally sustainable tourism in collaboration with the Environment Department, and initiating awareness campaigns to attract both domestic and international visitors. The committee also stressed the importance of transparency and accountability in the utilization of public funds allocated to tourism-related projects. Additionally, the department was instructed to establish proper mechanisms for tourist feedback and grievance redressal to improve service delivery.

Chairperson and MPA Sharafat Ali reiterated the government's commitment to developing tourism as a key sector for economic growth, employment generation, and cultural preservation. He urged all concerned departments to work collectively and proactively for the sustainable development of tourism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Absorption of cops from merged district in KP police Law Minister chairs meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Important Meeting on the absorption of Personnel from Merged Districts into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, Chaired by Minister for Law

An important meeting was held under the chairmanship of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law, Advocate Aftab Alam, at the Home Department, Civil Secretariat Peshawar. The purpose of the meeting was to review the legal and administrative matters related to the induction of Resaldars, Jamadars, and Dafadars deployed in the merged districts into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police.

The meeting was attended by Special Secretary Home Department Zubair

Ahmad, Additional Secretary Dr. Qasim, senior legal advisor from the Law Department Rais Khan, and other concerned officials. The participants held detailed deliberations on the unanimously passed Resolution No. 120 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, which pertains to the absorption of these personnel into the police force.

Addressing the meeting, Minister for Law Advocate Aftab Alam emphasized that all legal requirements must be fulfilled and that transparency and justice should be the guiding principles in this matter. He stated that granting rightful recognition to the personnel from the merged areas is a priority of the government.

During the meeting, the participants were also briefed on the progress of

the integration of the former Khassadar Force into the police. Emphasis was laid on the importance of effective coordination among the police, Home Department, and other relevant institutions to ensure a smooth and balanced transition.

Furthermore, the absence of basic pay scales for these personnel was noted, and the possibility of consultation with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Department on this matter was discussed. The legal aspects of the absorption under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Act were also highlighted during the session. The officials reiterated their commitment to resolving the issue on a priority basis in accordance with legal frameworks to ensure a balanced and just solution.

New BoG members visit KTH

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Every possible effort will be made to transform the hospital into a model institution equipped with state-of-the-art medical facilities – Dr. Waqar Ajmal

The newly appointed Chairman of the Board of Governors (BoG) for Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH), Khyber Medical College (KMC), and Khyber College of Dentistry (KCD), Dr. Waqar Ajmal, along with esteemed board members Dr. Rubina Nauman Gilani, Dr. Wajid Ali, Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmad, Engr. Javed Ahsan, and Mr. Taimoor Shah, undertook a comprehensive two-day visit to KTH on April 18 and 19, 2025.

The visit was attended by Dean KMC Professor Dr. Mahmud Aurangzeb, Hospital Director Dr. Muhammad Zafar Afridi, Medical Director Dr. Sajjad Dawar, Dean KCD Professor Dr. Syed Nasir Shah, along with heads of departments and administrative staff.

During this detailed visit, the delegation inspected all key areas of the hospital including the Outpatient Department (OPD), Emergency Ward, Transplant Center, ICU, Neurology Unit, Burn Unit, Pharmacy, Modular Operation Theaters, Wards, Nursery, Human Resources, IBP Clinics, Facilitation Cell, and Dialysis Unit.

In his briefing, Hospital Director Dr. Muhammad Zafar Afridi highlighted that prior to 2020, development at the hospital was quite limited. However, since 2021, the hospital has entered a new era of progress. He elaborated on several completed and ongoing projects aimed at improving patient care and upgrading infrastructure.

Chairman BoG Dr. Waqar Ajmal reiterated the board's vision of transforming KTH into a model institution in the healthcare sector. He assured full support and optimal use of available resources for the development of the hospital. He emphasized that the board is committed to enhancing public healthcare and will leave no stone unturned in making KTH a benchmark for modern medical facilities.

Humanitarian Policing Practices Dept of Criminology, ICRC organize workshop

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Department of Criminology, in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), has been organizing a three-day Capacity Building Workshop on "Humanitarian Policing Practices under International Law" from Tuesday, April 22, 2025, to Thursday, April 24, 2025. Law enforcement officers from various regions across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with a special focus on those serving in the Merged Districts (MDs), are invited to participate.

The primary theme of this training is to build the capacity of law enforcement officers engaged in fieldwork duties within MDs. Designed under the ICRC's Police and Security forces program mandate, the program aims to promote good policing practices in line with international law, encouraging officers to adopt and replicate these practices in their operational environments. The training will feature

lectures on key topics such as the Use of Force, Arrest & Detention, Community-Based Policing, Protection of Vulnerable Populations, and the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Agencies. Additionally, syndicate activities including case study analysis and role-playing exercises are incorporated to enhance practical understanding and to help integrate humanitarian policing principles into police curriculum and practices.

On the first day of the training, the session began with Mr. Asghar Marwat, Program Manager, Police & Security Forces, ICRC, who gave a brief introduction to the ICRC's global initiatives and its ongoing activities in Pakistan.

Prof. Dr. Basharat Hussain, Chairman, Department of Criminology, University of Peshawar, formally welcomed the participants and provided an overview of the department and its collaborative efforts with law enforcement agencies. He emphasized the importance of collaboration between the Department of

Criminology, Law Enforcement Agencies, and International Community in fostering an environment of learning and mutual growth.

Following this, Dr. Muhammad Ibrar, Assistant Professor at the Department of Criminology, University of Peshawar, shared his valuable insights on the best practices for safeguarding the rights of victims, underlining the significance of victim-centered approaches within the framework of international law and local policing practices.

Mr. Asghar Marwat conducted sessions on key topics, focusing on the Use of Force while integrating international standards and Good Practices related to the exercise of Police powers. Discussions were also conducted among the participants on Arrest and Detention under International Human Rights Law (IHRL).

The first day concluded with Groupwork activities, allowing participants to engage in practical exercises and discussions based on the lectures.

Social Media Mastery Young Leaders convene summit in Baragali

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The picturesque Baragali Campus of the University of Peshawar recently hosted the three-day "Social Media Mastery and Impact Summit," bringing together 50 young participants from the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The event, organized by WQ Softwares, and sponsored by the Directorate of Youth Affairs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, concluded on April 20th after an intensive program designed to equip youth with essential digital communication skills and network-building opportunities.

Throughout the summit, which ran from April 18-20, participants engaged in five interactive sessions

focused on leveraging social media platforms for positive societal impact. The gender-inclusive gathering featured both young men and women eager to enhance their digital literacy and communication capabilities.

"This summit represents our commitment to empowering youth from the merged districts with skills that are crucial in today's digital landscape," said a representative from the Directorate of Youth Affairs during the closing ceremony.

Distinguished experts led the training sessions, including Irfan Younas, Media and Communication Lead at USAID; Shoab Khan from HUM News; Dr. Zia, a noted policy expert; and social media specialists Aleena Ashfaq

and Asif Khan. The diverse panel offered participants insights into strategic communication, content creation, and responsible digital citizenship.

Beyond the formal learning environment, attendees participated in enriching exposure visits to Nathiagali and the renowned Ayubia Pipeline track, providing networking opportunities amid the scenic beauty of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's mountainous region.

"The combination of professional development and cultural exposure makes this initiative particularly valuable," remarked one of the trainers. "These young participants will return to their communities not only with enhanced digital skills but also with expanded perspectives."



In brief

Yahya defends PhD thesis F.P. Report

MARDAN: A Doctorate of Philosophy in Mathematics Dr M. Yahya at University of Abdul Wali Khan Mardan (AWKUM) successfully defended his thesis titled "Fuzzy Aggregation Operators and their Application to Decision Making Problem". His thesis was supervised by Dr. Saleem Abdullah. The external examiners were Dr. Saqib Hussain and Dr. Hizar Hayat from University of Kashmir and University of COMSAT respectively. It is mentioned that scholar published many research papers in international reputable. The examiners, the faculty members, Dean of Physical and numerical sciences appreciated the hard work by the scholar and encouraged him to continue the research activities in his chosen area for deep explanation. The scholar thanks all the family members, parents and well-wishers for their prayers and support.

Community policing directed F.P. Report

CHINIOT: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Faisalabad visited Chiniot and held a 'Kuli Katcheri' at city police station for the public's relief and prompt provision of justice. Police officers including DPO Chiniot were present, on Tuesday. RPO Faisalabad listened to the problems of the citizens and issued orders on the spot for their solution. All possible steps are being taken to immediately redress the complaints of the citizens and improve the quality of service delivery. He also inspected the Special Initiative Police Station, City Chiniot. Later, a crime meeting was held at the DPO Office Chiniot under the chairmanship of RPO Faisalabad Zeeshan Asghar, in which DPO Chiniot Abdullah Ahmad, SP Investigation, circle officers and SHOs participated. During the meeting, a detailed review of challans of serious cases, incomplete challans, and cases under investigation was conducted. The Regional Police Officer, Faisalabad, while issuing orders, said that the officers should play their positive role in clearing the cases under investigation. Investigating officers should prioritize justice and merit in clearing or dismissing the cases. To control serious incidents, especially street crime, the patrol system should be made effective and teams should be formed to trace the incidents.

RTA Admn Officer awarded F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Provincial Minister Punjab Transport and Mass Transit Bilal Akbar Khan has awarded appreciation certificate to Admin Officer, Secretary Regional Transport Authority Attock Sardar Zaheer Ahmed Khan in recognition of his meritorious achievements during a colorful ceremony. While talking to senior journalist chief Patron Attock Press Club Syed Raza Naqvi, he said that he has been posted as District Officer Industries, Finance and Planning Officer in DC office besides holding the additional charge of the post of Secretary Regional Transport Authority Attock. Replying to a question, Sardar Zaheer Ahmed Khan told that such kind of awards are playing motivational role for the future career growth of any civil servant in his entire service. This is also an overall satisfaction and confidence reposed by the higher authorities, he added.

Completion of Bakhshali bypass till May 15 directed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan has directed the officials of the Communications and Works (C&W) Department to complete the construction work of the bypass road from Bakhshali Interchange to Char Gali Road by May 15 and open it for general traffic, on Tuesday.

He was giving instructions to the concerned authorities during an inspection of the construction work of the five and a half kilometer Bakhshali Bypass, which is under completion at a cost of Rs. 632 million. Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning, Assistant Commissioner Development, AC

Revenue, Divisional Monitoring Officer, contractor firm and C&W officials were also present on the occasion.

Commissioner Mardan Nisar Ahmed inspected various parts of the bypass road and directed the DMO to review the quality of construction work. He said that Bakhshali Bypass Road is an important project in the context of Swat Motorway through which better facilities will be provided to the commuters and local people.

WSSCM launched joint cleanliness drive: Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) and district administration jointly started special cleanliness campaign in Mardan City.

Deputy Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer inaugurated special cleanliness campaign.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Azmatullah Wazir and Chief Executive Officer Shahid Khan stated that Clean and Green Mardan is our mission and all the available resources will be utilized to accomplish this mission. They stated on the directions of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Special Cleanliness campaign has been launched in all tehsils of Mardan. The main objective of the special cleanliness campaign is to provide clean and healthy environment to the citizens and raise awareness.

Indus irrigation canal uplift feasibility approved

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture has said that Uplift of Indus Irrigation Canal was formally approved for feasibility study. He said that work on this project will begin immediately after the successful completion of the feasibility study. There is no difficulty. As long as the intentions are firm and the prayers of our nation are with us, Allah Almighty will make it easy.

In this regard, I express my heartfelt gratitude to my beloved Chief Minister, Mr. Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and also to the Provincial Secretariat including P&D and Secretary Agriculture and Irrigation who did all the documentation for this

study and won the hearts of the Khattak people. This scheme will provide separate irrigation facilities for Banda Dawood Shah and Karak and Tahat Nusrati Tehsils.

Meanwhile, additional deputy commissioner (General) inaugurated a cleanliness drive in Karak district. On this occasion, an awareness walk was also organized from the office to Tehsil Chowk under his leadership, in which officials of the district administration and government departments, besides people of different schools of thought and sanitation staff, participated.

Anti-polio vaccination campaign continued: The polio campaign is going on successfully across the dis-

trict, Deputy Commissioner Karak is personally supervising the teams. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner Karak Shakeel Ahmed Jan visited different areas of Karak Tehsil today and checked the records of several fax and transit teams while supervising them.

During this, he inspected the teams engaged in the polio campaign in Shaheedan, Tabikhwa, Methakhel, Aayakhel and other areas and issued appropriate instructions. He appealed to the people to cooperate fully in the polio campaign by distributing polio drops to children. He said that polio drops must be distributed to save their children from lifelong disabilities.

School curriculum activities inspected

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Education Toba Tek Singh Aqeela Intikhab along with Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Iqra Nasir visited Government Boys High School Chak No. 664/5 GB, on Tuesday.

During the visit, they made a detailed review of the attendance of teachers, academic activities of students and cleanliness of the school. The Assistant Commissioner also asked questions to the students regarding the quality of education and appreciated the hard work of the teachers.

AC Iqra Nasir said that there will be no compro-

mise on the education of children and providing the best environment in educational institutions is the top priority of the administration. CEO Education Aqeela Intikhab directed the school staff to further improve the quality of education and take special care of cleanliness so that children get the opportunity to study in a healthy and pleasant environment.

DC inaugurated anti-polio vaccination drive: The anti-polio campaign has formally commenced across District Toba Tek Singh.

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sindhu inaugurated the drive by administering polio drops to children at City Hospital. Prominent

figures present at the occasion included Pakistan Muslim League-N leader Chaudhry Haris Amjad, CEO Health Dr. Kashif Bajwa, and DHO Dr. Kashif Nadeem.

According to data released by the district administration, a target has been set to vaccinate 433,838 children during the campaign.

To achieve this, 1,916 mobile teams, 106 fixed teams, and 49 transit teams have been deployed. These teams will administer polio drops door-to-door and at public places. They have also been stationed at bus terminals, railway stations, and other key locations to ensure no child is left unvaccinated.

Youth killed, two injured in road mishap

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: A tragic road accident occurred on the Hafizabad-Sukheki Road near village Uddoki, resulting in the death of one youth and injuries to two others. According to Rescue 1122, three young men were traveling on a motorcycle when they approached the vicinity of village Uddoki. The motorcycle reportedly made a U-turn from the wrong side of the road. At that moment, a speeding car, traveling from behind, collided with the motorcycle.

As a result of the collision, 18-year-old Zain was died before any medical aid could be made available to him, while two others, identified as 23-year-old Sanaullah and 20-year-old Shahid Imran, sustained injuries.

Rescue 1122 responded promptly to the scene, and the body of the deceased, Zain, was handed over to his relatives. The injured individuals were immediately transported to the hospital for medical treatment.

DPO holds Ardali Room: District Police Officer Hafizabad conducted an Ardali Room (orderly room) at his office, where police officers and personnel, ranging from the rank of Inspector to Constable, appeared for assessment and accountability. The session

saw a number of disciplinary actions being taken in line with the DPO's commitment to maintaining high standards of professionalism and integrity within the police force.

During the proceedings, DPO Hafizabad dismissed one police officer from service for misconduct. Furthermore, two officers were awarded increment stoppage punishments for their involvement in negligence, while five other officers were censured for failing to perform their duties effectively.

Addressing the gathered personnel, DPO Atif Nazir emphasized that no compromise would be tolerated when it comes to maintaining departmental discipline. He made it clear that honest, diligent, and public-friendly police employees would be recognized and promoted, while strict action would be taken against those who neglect their responsibilities or misuse their authority.

Civil Defence aims to combat illegal LPG & petrol pumps: District Civil Defence Officer Tahir Javed has announced the ongoing special awareness campaign aimed at combating the illegal LPG and petrol business in the region. As part of the campaign, a dedicated awareness session was organized

at the Government College for Women, Hafizabad, where the basic principles of Civil Defence were imparted to the attendees.

Tahir Javed emphasized the significance of the campaign, stating that efforts are focused on curbing the hazardous practice of illegal LPG decanting. A daily crackdown on illegal decanting activities has been initiated, with several decanting tools already confiscated during the operation. Applications for the registration of cases have also been forwarded to the relevant police stations for further action.

The Civil Defence Officer reiterated that the primary goal of the awareness campaign and the crackdown is to protect the lives of the public. He firmly stated that no leniency will be shown to anyone involved in the illegal decanting or petrol business within the district, and strict action will be taken against violators to ensure public safety.

Rescue prompt action averts disaster: A timely and efficient response by the firefighters of Rescue 1122 prevented a major disaster when they successfully contained a fire that threatened to destroy 150 acres of standing wheat crop in the village of Attlay Rehman, near Sukheki.

Commissioner visits Ghamkul refugee camp F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Syed Motasim Billah Shah has visited the Ghamkul Refugee Camp on Tuesday morning, where he beside inspecting the polio fixed, transit and other teams, also checked the polio records at the Basic Health Unit Ghamkul Camp No. 2. He also administered polio drops to the children on this occasion. He expressed satisfaction with the performance of the polio teams, however, directed action against the absent LHV at the said Health Unit.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Kohat Division also paid a surprise visit to the KDA Offices Complex and inspected the offices of Deputy Commissioner, RTA, Education, Accounts, KPPRA, Excise, Water Management, Industry, Health, Arms Licenses Section and Mines and Minerals. He directed immediate action against more than 10 employees including the RTA Superintendent, Excise Inspector, DMO Health and other absent staff for their absence.

Commissioner Kohat also reviewed the ongoing weekly cleanliness drive, started on the directions of the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and expressed his extreme anger over the deteriorating cleanliness condition of the Offices Complex. He reprimanded the Heads of all Departments and gave them a deadline of 2 days to clean the complex.

He also visited the Matriculation Examination Hall in Higher Secondary School No. 4 Kohat and expressed satisfaction with the facilities in the examination hall and the ongoing examination process. He also directed the school principal to further improve the cleanliness of the school.

Varsity employees' sit-in continue F.P. Report

LARKANA: The University of Larkana employees' sit-in protest enters into 11th day in favor of their legitimate demands at the main gate of the university. The demonstrators also raised slogans while holding placards and banners.

On this occasion, a joint action committee consisting of the Employees Welfare Association (EWA) and the Officers Welfare Association (OWA) held a protest demonstration for the 11th day to resolve their joint legitimate issues. Addressing the demonstration jointly, Siraj Ahmed Bhutto, Abdul Jabbar Chandio, Gulam Mustafa Odho and others protested and said that the 11th day of our continuous protest has passed but the administration is still silent.

While last week, the Vice Chancellor of The University of Larkana, Muhammad Usman Kerio, expressed helplessness and said that some members of the syndicate had sent written requests to the university board to do some work, on which some letters were also sent. The notices regarding which have also been withdrawn, for which we would like to inform the acting Vice Chancellor that the members of the syndicate have no authority to interfere in the day-to-day operations of the university.

They can only raise their objections until the syndicate meeting but it is unfortunate that the University Board Secretary Gulam Abbas has issued letters to stop the day-to-day operations of the university on the request of one or two members. They further said that the Chairman Pakistan People's Party and the Chief Minister of Sindh should take notice of this matter and ask the Secretary Board why such letters have been issued on the demand of the members of the peaceful syndicate.

As many as 4448 teams deployed for polio campaign: DIG Larkana has taken strict measures for anti-polio vaccination week. Almost 5400 policemen and officers are performing security duties for a total of 4448 teams in the Larkana Range from April 21 to April 27 by the Health Department in the five districts, Shikarpur, Jabakabad, Larkana, Qamber Shahdadkot and District Kashmir and Kandhkot.

Int'l conference on Indigenous Languages & Heritage held



F.P. Report

KARAK: First ever International Conference on Indigenous Languages, Literature, and Heritage, themed "Bridging the Past with the Future: Preserve, Revive, Celebrate," commenced at Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak (KKKUK). This hybrid multilingual conference, organized by the Center for Applied Studies and Research (CASR) in collaboration with Khushal Khan Khattak University, on Tuesday.

The inaugural ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of the Vice Chancellor KKKUK Prof. Dr. Naseer u Din, who served as the Chief Guest. In his address, Vice Chancellor highlighted the critical importance of preserving and promoting indigenous languages, literature, and heritage in an increasingly globalized world. He emphasized the vital role of such academic gatherings in fostering dialogue, research, and collaborative efforts to safeguard these invaluable cultural assets for future generations.

Earlier in the program, Dr. Fasih Ur Rehman, Director of Academics and Research, warmly welcomed all the participants, including national and international scholars, researchers, and cultural enthusiasts. He underscored the significance of the conference theme in the context of the rich cultural tapestry of the

region and beyond. He expressed his hope that the conference would serve as a platform for insightful discussions, knowledge sharing, and the development of actionable strategies for the revitalization of indigenous heritage.

The conference features an impressive lineup of keynote speakers, including national luminaries such as Zubair Torwali Researcher, Writer, and Minority Language Activist, Dr. Muhammad Waqas Sajjad Director Research, Lok Virsa, Dr. Maria Isabel Maldonado-Garcia University of the Punjab, Mr. Muhammad Hamza Mirasi Playwright, Qissa Goh, Dr. Yasir Hussain Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Asmat Ullah Damaili, Linguist, Author & Poet, Dr. Abdus Samad Kakahel Kohat University, Dr. Mirza Qasim Baba Guru Nanak University, Nankana Sahab, Dr. Amjad Saleem University of Peshawar, and Dr. Abdul Hakim, Linguist & Researcher. Their expertise will undoubtedly enrich the conference proceedings and provide valuable perspectives on the multifaceted aspects of indigenous languages, literature, and heritage.

The 1st International Conference on Indigenous Languages, Literature, and Heritage promises to be a significant event, fostering collaboration and generating crucial insights for the preservation and promotion of the world's diverse cultural heritage.

Campaign launched to boost girls' enrolment

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Government Girls Primary School Barikot in Swat district has launched an admission campaign to promote girls' education and increase enrollment in schools. District Education Officer Female Swat, Hafsa Gul, inaugurated the campaign by filling out admission forms for girls and distributing free books and bags among them.

The ceremony was attended by Sub-Divisional Education Officer Barikot

Ishrat Begum, female teachers, and mothers of the students. Female students from different schools participated in the event, delivering speeches and presenting educational sketches highlighting the importance of education.

In her address, DEO Hafsa Gul emphasized that education is a fundamental right of every child, and nations are built through education. She stressed that girls' education is equally important as boys' education and that the provincial government is taking prac-

tical steps to promote it.

DEO revealed that the district has been given a target to enroll 29,000 children, and officials are working to make the campaign a success. She urged parents to send their children to school and get them admitted to secure their future.

The DEO was given a warm welcome by the students, who showered her with flowers upon her arrival at the school. The event marked the beginning of a new initiative to promote girls' education in Swat.

6 held in Maidan house robbery case: DPO

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Police have arrested six suspects, including a foreign national and a woman, in connection with a major robbery that took place in the Lal Qila area on April 15. District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Salam Khalid told reporters at Balambat Police Lines that the robbers, dressed in security forces' uniforms, broke into the house of a local resident, Saaz Muhammad, and looted gold, cash, and other valuables.

A special investigation team, headed by SP Investigation Rashid Ahmad, used modern forensic tools to track down six members of the eight-member gang. DPO Khalid confirmed that 80 percent

of the stolen items had been recovered and assured that the remaining two suspects would soon be arrested. Recovered items included cash, mobile phones, weapons, SIM cards, and even a stolen iron and a set of military uniform.

He commended public cooperation in maintaining law and order, reiterating that there were no "no-go areas" in the district. The DPO also addressed a separate incident involving the armed attack on Constable Sajjad Khan in Munda on March 31. Initially believed to be an act of terrorism, a joint investigation later concluded that the motive was personal. Two suspects were arrested, and an SMG used in the attack was recovered.

Meanwhile, Deputy

Commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan inaugurated the district's spring tree plantation campaign by planting a sapling at the Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) Timergara office. He also launched a 15-day cleanliness drive set to continue until April 30.

Speaking on the occasion, DC Arif Khan said that all departments, including the Forest Department, had been directed to actively participate in the plantation campaign. The goal is to plant at least 100,000 saplings across Lower Dir during the season.

"Trees not only enhance the beauty of our region but also help reduce pollution and promote a healthier environment," the DC remarked.

Power of vulnerability: Embracing authenticity in relationships

Khadija Rehman and Adeela Manzoor

BECAUSE of the fear of rejection or criticism in a society that often equates openness with weakness, many people are reluctant to give their hearts. It is not a sign of weakness, however, and it is the foundation of real and lasting connections.

When people accept themselves for who they are, imperfections and all, sincere relationships develop. Being vulnerable is having the courage to communicate worries, express emotions, and be one's true self without putting on a front of perfection. In the face of uncertainty, it is the willingness to honestly communicate one's feelings. Renowned psychologist and vulnerability researcher Brené Brown

claims that vulnerability is "the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity." Vulnerable relationships remain artificial and lack the depth necessary to develop intimacy and trust. Vulnerability is a problem for many people despite its importance.

A 2023 survey by the American Psychological Association found that 61% of people struggle to show their true emotions in relationships because they fear rejection or criticism. A second YouGov research from 2022 found that 43% of individuals avoid emotional openness, especially with close friends or partners, because of fear that they will appear weak. However, research also shows that those who embrace vulnerability are 40% more likely than those who suppress their emo-

tions to experience high levels of emotional well-being and relationship satisfaction.

Being authentic in relationships means being true to oneself without pretending or worrying about criticism. Instead of using force or social pressure, it allows people to build solid emotional bonds based on trust. When people conceal their true selves from one another, relationships become transactional instead of transformative. Being sincere makes people feel valued and understood and promotes acceptance. By expressing confidence in another person, vulnerability fosters a safe space for open communication. When people talk about their issues and worries, it strengthens mutual understanding because it inspires friends, family, and partners to do the same.



Why did Putin’s Russia invade Ukraine?

MOSCOW (BBC): When Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered up to 200,000 soldiers into Ukraine, his aim was to sweep into the capital, Kyiv, in a matter of days. He wanted to overthrow the pro-Western government and return Ukraine to Russia's sphere of influence. Putin failed but, more than three years on, a fifth of Ukrainian territory is in Russian hands.

The US - until recently Ukraine's strongest ally - has been talking directly to Russia in a bid to end the war, but other than a 30-hour Russian-declared Easter truce marred by violations, there has been little sign of progress. As Putin launched the biggest European invasion since the end of World War Two, he gave a fiery speech on TV declaring his goal was to "demilitarise and denazify" Ukraine. Russia has repeatedly painted modern Ukraine as a Nazi state, in a crass distortion of history.

Putin had already seized Ukraine's Crimean peninsula eight years earlier, after a revolution that ousted Ukraine's pro-Russian president and replaced him with a more pro-Western government. Putin then prompted a lower-level war in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, with pro-Russian proxy forces occupying territory and setting up rebel states supported by Moscow. But the 2022 invasion was on a different scale. Putin had just recognised the rebel states as independent. Then, as the invasion began, he said the people there - many of whom are Russian speakers - needed protection from the Kyiv "regime". A day later, Putin called on Ukraine's military to "take power into your own hands" and target the "gangs of drug addicts and neo-Nazis" running the government.

Putin then added another objective - to ensure Ukraine stayed neutral. He accused the Western defensive alliance, Nato, of trying to gain a foothold in Ukraine to bring its troops closer to Russia's borders. The Russian leader has long questioned Ukraine's right to exist, claiming that "modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia" after the communist revo-

lution in 1917. In a long-winded 2021 essay he even suggested "Russians and Ukrainians were one people" dating back to the late 9th Century. Last year he told US TV talk show host Tucker Carlson that Ukraine was an "artificial state". Those comments have led many to believe that the goal of the invasion was in effect to erase the state of Ukraine. Russia's state-run Ria news agency explained that "denazification is inevitably also de-Ukrainisation" - seemingly tying the idea of erasing Ukraine to the stated goal of the invasion. Ukrainian culture and identity have in fact existed for centuries independently of Russia. Putin has long sought to get rid of Ukraine's elected pro-Western president, and Zelensky was apparently a target from the very start of the war.

Russian troops made two attempts to storm the presidential compound soon after the invasion, according to Zelensky's adviser, and Ukraine's elected leader said they wanted him dead. "The enemy has designated me as target number one; my family is target number two. "They want to destroy Ukraine politically by destroying the head of state." Zelensky said later that Putin had initially tried to replace him with the wealthy head of a pro-Russian party, Viktor Medvedchuk, who was accused of treason in Ukraine and is now in Russia. Even now, three years on, Putin refuses direct peace talks with Zelensky "because of his illegitimacy" - a false narrative that has been repeated by President Trump.

As evidence Putin cites the postponement of Ukraine's March 2024 presidential election, although it is because of Russia's war that Ukraine is under martial law and elections are barred under the constitution. Putin's own re-election in 2024 is highly questionable, as Russia's opposition leaders are either in exile or dead. Putin has for years complained about Nato's eastward expansion as a security threat, and sees any possibility of Ukraine joining the alliance as a major red line. Before Russia's 2022 invasion he demanded that Nato remove multinational deployments



from the Central and Eastern European states that joined the Western alliance after 1997. But it was Russia who launched military action in Eastern Europe, when it invaded Georgia in 2008 and then Crimea in 2014.

After the Crimea invasion, Nato established a continuous presence on its eastern flank - closest to Russia. Nato has always stressed the whole purpose of the alliance is to defend territories "with no aggressive intentions". Sweden and Finland have joined Nato in the past two years precisely because of the perceived Russian threat. It is part of Ukraine's constitution to join the European Union and Nato, but there was no real prospect of this when the full-scale war began. Zelensky said as much two weeks into the invasion: "Nato is not prepared to accept Ukraine." He has since said he would consider resigning in exchange for Nato membership, but Trump says Kyiv should "forget about" joining the Western alliance. Putin has accused Nato of participating in the war, because its member states have increasingly sent Ukraine military hardware, including

tanks and fighter jets, air defence systems, missile systems, artillery and drones.

Nato has provided security assistance and training to Ukraine, but it insists that does not make it a party to the war. Putin's grievance against Nato dates back to 1990, when he claims the West promised not to expand "an inch to the East". However that was before the Soviet Union collapsed and it was based on a limited commitment made to then Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev said "the topic of Nato expansion was never discussed" at the time. Before his return to the White House and since, President Donald Trump has suggested Ukraine's president was responsible for the war with Russia.

In reality, the war began in 2014, when Putin seized Crimea and Russian proxies grabbed part of eastern Ukraine. Zelensky had not even entered politics by then. Putin then ordered Russia's full-scale invasion eight years later, after months of meticulous co-ordination and denials of any such plan. But Trump's messaging has not been altogether consis-

tent, so it is difficult to know whether he truly believes Zelensky was to blame. "[Zelensky] should never have let the war start, that war's a loser," he said in October 2024. He repeated that theory a day after a Russian missile killed 35 people in Sumy in April 2025: "When you start a war, you got to know you can win."

Trump has been accused of adopting Russian narratives on the war, and Zelensky has said he "lives in this disinformation space". However, the US president has also recognised Putin's overall responsibility. "Biden could have stopped it and Zelensky could have stopped it, and Putin should have never started it. Everybody is to blame," he said. Asked to clarify his comments days later, he told reporters days later that he was not happy with Zelensky: "I'm not blaming him, but what I am saying is that I wouldn't say he's done the greatest job."

At the start of the 2022 invasion, Putin vowed to protect people in occupied areas of eastern Ukraine from eight years of Ukrainian "bullying and genocide, during the war in the east. More than 14,000 people

died on both sides of the front line between 2014-2022, but Russian claims of Ukrainian Nazis committing genocide in the occupied regions never added up, and no international body has spoken of genocide. Germany's chancellor called the allegation "ridiculous". The Russian taunts of Nazis in charge in Kyiv are also not correct. Modern Ukraine has no far-right parties in parliament - they failed to get enough votes in the 2019 elections. On top of that, Zelensky is Jewish and many of his relatives were murdered by the Nazis in World War Two. Putin condemns him as a "disgrace to the Jewish people", but the US Holocaust Memorial Museum rejects his claims outright, saying he "misrepresented and misappropriated Holocaust history".

Putin himself was accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Court in 2024, although that has been rejected by the Kremlin. Russia's attempt to stop Ukraine leaving its sphere of influence goes back years, and its initial invasion began in 2014 when pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovych was ousted after months of mass demonstrations. Yanukovych had abandoned an EU deal under Putin's pressure, prompting protests that ended when snipers shot dead dozens of demonstrators. Yanukovych soon fled to Russia. Putin quickly seized Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and Russian proxies took up arms against the government, occupying parts of the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

Two attempts to stop the war came to nothing. They were known as the Minsk agreements and were brokered by France, Germany and Russia itself. They reduced the scale of violence, but Zelensky has called them a trap that created a frozen conflict on Russia's terms. Both sides accused each other of violations, and the Kremlin said ultimately the failed accords were a precursor to Moscow's full-scale invasion. The Ukrainian leader has warned the Trump administration not to trust Putin: "He broke the ceasefire, he killed our people."

Conservative Poilievre seemed poised to be Canada’s next leader

TORONTO (AP): Until a few months ago, Pierre Poilievre was seen as a shoo-in to become Canada's next prime minister and shepherd his Conservative Party back into power for the first time in a decade. Then, President Donald Trump declared economic war on the US's neighbor to the north and even threatened to make Canada the 51st state.

Poilievre, a career politician and firebrand populist, has campaigned with Trump-like braggadocio, even taking a page from the "America First" president by adopting the slogan "Canada First." But his similarities to Trump might cost him the chance to become prime minister when Canadians head to the polls on April 28. Trump's frequent attacks on Canada's economy and sovereignty have infuriated Canadians and led to a surge in nationalism that has bolstered Liberal Party poll numbers.

Like Trump, Poilievre brags about the size of the crowd at his campaign rallies and attacks the mainstream media, recently calling a female journalist a protester. In response to the changes in public opinion, some Poilievre supporters wore hoodies to a recent rally with the slogan, "Do you believe the polls?" The change in the polls has been dramatic. In a mid-January poll by Nanos, the Liberals trailed the Conservatives by 47% to 20%. In the latest Nanos poll, which was conducted during a three-day period that ended April 20, the Liberals led by eight percentage points. The January poll had a margin of error of 3.1 points while the latest poll had a 2.7-point margin.

"The Trumpy hectoring of people, the slogans, the big rallies - like it all just seems like so Trump. And people are not loving Trump right now in Canada," said Kory Teneycke, a key figure in conservative Canadian politics who directs campaigns.

"(Poilievre's) style and his approach to politics certainly channel a lot of Trump. It's like a cheap karaoke version of Trump."

Poilievre is imploring Canadians not to give the Liberals a fourth term after "a lost Liberal decade." He hoped to make the election a referendum on former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose popularity declined toward the end of his decade in power as food and housing prices rose and immigration surged. But Trump attacked, Trudeau resigned and Mark Carney, a two-time central banker, became Liberal party leader and prime minister. After decades of bilateral stability, the vote is now expected to focus on who is best equipped to deal with Trump.

Poilievre is best known for his populist slogans and attacks on Trudeau, whom he blamed for high inflation. He was a Cabinet minister in former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government and has led the opposition Conservatives since 2022. Teneycke said Poilievre's skill as a "political attack dog" is what led him to great heights. "When that ire was focused on a very unpopular prime minister in Justin Trudeau, that was working for him," Teneycke said. "Exit Trudeau, enter Trump and it's a totally changed game. He hasn't brought that level of ferocity to Trump."

Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal, said Poilievre is different from Trump in quite a few ways but, stylistically, their rhetoric is often similar. "Sounding like someone many of your fellow citizens perceive as their country's public enemy No. 1 can't be a good thing in politics," Béland said.

A married 45-year-old father of two, Poilievre represents a district outside the capital, Ottawa, but he grew up in Alberta, Canada's most

conservative province. He has been a member of Parliament since the age of 25. Poilievre volunteered on conservative campaigns during his teenage years, joined the campus conservative club at the University of Calgary and was a finalist for an essay-writing contest about what he would do if he were prime minister.

What would a Poilievre victory mean for Canada-US relations? Trump has said he isn't concerned that his trade war with Canada was boosting the Liberal Party ahead of the parliamentary elections. And although he said Poilievre's views are more aligned than Carney's with his own, he's not a fan of Poilievre.

"The conservative that's running is stupidly no friend of mine," Trump has said, criticizing Poilievre for "saying negative things." Poilievre, like Carney, said that if he's elected, he would accelerate renegotiations of the free trade deal with the US He also wants Trump to suspend US tariffs during the talks. He said Trump should "knock off" his attacks on Canada, but that "nobody can control this president."

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, a conservative ally of Poilievre, said Poilievre would be "very much in sync" with the "new direction in America." Poilievre has vowed to defund the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the public broadcaster and a cultural institution in Canada. He wants to cut taxes and hopes to approve pipelines that would diversify oil exports. He has also promised to be tough on crime and has denounced "woke-ism." "Who's ready for change in Canada? Who's ready to ax some taxes? Who's ready to build some homes? Who's ready for some pipelines to make us independent from the Americans? And who's ready to put Canada first for a change?" Poilievre said at a recent rally.

Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, after missing nearly \$20,000 in mortgage payments, trial testimony showed. A longtime friend, Wael Hana, provided cash to save the home - and prosecutors said that in return, the senator began helping Hana preserve a business monopoly he had arranged with the Egyptian government to certify that imported meat met religious requirements.

Nadine Menendez also needed a new car after her old one was destroyed when she struck and killed a man crossing a street. (She did not face charges in the crash). Prosecutors said a businessman, Jose Uribe, gave her a Mercedes-Benz, and in return Bob Menendez used his clout to pressure the New Jersey attorney general's office to stop investigating some of Uribe's associates. Prosecutor said more cash and gold bribes were paid to the couple by Fred Daibes, a prominent real estate developer who prosecutors said wanted the senator to protect him from a criminal case he was facing in New Jersey. Prosecutors said Bob Menendez also helped Daibes secure a \$95 million investment from a Qatari investment fund.

Wife of former US Sen Menendez convicted in bribery scheme

NEW YORK (AP): Nadine Menendez, the wife of former US Sen. Bob Menendez, was convicted of teaming up with her husband to accept bribes of cash, gold bars and a luxury car from three New Jersey men looking for help with their business dealings or legal troubles.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty on all counts in the same federal courthouse in Manhattan where a different jury convicted Bob Menendez of many of the same charges last year. The Democrat is supposed to begin serving an 11-year prison term in June.

Nadine Menendez, who stood but did not appear to react as the verdict was delivered by the jury foreperson, was scheduled to be sentenced on June 12, six days after her husband is expected to report to prison. Outside the courthouse, she wore a pink mask as she stood next to her lawyer, Barry Coburn, said he was "devastated by the verdict."

"We fought hard and it hurts," he said. "This is a very rough day for us." The evidence shown to jurors over a three-week trial followed the timeline of the whirlwind romance between the couple that began in early 2018 and

continued after criminal charges were brought against them in September 2023. Repeatedly during the trial, prosecutors said they were "partners in crime."

During a 2022 raid on the couple's Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, home, FBI agents found nearly \$150,000 worth of gold bars and \$480,000 in cash stuffed in boots, shoeboxes and jackets. In the garage was a Mercedes-Benz convertible, also an alleged bribe. Both Nadine and Bob Menendez said they are innocent and never took bribes. Initially, they were to be tried together, along with the three businessmen, but Nadine Menendez's trial was postponed a year ago after she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent surgery. Bob Menendez, 71, resigned from the Senate last August following his conviction. Before the charges were brought he had been chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Prosecutors accused Nadine Menendez of starting to facilitating bribes to the senator around the time that they began dating, before they married in the fall of 2020. At the time, she was in danger of losing her home in

China to launch new crewed mission into space

BEIJING (AFP): China is expected to launch a new crewed mission into space this week, as Beijing takes steady steps towards its goal of putting astronauts on the Moon. The Shenzhou-20 mission will blast off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China, carrying three astronauts to the country's self-built Tiangong space station for a likely six-month stay.

The team will undertake experiments to further the space programme's ambitions aims to place astronauts on the Moon by 2030 and eventually build a lunar base. The country's space agency said last week that the Shenzhou spaceship and its Long March-2F carrier rocket were transferred to a launch site at the remote desert base and would launch "at an appropriate time in the near future".

Photographs published by the Xinhua state news agency showed the sleek white rocket perched on a blue pedestal festooned with national flags, pointing towards the heavens, with red-and-gold banners hailing China's space programme. "At present, the launch site facilities and equipment are in good condition. The functional inspections and joint tests will be carried out as planned," the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said. Authorities have not yet given details on the identities of the Shenzhou-20 astronauts or the work they will carry out.

Zhou Wenxing, a staff member at the country's astronaut training centre, said the crew was "in good condition, precise in operation, and smooth in coordination", state broadcaster CCTV reported. China's previous crewed mission, Shenzhou-19, launched last October and will reach its planned end date on April 29. It is headed by Cai Xuzhe, a 48-year-old former air force pilot who served a previous stint aboard the Tiangong space station as part of the Shenzhou-14 mission in 2022.

Also among the crew is Wang Haoze, 35, who is China's only female space-flight engineer and the third Chinese woman to take part in a crewed mission. Song Lingdong, a 34-year-old man, completes the trio. The Shenzhou-19 team has been carrying out tests to see how extreme radiation, gravity, temperature and other conditions affect "bricks" made from components imitating lunar soil, according to reports at the time of the launch.

Trump visa cuts hit Chinese students

BEIJING (Reuters): When 25-year-old biology student Yao's PhD program enrollment was deferred due to funding cuts at her US university, she joined a growing list of Chinese students exploring other destinations. Visa revocations and university funding cuts by the administration of US President Donald Trump have become a source of anxiety for international students. Those from China face additional challenges due to Washington's trade war with Beijing and the increasing vilification of Chinese citizens, students and industry insiders said.

"I used to think politics was far away from me, but this year I really felt the impact of politics on international students," Chicago-based Yao said, declining to give the name of her prospective university. China had accounted for the biggest international student body in the US for 15 years, until it was overtaken by India last year. The economic impact of Chinese students on the American economy was \$14.3 billion in 2023, according to Open Doors data.

But within the United States, the community has been portrayed as a national security threat - likened to spies sent across by the Chinese Communist Party - and threatened with proposed legislation that could bar them from universities. Reuters spoke to 15 Chinese students, eight of whom were in the US, who said the compounded issues have spiked safety concerns and intensified financial constraints, forcing them to rethink their American dream.

Since Trump returned to the White House, more than 4,700 students have been deleted from a US immigration database, making them vulnerable to deportation. Chinese students have accounted for 14% of 327 visa revocation reports collected so far by the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Last month, the US House's select committee on China sent letters to six universities requesting information on enrollment policies for Chinese students in advanced STEM programs, and questioning their involvement in federally funded research. Committee chairman John Moolenaar wrote America's student visa system had become "a Trojan horse for Beijing" that provided unrestricted access to top research institutions and posed a national security threat.

China's foreign ministry urged the US to "stop brandishing national security as a false pretext" for discriminatory and restrictive measures targeting its students.

Republicans in the US House of Representatives have also proposed the "Stop Chinese Communist Prying by Vindicating Intellectual Safeguards in Academia Act" that would halt student visas for Chinese nationals.

New York-based non-profit Committee of 100, a grouping of prominent Chinese Americans, has said the bill betrays American values and weakens the US's leadership in science, technology and innovation. Duke University Professor Chen Yiran said the idea that Chinese students rush home to help Beijing compete with the US was a fallacy.

"Most of them still want to stay in the US," Chen said. "They're from middle-class families, they pay the millions (in yuan) for these few years, they want to get the investment back." Universities outside the US have since reported increased interest.

Italy's Bocconi University has received many queries from students, its Greater China country manager Summer Wu said. "Many students said because of (the political situation), they're looking more at other countries, because they don't know what will happen if they go to the US," she said.

Institutions in the US and United Kingdom were also facing competition from Chinese universities that have shot up in global rankings in recent years. "The growing reputation of China's domestic universities as well as an increase in funding for research and development is making Chinese institutions more attractive," said Pippa Ebel who authored a report on Chinese students for British education think tank HEPI. The US remains China's most-searched destination on Keystone Education Group's websites, but interest dropped 5% since Trump's additional tariffs announcement, with searches for doctoral programmes declining 12%.

Trump's 145% tariffs on Beijing will impact \$400 billion worth of goods sold by Chinese producers in the US market annually and compound slowing growth in the world's second-largest economy. "China may be more sensitive to shifts in economic conditions and international policies ... affecting household budgets and the overall affordability of pursuing a US education," Keystone's insights director Mark Bennett said. In Hong Kong, visa arrangements that allow graduates to stay and seek employment have made the city a popular destination, the Chinese University of Hong Kong said.

Los Angeles mayor proposes slashing jobs

LOS ANGELES (AP): Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass proposed laying off more than 1,600 government workers in an attempt to close a nearly \$1 billion budget gap amid a slumping economy while the city contends with the costly job of rebuilding a seaside neighborhood leveled in a January wildfire.

The prospect of chopping hundreds of government jobs comes as the latest unwelcome news for the first-term Democrat, who will stand for reelection next year. In an address to

the city council, Bass called the municipal workforce the "city's greatest asset" but said cuts were needed as City Hall wrestles with uncertainty in Washington, higher costs for worker salaries and benefits, a slowing economy, and the daunting work of rebuilding the affluent Pacific Palisades community.

"We have a very difficult budget to balance," Bass said. She called her decision to propose job cuts a "last resort." David Green, president of Service Employees International Union, Local 721, which represents over 10,000 city workers, said the union would be looking for new funding sources and other alternatives to slashing jobs.

"We're not going to allow the out-of-touch bureaucrats ... to balance the budget on the backs of city workers," Green said in a statement. Late last month, Bass and the city council appealed to Sacramento for nearly \$2 billion in disaster recovery aid as the city faces a projected deficit that Bass' office pegged at nearly \$1 billion.

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Regional apple tree blighted by Washington

THE recent state visits of President Xi Jinping to Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia, as his first overseas trip of the year, highlight the importance Beijing attaches to relations with neighboring countries. As the central conference on work related to neighboring countries that convened before his trip made clear, China hopes to work with countries in the region to consolidate the traditional friendship and enhance the strategic mutual trust and practical cooperation that have served to make the neighborhood a vibrant and dynamic community with a shared future.

It is regrettable, therefore, that the Philippines seems intent on proving itself to be a bad apple. In its latest misguided move, around 5,000 Philippine troops began military exercises with about 9,000 US troops on Monday.

The drills, which will run until May 9, are being staged in western and northern Philippine locations facing the South China Sea and the island of Taiwan, which, thanks to repeated provocations from the United States and the Philippines, have become regional flash points.

In what was described as a "full-scale battle scenario" by the US and Philippine militaries, the drills feature a simulated counterattack against an enemy force occupying an island, the sinking of a mock enemy vessel, joint patrols and aerial reconnaissance missions. Australian forces are also participating, while Japan and a few other nations have sent observers.

US and Philippine officials have said the drills do not target any other nation. But such rhetoric rings hollow in the face of the simulated battle scenario and the drills' scale and the involvement of other countries, which far exceeds the scope for a regular bilateral military exercise.

The locations of the drills in disputed waters in or near the South China Sea and facing the island of Taiwan also lay bare the two countries' intention to target China and stir up trouble over the South China Sea disputes and the Taiwan question. Hence it is natural that the US-Philippine joint drills have been strongly condemned by China.

On Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun criticized the Philippines for disrupting regional strategic stability and expressed firm opposition to any country using the Taiwan question as a pretext to strengthen military deployments in the region.

As the world is facing challenges of unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonic bullying, countries in Asia need to make concerted efforts to strengthen solidarity and cooperation so as to maintain a stable, secure environment for their development. What the Philippines is doing runs counter to that. By siding with the US, a non-regional country, and conducting massive war games with it in waters near strategically important international waters, it has revealed its malicious intention to continue to make waves over the South China Sea and the Taiwan question at Washington's bidding.

Beijing has repeatedly reminded Manila that the Taiwan question, which is a core interest, is its internal affair, and that those who do not stop playing with fire will eventually get burned.

Manila would be naive and foolish to count on the US' support for it to mine gains from its illegal and ill-grounded territorial claims in the South China Sea.

It should have appreciated by now that the US only wants to use it as a pawn in its self-initiated strategic competition against China and a launchpad for its missile deployment.

In response to the repeated provocations of the US and the Philippines, the People's Liberation Army has stepped up vigilance and combat preparedness and readiness in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, sending an unmistakable message to the outside world that it will not tolerate any moves that aim to infringe upon China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Beijing has tried many times to talk some sense into Manila by underscoring that peace and stability in the South China Sea serve the common interests of all countries in the region, including those of the Philippines. It has also repeatedly affirmed that it seeks to resolve differences through dialogue. But this should not be mistaken for weakness. It does not mean it will tolerate provocation and coercion, nor will it be daunted by the muscle flexing of the US and the Philippines.

By rejecting the outside interference of the US and consolidating political mutual trust with Beijing through high-level interactions, Manila can play its part in helping the region to continue to reap fruitful outcomes from practical cooperation and close and effective multilateral coordination.

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We need AI that thinks in Arabic and can grasp nuance

Luma Makari

LANGUAGE is not just a collection of labels for the world – it is the blueprint for how we think, feel and experience reality. As the cognitive scientist Prof Lera Boroditsky puts it, each language “provides its own cognitive toolkit and encapsulates the knowledge and worldview developed over thousands of years within a culture”.

This is especially true of the Arabic language. Its rich linguistic range and unique expression of emotion, thought and culture often have no parallel. However, Arabic – like many other languages – is contending with the rise of AI, an advanced technology that has made its way into our daily lives.

What happens when emerging tech and AI developments fail to account for the Arabic language – especially in commonly used models such as ChatGPT and Claude that have woven themselves into our daily lives? As it stands, popular large language models and chatbots are trained predominantly on English content. According to data from Statista, less than 1 per cent of AI models are trained on Arabic content.

The result? Stilted, unnatural answers that lack nuance. As Mohammed Moneb Khaled, an Emirati Arabic AI researcher, told AramcoWorld magazine in June, models like ChatGPT tend to give Arabic responses that “sound unnatural, and literal translations do not have the same meaning”.

Important cultural subtlety gets lost because the AI is essentially trying to force Arabic ideas into an English mould. This “AI translation” approach is not just a minor inconvenience, it can erase linguistic and cognitive diversity. So, as such technology become more ubiquitous, the absence of

Arabic-native AI is not a mere oversight, it is a cultural crisis.

Why does this matter? Because AI is not just another tech product – it is poised to become our confidant, adviser and assistant. When AI cannot speak Arabic reliably and fluently, it does not just fail on a technical level, it fails culturally.

Consider the depth lost when AI translates the rich concept of “tarab” merely as “musical enchantment” or reduces the complex emotional resilience described by “sabr” to “patience” when it encompasses so much more – a sense of graceful perseverance and faith during hardship. These are not linguistic gaps, they are chasms of cultural concepts. These words carry emotional and cultural weight built over centuries. They resist clean translation because they emerge from Arabic’s unique cultural context. When we lose these words, we lose worlds. Crucially, these linguistic nuances are not just vocabulary, they shape emotional processing. An Arabic speaker describing their depression might say they feel a sense of “ghurba” or invoke “sabr” as a coping mechanism.

Beyond miscommunication, there is a deeper issue of identity. Language carries identity, and repeatedly encountering technology that “prefers” English can send a subtle message that Arabic is second-class in the digital world. It is disheartening for Arab users – especially younger generations – to find that talking to Siri or Alexa in Arabic is far less effective than in English, or that an Arabic prompt to a chatbot yields a gibberish answer.

Over time, people using such technology might default to English, slowly

estranging themselves from their mother tongue in professional or technical domains. This is how linguistic diversity fades – not by force, but by convenience and neglect.

We urgently need AI that thinks in Arabic – not as an act of ethnic pride, but as a necessity for a fair and rich digital future. Truly Arabic-native LLMs are essential for several reasons. An Arabic-native AI would uphold the nuances of Arabic identity instead of diluting them.

It would use Arabic proverbs, quote Al Mutanabbi’s poetry where relevant, and understand the subtlety behind a phrase like “inshallah”. This affirms to users that their language – and by extension their culture – belongs in the digital age. It keeps Arabic alive and evolving on its own terms, preventing the scenario where future generations engage with technology only in English and let their Arabic atrophy. If Arabic is left behind, so are its speakers.

Second, if AI is to serve humanity it must encompass the full range of human thinking patterns. Arabic offers a fundamentally different structure – a right-to-left script, a root-based word system, and flexible word order – and has a treasure trove of classical texts on logic, law and philosophy. Training AI on these will introduce new perspectives into how the AI “thinks”.

For instance, Arabic’s logical treatises and unique grammar, such as the dual form and grammatical gender, could broaden AI’s problem-solving approaches. More broadly, each language an LLM masters makes generative-AI programs smarter and more versatile. Including Arabic is not just good for Arabs, it is

good for AI and the world. It forces AI to learn concepts it might never encounter in monolingual training. Embracing global cognitive diversity ensures AI is not one-dimensional. Much as biodiversity strengthens an ecosystem, linguistic diversity strengthens our AI systems’ understanding, avoiding a one-size-fits-all intelligence.

Recent years have witnessed promising Arabic AI development across the region, led by pioneering institutions laying the groundwork for a more linguistically and culturally rooted digital future.

In the UAE, the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence’s Jais model, developed with US company Cerebras and Abu Dhabi tech group G42, is one of the world’s most advanced bilingual Arabic-English language models, trained to understand both Modern Standard Arabic and regional dialects.

In Doha, the Qatar Computing Research Institute has launched Fanar – an instruction-tuned Arabic model built entirely in-house, designed to handle culturally nuanced tasks and support the country’s digital priorities. Meanwhile, the Saudi Data and AI Authority, in partnership with IBM, has released ALLaM – an open-source Arabic model built to reflect national values and serve both public and private sectors.

These efforts are vital – not only technologically, but symbolically – affirming as they do that Arabic belongs at the centre of AI development, not at its margins. But to truly meet the scale of what is possible, we need sustained investment, collaborative research and infrastructure that treat Arabic not as a downstream use case, but as a primary driver of innovation.

World leaders sadly ignored Pope Francis’ pleas

Peter Harrison

POPE Francis was the first pontiff to come to the Arabian Gulf. During his historic visit in February 2019, he held a Mass in Abu Dhabi before tens of thousands of devoted Catholics and also signed the “Document of Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.” The agreement, which he signed with Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb, the grand imam of Egypt’s Al-Azhar Mosque, pledged a lasting partnership to reject violence and extremism.

During that 2019 visit, I attended several of the events, including a two-day conference on tolerance. The aim of the conference, like the document, was to promote tolerance across faiths. Unsurprisingly, all agreed to be nice to each other – and not just the Abrahamic faiths, as everyone who was there, including Buddhists and Hindus, agreed.

There was a sense of hope that this group of largely men agreed that they were on the right path to a global community of tolerance. However, when I carried out a straw poll of faith leaders at the event, asking if they were simply preaching to the converted, most, if not all, agreed. After all, it was what they and their predecessors had been doing for at least two millennia.

But, in fairness, those who attended the confer-

ence, like the tens of thousands at the Sunday Mass that week, probably would not have wanted to sit in a room with the truly intolerant, whether that is hostile nations or international groups fueled by hatred and a lust for power and murder.

The papal visit to the UAE finished with a Mass at Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi, with tens of thousands of worshippers bussed in to see the pope. The atmosphere was extraordinary. There was a buzz in the air as people waited for the moment – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for most.

And then he came, with a ripple of cheers and applause gradually working its way through the crowds outside the stadium as people lined the route of the popemobile. Then he entered the stadium and the faithful cheered. A baby was handed to him and a child ran to give him a flower. Here was the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the “People’s Pope,” the “humble man,” who had made it clear from the outset of his reign that he wanted to clean up the reputation of the church and make sure that both it and the world started making a greater effort to live in a time of peace, acceptance and tolerance.

Is that what happened?

Since that visit in 2019, we have seen the world brought to its knees with the COVID-19 lockdowns,

while we have also been trapped in a long-running era of economic turbulence and war. It is impossible to say precisely how many people have been killed as a result of the wars and unrest over the past six years. Thousands continue to die after boarding unsafe boats in an attempt to cross seas and secure a better life.

Pope Francis spent years pleading with world leaders, such as Benjamin Netanyahu, Vladimir Putin and American presidents. If their hand was on a trigger or behind the person’s who was, then the pope probably pleaded with them to lay down their arms and follow a path of peace.

Like so many in his generation, Pope Francis lived through the Second World War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, to name just three. He saw the creation and subsequent fall of the Iron Curtain – both physical and metaphorical – and he lived through the creation of Israel and the dismantling of Palestine.

Pope Francis was around as the rainforests were intentionally depleted so that farmers could produce more beef. The world has continued to warm, but politicians have failed to deliver on promise after promise to reverse climate change and global warming.

The role of women in most major religions remains far behind that of their fellow male worship-

pers. But while Pope Francis pushed forward, clearing the way for more women to progress through the various layers of the church, he stopped short of agreeing to them being ordained as clergy.

There is no denying that he was a man of progression, a modernizer who wanted to bring the church forward in its attitudes and acceptances. Whether he succeeded will be seen when his successor is announced.

But as democracy has shown us, the apparently good efforts of one person can be negated in an instant by those that follow.

The generation of which Pope Francis was a part was born into turmoil and war and, sadly, it seems they will leave us in a similar state.

Pope Francis clearly had ambitions of creating a world where people worked together. COVID presented that opportunity, but instead it ended up being used as a platform for yet more finger-pointing. The world is increasingly becoming more insular and nationalistic. The world is mourning the loss of Pope Francis. He called on world leaders to opt for peace, but they smiled and dismissed his calls. If they truly cared and if their thoughts of sorrow and remorse were genuine, then maybe, before he died, they might have come to the table and stopped the killing. They might have chosen to work together.

Before he died, Pope Francis called for peace in Gaza. Will anyone listen?

Belén Fernández

POPE Francis died today at the age of 88 following a prolonged illness. Just yesterday, in his Easter Sunday address in Saint Peter’s Square in Vatican City, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church chose to express his “closeness to the sufferings of Christians in Palestine and Israel, and to all the Israeli people and the Palestinian people”.

He went on to state that he was “think[ing] of the people of Gaza, and its Christian community in particular, where the terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation” – a toned-down reference, of course, to Israel’s ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip, which has officially killed more than 51,200 Palestinians since October 2023.

Concluding the pope’s thoughts on this particular “terrible conflict” was an “appeal to the warring parties: call a ceasefire, release the hostages and come to the aid of a starving people that aspires to a future of peace!”

To be sure, Pope Francis opted to deploy language that does not adequately reflect the horrors currently being unleashed upon Gaza. For one thing, a genocide is not a “conflict”; nor are Israeli genocidaires and Palestinian victims of genocide equal “warring parties”.

That said, the pope deserves praise for utilising what would be his final platform to call for a ceasefire in Gaza – at a time when the world appears all too content to allow the mass slaughter of Palestinians to proceed indefinitely.

Though he did not pin-

..... Pope Francis’s call for a ceasefire yesterday came just a month after Israel’s definitive annihilation of the existing ceasefire that ostensibly took effect in January, which the Israeli military had already taken the opportunity to violate at every turn. Between Israel’s termination of the ceasefire on March 18 and April 9, the United Nations found that, in at least 36 separate Israeli air strikes on Gaza, women and children were the only fatalities. As much as the starving people may “aspire to a future of peace”, then, it’s difficult to aspire to any future at all when you’re being actively exterminated by an army that enjoys the full bipartisan support of the reigning global superpower, the United States of America.

..... Incidentally, Pope Francis’s final day on Earth also included a brief meeting with said superpower’s second-in-command: US Vice President JD Vance. The encounter came after the head of the Catholic Church openly and repeatedly criticised US President Donald Trump’s administration and its maniacal deportation schemes. In a February address, he noted that its immigration policies were causing a “major crisis” that “damages the dignity of men and women”. Pope Francis made a nod to the plight of people on the move in his Easter address as well: “How much contempt is stirred up at times towards the vulnerable, the marginalised, and migrants!” He went on to reiterate his desire “to renew our hope that peace is possible”. Unfortunately, however, contempt and dehumanisation are pillars of a hopeless global system – led by the United States – that prioritises elite tyranny and profit over any semblance of human decency. Whether it’s the arms industry making bank off of Israel’s genocide in Gaza or the US making life hell for the undocumented folks on whose labour the country’s own economy depends, institutionalised contempt is good for business.

..... point who precisely is to blame for the fact that there are now “starving people” in need of aid, this is naturally a reference to Israel’s decision in early March to cut off all humanitarian aid deliveries to the Gaza Strip – a move amounting to enforced starvation and a war crime.

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This Easter week, the “hope that peace is possible” was entirely out of the question for Palestinian Christians in Gaza, the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and Jerusalem – the very place Jesus was crucified, according to the Bible.

In the Gaza Strip, Christians gathered in

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How Pope Francis’ progressive legacy changed the church

About six months after he was elected head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis made a surprising admission.

A Jesuit priest was interviewing Francis when he departed from a pre-approved list of questions and asked Francis, referring to him by his birth name, “Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?” Francis stared at the fellow Jesuit in silence before answering.

“I am a sinner,” Francis said in the 2013 interview. “This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner.”

When Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, a Maryland-based Catholic group that advocates for LGBTQ+ people, learned of Francis’ response, he was elated.

“For the pope to acknowledge that he was a sinner and that he does not know everything, I’ll always remember that,” DeBernardo says. “So much of Catholic culture is ingrained with this idea that the pope is always infallible. For him to say he was a sinner meant that he acknowledged his fallibility. It was a sign of humility.”

Pope Francis didn’t affirm same-sex marriage, lobby for ordaining women as priests or spark a liberal revolution in the Catholic Church. The pontiff, who died Monday at the age of 88, periodically disappointed some of his most progressive church supporters. One critic said that Francis “was at heart a conservative” who had a habit of floating a progressive idea and then angering the left by retreating as soon as that idea was met by a push-back from the right.

Yet DeBernardo and others say Francis still lived up to his nickname as the “Great Reformer.” They say he leaves behind a progressive legacy that transformed the Catholic Church for its 1.4 billion followers. That legacy is centered on one transformative shift, they say: Francis changed how Catholics talked to one another, and what issues they focused on.

Before Francis, many Catholic Church leaders dwelled on culture-war issues such as abortion and birth control. Francis elevated climate change to a moral issue, denounced unfettered capitalism and increased financial transparency within the Vatican. He also pressured church leaders to listen more to ordinary church members instead of simply issuing edicts, declaring that “We priests are not the bosses of the laity (lay people).”

He inspired much of this change through two distinctive personal attributes: a refreshing humility, and a compassion for all that led him to be called the “pope of peripheries” — a leader who spoke and acted on behalf of far-flung groups traditionally shunned by the church.

Francis’ approach was apparent in the way he carried himself. Maybe part of it was his place of origin. He was the first pontiff from Latin America. He brought a warmth and pastoral accessibility to the papacy that was missing in his two predecessors: Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II, says Natalia Imperatori-Lee, a religious studies professor at Manhattan University in New York City.

Part of that humility came in his ability to admit mistakes, she says. He once apologized for remarks he made defending a bishop accused of covering up sexual abuse by members of the clergy. He also apologized to survivors of clergy sexual-abuse scandals.

“He was upfront about his mistakes, which was a good sign,” she says.

He also broadened the church’s appeal through his approachable manner. Instead of the luxury cars used by his predecessors, he rode around in a simple Ford Focus. He seemed happy to pose for selfies with admirers. And he sought to build bridges to other faiths, once saying, “All religions are paths to God.”

Imperatori-Lee says that Francis transformed the Catholic Church’s image.

“For a long time, Catholics were only known for their don’ts — don’t be gay, don’t have an abortion, don’t get a divorce,” she says. “Francis unlocked a different kind of Catholicism in the public square. He was somebody who appealed to non-Catholics and Catholics. He was just a decent person.”

Francis led the church to new frontiers in another way: many saw him the first “digital pope.” While Jesus may have used parables and the Apostle Paul used letters, Francis used social media to spread the Gospel.

He was the first pope to use Facebook Live and the first to share an encyclical (a papal letter written to bishops) through a Twitter account. He once called the Internet a “gift from God.” He had more than 53 million followers across nine official Twitter, or X, accounts in multiple languages and another 10 million followers on Instagram. One headline called him an “internet rock star.”

In some ways, Francis was the perfect pope for the social media age. He was not afraid to challenge powerful people and institutions through actions and remarks that often went viral and spawned memes.

He denounced President Trump’s demonization of non-White immigrants. And, in a move perfect for grabbing attention in a crowded media space, he once traveled to a Mediterranean island where the lives of many immigrants had been lost. Upon arrival, he celebrated mass on an altar made of refugee boats.

He was known for dropping progressive bombshells. Early in his papacy he said atheists can go to heaven if they lead honorable lives. That same year he also said: “If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?”

In a 2024 interview with CBS’ “60 Minutes,” Francis explained his progressive temperament.

When informed that some conservative bishops in the US had complained he was shifting church doctrine in a liberal direction, he responded by saying the term “conservative” can be defined as someone “who clings to something and does not want to see beyond that.”

“It’s a suicidal attitude,” he added. “Because one thing is to take tradition into account, to consider situations from the past, but quite another is to be closed up inside a dogmat-

ic box.”

The most radical part of Francis’ legacy might not have been what he said, but how he changed the way the church communicated.

Francis’ most momentous change arguably came when he opened dialogue on church and social issues through something called the “Synod on Synodality.” Though the Synod, Francis summoned priests, bishops, lay people and women to engage in an ongoing debate about some of the biggest issues facing the church, such as the blessing of gay couples and priestly celibacy. Some called the synod “the biggest consultation exercise in human history.”

“At each of those meetings, he (Francis) told bishops, ‘I want to hear your opinions even if you disagree with me,’” says DeBernardo from New Ways Ministry. “That was something that would not have been said under John Paul II or Benedict. During those two papacies even bishops were afraid of expressing their minds for fear of getting in trouble.”

Some Vatican historians described the Synod as “transformative” and a “momentous innovation.” It upended the traditional hierarchy in the church and forced bishops to listen and engage in open debate.

“He (Francis) didn’t think the disagreements made the church look weak,” says Imperatori-Lee of Manhattan University.

To an outsider, Francis’ progressive statements may not have seemed radical. But DeBernardo says Francis broke ground by gently steered the Catholic Church to be more open and accepting. The church was emerging from a conservative period under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI that had made it difficult to connect with the modern world, he says.

“He’s a reformer who recognized that the church needed to start with very small steps,” DeBernardo says. “He took small steps, but he had a very powerful impact. He found a way out of the corner that the previous popes had the painted the church into.”

Though they wanted Francis to do more, DeBernardo and other progressive Catholics say they recognized his limits.

“Part of being the pope is to be a symbol of unity in the church,” DeBernardo says. “It’s not to be a dictator and tell people what to do. He was a bridge, and so his job was to bring together progressives and conservatives. It wasn’t possible for him to go as far as we hoped he would go. He recognized that there was a lot of opposition. He didn’t want to split the church.”

Francis’ compassion made him popular among many in the church, but there was a bitter irony to his progressiveness — it made him a more isolated figure on the world stage, some say.

Francis became “an increasingly lonely moral voice” in a world that was being engulfed by nationalism, disinformation and xenophobia, wrote David Gibson, director of the Center on Religion and Culture at Fordham University in New York City, in an essay written after the pope had fallen ill with a lung infection in March.

“A world without a pope

like Francis will in some ways resemble a Hobbesian dystopia without a prophet pointing to our better angels or a sensible idealist showing a better way,” Gibson wrote.

McElwee, however, says Francis was trapped in his own dogmatic box when it came to one vital issue: ordaining women as deacons and priests in the church.

She praised him for opening high-level offices in the Vatican to women and for appointing the first woman governor of Vatican City. But McElwee says she wanted more reform. So did others.

Progressive Catholics have been pushing for women to be ordained as deacons and priests for years. They say women were among Jesus’ first disciples and some of the earliest church leaders. Traditional Catholics resist such calls, pointing to the “Petrine” theory — a church teaching that insists that Jesus granted a man, the Apostle Peter, special authority to become the first pope to lead the church.

Francis let Catholics like McElwee down, again and again. He never abandoned traditional church teachings on women in leadership. He said women could not be priests or deacons. When he was asked during last year’s “60 Minutes” interview if women could be deacons, he flatly said no, and cited the Petrine theory.

“My heart broke,” McElwee says. “When speaking with other women, they didn’t want to believe it at first. What I heard from other women is that he (Francis) was sometimes a heartbreaking figure because in so many other ways, he lived the Gospel and was a breath of fresh air for people. But on women, he continually fell short.”

Francis also broke some progressive hearts when he reportedly used an anti-gay slur while speaking to Italian bishops at a conference. The Vatican later apologized for Francis’ language.

That apology was enough for DeBernardo, who leads the Catholic ministry advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion. He says he wasn’t that bothered because Francis did not use the term in a formal church communication. He says Francis was the first pope to use the word “gay” instead of “homosexual,” which DeBernardo says is a more condescending and clinical term.

“I wasn’t as upset as others were because Pope Francis, like us all, was a product of his upbringing. His actions speak louder than (his) words,” he says.

What DeBernardo remembers more is a personal meeting he had with Francis. On a lark, DeBernardo says he wrote a letter to Francis on behalf of LGBTQ+ church members and requested an audience with the pontiff in Rome. Several weeks later, he received a letter from the Pope that said, in effect, come on by.

When DeBernardo arrived, he was he struck by the Pope’s relatively austere living quarters. He lived in a modest guest-house in Vatican City instead of the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace, the official residence of the reigning pope.

It was a working meeting for DeBernardo. He

brought along church members who were transgender, and urged them to share their stories with Francis. The meeting was supposed to last about 10 minutes, but Francis gave DeBernardo’s group 40 more minutes. As members of the group told Francis about the plight of LGBTQ+ people in the church, including some suicide attempts, Francis clutched the cross around his neck and a look of anguish flashed across his face, DeBernardo says.

At other times, the talk drifted to lighter matters and the pope’s warmth and humor surfaced, he says.

“It was like having tea with your grandpa,” DeBernardo says.

At one point, a member of DeBernardo’s entourage told Francis that he was the face of God for so many people who had been hurt by the church.

“He didn’t mess a beat,” DeBernardo says. “He just pointed to his face and said, ‘God is not this ugly.’”

Why Francis’ liberal legacy may outlast him

A pope’s legacy doesn’t only depend on what he does. It also depends on something else: Did he appoint enough allies as bishops and as members of the College of Cardinals? Popes are chosen by the College of Cardinals, the church’s most senior leaders after the pontiff, and in this way a pope can posthumously influence church doctrine and the selection of his successor.

“This is where Francis is going to shine,” says Imperatori-Lee of Manhattan University.

“The people he elected to the College of Cardinals and made bishops — the criteria for that were that they were pastors first,” she says, referring to cardinals who define themselves primarily as serving people. “They’re not career bureaucrats or climbers but more committed to their flocks. They’re humble and do not take themselves too seriously.”

That description could also apply to Francis. Despite his brilliant intellect — Jesuit priests are known for being the intellectual heavyweights of the church — many Catholics may most remember his warm smile and folksy manner.

Behind that smile, though, was a determined reformer. In a 2013 interview, Francis was asked about the most urgent need facing the contemporary church.

“I see clearly that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity,” he said. “I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars. You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else.”

Francis took that warmth to millions of Catholics around the globe. It is a measure of his impact that he will be missed not only by Catholics but by many people who do not even believe in God.

In an age of brutal authoritarianism, Pope Francis offered a different type of leadership. He wasn’t the pope that lived in a palace. He was the pope who seemed to be the most moved by those who lived on the peripheries.

Israel cannot be trusted to protect freedom of religion in Jerusalem

ISRAEL prevented thousands of Christian pilgrims from participating in Saturday’s “Holy Fire” celebrations in the occupied Old City of Jerusalem. Of the West Bank’s 50,000 Palestinian Christians, only about 6,000 permits were issued by Israel. And on Saturday, many foreign pilgrims were prevented from reaching the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Christianity’s holiest site. Israeli authorities denied entry to the Vatican Ambassador to Palestine Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, an act that violates diplomatic protocols and international conventions.

Among the many misconceptions about the Palestine saga is that Palestinians are Muslims and that the historical struggle over the Holy Land is between Jews and Muslims. That is a gross misapprehension of the Palestinian struggle for liberation and independence, as well as a failure to understand the diverse social and cultural tapestry of the Palestinian people.

Most Palestinians are indeed Sunni Arabs — they constituted about 85 percent of historical Palestine in 1948, with Christians making up about 10 percent. Despite being a minority, Christians of all denominations were integral to Palestine’s political, economic and cultural life.

As for the Jews who lived in Palestine and were considered Palestinian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, it is estimated that, by the early 1900s, there were about 25,000 Jews in the Holy Land, about 4 percent of the total population.

Today, Palestinian Christians in the West Bank represent no more than 1.5 percent of the population, or 50,000, while another 1,100 were living in Gaza before the start of the ongoing Israeli war on the enclave.

Until the creation of Israel, Muslims, Christians and Jews coexisted peacefully within the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. But the 1948 and 1967 wars drove many Palestinian Christians out of historical Palestine. The Christians now living in Israel — and not all are Palestinian — make up 1.8 percent of its population.

The Old City has become the fulcrum of the ongoing struggle between Palestinians and Israelis. With Israel in full military control of the walled city, with its sacred Muslim and Christian holy sites, the conflict eventually evolved into a religious one.

In East Jerusalem, the Arab Christian population is estimated to be about 12,850.

This is about 1.1 percent of Jerusalem’s total population. The Christian population has been declining and the current number is similar to what it was more than 120 years ago. With Jewish settlers, most of whom are religious fundamentalists, flooding the city and terrorizing its inhabitants, Palestinian Christians have opted to emigrate.

In fact, the number of Palestinian Christians has been declining for decades. And it is Israel’s aggressive settler-based policies that have driven most to leave. Such poli-

Osama Al-Sharif

cies do not differentiate between Muslim and Christian Palestinians — Israel targets both.

What has increased in recent years are the attacks and harassment of Christian worshippers, particularly Palestinians, by extremist Jews in the Old City. The world is used to seeing Jewish ultranationalists and ultra-religious Zionists storming Al-Haram Al-Sharif, what Jews call the Temple Mount, resulting in skirmishes and attacks against Muslim worshippers by Israeli soldiers. Ariel Sharon’s provocative visit to the Muslim compound in 2000 triggered the Second Intifada, which resulted in the collapse of the Oslo Accords and the killing by Israel of no less than 3,000 Palestinians.

But rarely reported by the mainstream media are the attacks and insults that Christian worshippers in Jerusalem endure from Jewish extremists. The documented attacks include reports of ultra-Orthodox extremists spitting at Christian clergy, particularly monks and priests wearing religious garb, while walking in the Old City. Also, some churches and monasteries in East Jerusalem have experienced graffiti, property damage and desecration.

Today, Palestinian Christians in the West Bank represent no more than 1.5 percent of the population, or 50,000, while another 1,100 were living in Gaza before the start of the ongoing Israeli war on the enclave. Until the creation of Israel, Muslims, Christians and Jews coexisted peacefully within the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. But the 1948 and 1967 wars drove many Palestinian Christians out of historical Palestine. The Christians now living in Israel — and not all are Palestinian — make up 1.8 percent of its population. The Old City has become the fulcrum of the ongoing struggle between Palestinians and Israelis. With Israel in full military control of the walled city, with its sacred Muslim and Christian holy sites, the conflict eventually evolved into a religious one. In East Jerusalem, the Arab Christian population is estimated to be about 12,850. This is about 1.1 percent of Jerusalem’s total population. The Christian population has been declining and the current number is similar to what it was more than 120 years ago.

Some Christian pilgrims and clergy have reported verbal harassment or being impeded while trying to access Christian holy sites, particularly during religious processions or celebrations. There have been incidents of tombstones being damaged and anti-Christian graffiti in Christian burial grounds. Some Jewish extremist groups have organized protests against Christian ceremonies, particularly during the Christmas and Easter celebrations.

Ironically, support of Israel among evangelical Christians in the US has added to tensions between extremist Jews and Christians in general. Many of the evangelicals who visit the Holy Land believe that the creation of Israel fulfills a biblical prophecy. Some who visit Jerusalem try to convert Jews to Christianity, provoking retaliation.

Despite mounting evidence of extremist Jews insulting and attacking Christian pilgrims, there has been no denunciation by Western countries of such attacks or any move to pressure Israel to respect freedom of worship in the Holy Land.

Donald Trump’s new US ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, is an ordained minister and an evangelical who is on record denying any rights for the Palestinians and advocating Israel’s annex-

ation of Palestinian territories. Such religious intolerance did not exist before the fall of East Jerusalem in 1967.

Many Palestinian Christians, both at large and in Palestine, are known to the world. These include Edward Said, Emile Habibi, George Habash, Hanan Ashrawi, Zuheir Tarazi, Shireen Abu Akleh, George Antonius, Khalil Al-Sakakini, May Ziadeh, George Saliba, Hasib Sabbagh and Hanna Siniora. Palestinian Christians have been contributing to civilization for centuries.

It is, therefore, sad to see Palestinian Christians being forced by the Israeli occupation to leave the land of their ancestors. It is even more concerning to see Christian pilgrims insulted and attacked by Jewish extremists and Christian holy sites vandalized.

These attacks on Christian worshippers and holy sites have intensified in recent years, with little international attention or condemnation. The pattern of harassment and vandalism seems to be part of a larger effort to eliminate any non-Jewish religious presence in Jerusalem, particularly in and around the Old City, where the most sacred sites are located.

Israel cannot be trusted to secure and guarantee freedom of worship in the

Holy City. Jerusalem must remain open to the followers of all monotheistic religions. That is the premise of the Abraham Accords. But since the signing of those accords, Jewish attacks on Al-Aqsa have spiked, with calls to blow up the third-holiest site for billions of Muslims. What happened to Christian worshippers in Jerusalem on Saturday and Sunday cannot be excused.

Jewish extremists openly say they want to make Jerusalem a 100 percent Jewish city, with no religious rights for Muslims or Christians. They and the evangelists have conflicting prophecies about the future. Still, in the process, they are uprooting Palestinian Christians from their ancestral lands and imposing a dark and sinister reality onto the Holy City and beyond.

The international community bears responsibility for protecting the multireligious character of Jerusalem. Under international law and numerous UN resolutions, the Old City’s status as an occupied territory is clear, while unilateral efforts to change its demographic and religious composition are illegal.

Yet actions on the ground continue to erode the city’s diverse heritage, with Christian communities paying a heavy price alongside their Muslim neighbors.

Away from the global spotlight, Eritreans are trapped in a garrison state

AMERICAN writer and security analyst Paul B Henze, who served in the Carter administration as a deputy to National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, once made a very astute observation about Eritrea’s current president, Isaias Afwerki.

In his 2007 book, Ethiopia in Mengistu’s Final Years: Until the Last Bullet, he noted “Isaias impressed me as remarkably similar in temperament and attitudes to Mengistu [Haile Mariam, Eritrea’s former dictator who has overseen the killings of tens of thousands of opposition figures and civilians]. He has many of the same mannerisms, a rather bulldoggish seriousness, a defensiveness behind a facade of feigned reasonableness that is not really

convincing. One senses a stubborn, fundamentally authoritarian personality.”

The similarities Henze saw between Mengistu and Isaias have proven correct and highly consequential over the last three decades.

After declaring victory against the Mengistu regime in 1991, Isaias was able to oversee the emergence of an independent, sovereign Eritrea. For a brief moment, Eritreans were full of hope. They assumed independence would bring more freedom and better economic prospects. There was talk of turning Eritrea into Africa’s Singapore.

However, the euphoria of independence was short-lived. The dream of transforming Eritrea into a prosperous liberal democracy did not appeal to Isaias. He wanted his country to resemble not

Singapore, but Sparta. He rejected the democratic constitution drafted by the pre-eminent Eritrean jurist Bereket Habte Selassie and ruled Eritrea with an iron fist.

In no time, he turned Eritrea into a garrison state. He transformed Eritrean institutions and society at large into tools to fulfil his geo-political fantasies. Eritreans became uniformed pawns in the president’s many military schemes, with no space left for their personal dreams and aspirations.

Isaias ruthlessly dealt with even his closest colleagues and allies who dared to suggest that Eritreans enjoy some basic liberties that people elsewhere in the world often take for granted.

In May 2001, 15 senior Eritrean officials, many of whom had been on the president’s side through-

Ibrahim Harun

out the independence war, issued an open letter urging him to reconsider his autocratic mode of governance and hold free and fair elections. At the time, three of the 15 officials were living abroad, and one eventually changed his position and rejoined the Isaias government. The remaining 11, however, were swiftly arrested on unspecified charges. More than 20 years later, the fates of these 11 men are still unknown. No one knows for sure if they are alive or dead. No legal or religious counsel or family member has been granted access to them. There have been no charges, no trials, no conviction and no sentence.

Though these senior officials are among the most prominent in Eritrea to be meted such treat-

ment, their fate is hardly unique. Anyone in Eritrea who dares to question the great wisdom of the infallible President Isaias meets the same fate.

In the nightmarish gulag state that President Isaias created, no one is free to study, work, worship, run a business or engage in any other normal activities. There is a mandatory and indefinite military service which keeps every Eritrean citizen in servitude to the supreme leader for their entire lives.

While everyone in Eritrea suffers from Isaias’s institutionalised tyranny, religious and ethnic minorities suffer the most. Religious persecution in the country is so extreme that in 2004 the US Department of State designated Eritrea as a “country of particular

concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. There is also significant ethnic persecution in Isaias’s Eritrea. In a May 2023 report, for example, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker, underlined the harsh conditions faced by the Afar community who inhabit the Dankalia area of the country. Babiker wrote: “The Afar are one of the most disenfranchised communities in Eritrea. For several decades, they have been subjected to discrimination, harassment, arbitrary arrests, disappearance, violence, and widespread persecution.”

In the end, Paul Henze’s insight about the fundamentally autocratic personality of Isaias proved not only right, but also an understatement.

The oppression and violence of Isaias’s rule in the past three decades matched and at times surpassed that of Mengistu.

Regrettably, the world rarely acknowledges the plight of Eritreans, who are forced to live their lives as unwilling servants and soldiers of their authoritarian president. The toll of Isaias’s endless war schemes on Eritreans is still rarely mentioned in discussions about the region.

Eritrea under Isaias is a country always on a war footing. Right now, it is not only agitating against Ethiopia, but also actively involved in the civil war in Sudan. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find a period in Eritrea’s post-independence history that it was not at war with one of its neighbours, or involved in some regional conflict or civil war. War is the

modus vivendi of President Isaias.

The world is now paying some attention to Eritrea, because of the looming risk of conflict with Ethiopia. But even if conflict between the two neighbours is somehow prevented, the misery of Eritreans stuck in Isaias’s garrison state will continue.

Forgotten and left to their own devices, Eritreans will continue to suffer in a brutal dictatorship where the individual is seen just as fodder for the mighty Eritrean Defence Forces. This must not be allowed to continue. The world must not avert its gaze and forget about the plight of Eritreans once their country is no longer mentioned in the news. The world needs to act before more Eritreans lose their lives and dreams fighting in Isaias’s forever wars.



Police Services Centre to be set up at SCCI

— to facilitate the business community

F.P Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fazal Moqeem Khan and Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed agreed to establish the Police Sahulat Centre at the chamber house.

SCCI chief demanded of the provincial government and police department for early execution on the Safe City Project in Peshawar.

The SCCI chief suggested establishing a hotline between the chamber and police department to address business community problems promptly.

According to details, the Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed visited the chamber house on Tuesday. The meeting was chaired by SCCI president Fazal Moqeem Khan.

Provincial Police chief Zulfiqar Hameed while speaking on the occasion announced setting up of a police Sahulat Centre at Chamber House, creation of WhatsApp group and establishment of close liaison and regular meetings to timely resolve issues of the business community.

Meeting was attended by SCCI senior vice president

Abdul Jalil Jan, vice president Shehryar Khan, Group leader and FPCCI former president Ghazanfar Bilour, Chairman SCCI Standing Committee on Law and Order Shaukat Ali Khan, former presidents Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Haji Muhammad Afzal, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Fuad Ishaq, former SVPs Imran Khan Mohmand, Shahid Hussain, former vice presidents Javed Akhtar, Abidullah Yousafzai, member of the chamber executive committee Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Aftab Iqbal, Abdul Naseer, Nadeem Rauf, Shamsur Rahim, Saifullah Khan, Gul Zaman, along with Atif Rasheed Khawaja, Mazhar ul Haq, Affaf Ali Khan, traders, exporter and importers.

CCPO Peshawar Qasim Ali Khan, SSP Operations Masood Ahmad Bangash and other senior police officers accompanied the IGP KP during the visit to SCCI.

Fazal Moqeem in his opening remarks paid rich tribute to sacrifices of police force for establishment peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and demanded for early execution of Safe City Project Peshawar and reactivation of liaison committee between SCCI and Police department.

The SCCI chief stated that a peaceful environment is essential for flourishing economic and commercial activities.

He urged the police department to take pragmatic steps for resolution of business community issues. Shaukat Ali Khan while speaking on the occasion stated KP police and business community rendered unmatched sacrifices for peace and stability. He demanded equalization of KP police salaries to the Punjab police force.

He called for proactive measures to eradicate use of ice drugs in the society.

Meeting was also addressed by FPCCI former president Ghazanfar Bilour, Haji Muhammad Afzal, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Habibullah Zahid, Naeem Qasmi highlighted the issues, which are being faced by traders' community and gave various proposals for their amical resolution.

They stressed the need for early execution of Safe City Project Peshawar.

IGP KP while responding to various proposals and queries of the participants revealed today a contract has been signed for execution of Safe City project Peshawar during a ceremony held at CM House.

He said the timeline for completion of Safe City Project Peshawar has been set for December 2025 and we will try to complete it in the stipulated period.

Provincial police chief informed that the second phase of the Safe City Project will be implemented in South Region like Bannu and Dikhan District followed by Lakki Marwat, Tank and Waziristan in the next year.

IGP KP sought cooperation and role of business community with regard to increase in salaries, incentive and Shuhada Package for the police force.

He informed that Rs 550 Million had been distributed among police forces on head of welfare during the last three months.

Regarding the new recruitment in the police force, IGP said the police department is facing a deficiency of 11,000 police personnel. He, however, said the police department got sanction from the KP government and finance department for the recruitment to overcome the deficiency.

Provincial police chief assured that the police department will take proactive steps for early resolution of the business community issues.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqeem Khan presenting a Chamber's shield to Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed.

Pace of activities carried out by SFERP:

WB review team expresses satisfaction

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The World Bank review team on Tuesday expressed its satisfaction over the pace of activities carried out by the Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project (SFERP) concluding the project much ahead of the scheduled time, which is December/27, as almost 95% of the work is completed and various sites including roads, water supply & drainage schemes as well as Rescue 1122 satellite stations along with emergency response centers to provide services to people of Sindh have already been handed over to the concerned departments.

The review meeting held at PIU SFERP office today was chaired by Mr. Shoaib Siddiqui from World Bank along with Mr. Shams Jafrani was briefed that out of 141 roads in 19 districts measuring 825 kilometers, 130 roads measuring 790 kilometers are operational. The rehabilitated road network is benefitting an estimated five million flood affected people as economic activity has picked on the roadside of these roads. The completion time for rehabilitation of all these roads was December 2027 but only 11 roads with almost 35 KMs which is 5% of the

total road rehabilitation activity, would be concluded by June of the current year.

Aslam Leghari, project director, while briefing the team informed that 114 water supply schemes in five districts including Sanghar, Badin, Mirpurkhas, Umerkot and Shaheed Benazir Abad districts, under phase -I, are operational, providing drinking water to the inhabitants of their respective areas. The 23 drainage schemes in the above-mentioned districts have also been rehabilitated, making the climate environment friendly and reducing pollution. Under phase -II, a total of 264 water supply and 133 drainage schemes are being rehabilitated in districts of Jacobabad, Khairpur, Dadu, Naushero Feroz, Jamshoro and Qambar Shahdadkot. The progress on these schemes is more than 65% and all these sites would be completed by the end of current fiscal year.

Out of 12 District Headquarters for provision of emergency services to the victims of road accidents, fire and medical emergencies, seven DHQs at Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Tharparkar, Qambar Shahdad Kot, Jacobabad and Ghotki have

been completed and are in the process of being handed over to Rescue headquarter 1122. The remaining five DHQs are at an advanced stage of completion. Out of these, three would be completed by July/ 2025 while remaining two would be done by the end of current year. All 16-satellite emergency Rescue 1122 stations on M-9, N-5 and N- 55 have been handed over to Sindh Emergency Rescue Service 1122 for operations. The meeting was informed that all 10 Govt Hospital Emergencies at Ghotki, Kumber, Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Sujawal, Johi, Matiari, Matli and Thatta have been fully refurbished and already providing satisfactory medical care to the people of area.

It was pointed out during the meeting that at the initial phase of project, 0.139 million flood affected people were engaged to restore the community infrastructure under cash for work program to enable them to meet their essential needs. The funds were disbursed to beneficiaries, in 14 districts comprising 50 talukas, 280 union councils and 1985 villages in the province through mobile valet cards registered in their personal names.

Local output of trucks and buses increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Trucks and buses assembling in the country during first 08 months of the current financial year grew by 106.71% and 55.95 percent respectively as compared to the assembling of the corresponding period of the last year, according to the summary of Provisional Quantum Index Numbers of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (QIM).

The QIM for February 2025, released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the QIM for July-February 2024-25 was estimated at 115.82. During the period from July-February, 2024-25, over 3,113 trucks were locally assembled as compared to the assembling of 1,506 trucks of the same period of the last year, the data revealed.

Meanwhile, about 524 buses were locally produced during the period under review as compared to the production of 336 buses of the same period of the last year, it added.

However, tractor assembling in the country during first 08 months of the current financial year decreased by 29.70 percent as compared to the assembling of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July-February, 2014-25, about 22,613 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the manufacturing of 32,165 tractors of the same period of the last year.

Meanwhile, heavy machinery and equipment manufacturing during the period under review increased by 23.89% as compared to assembling of the same period of the last year.

In first 08 months of current financial year, 140 units of heavy machinery and equipments locally assembled as compared to the assembling of 113 units of the same period of the last year.

The output of LSMI in the country during first eighty months of current financial year (2024-25) slightly decreased by 1.90%.

Haroon chairs meeting to review KCCI proposal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Tuesday chaired a meeting to review budget proposals of Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and address the concerns of the business community.

In this regards, a high-level meeting was held at the Ministry of Industries and Production, said a news release.

During the meeting, Haroon emphasized that economic stability and growth remain top priorities

ties under the vision of the Prime Minister.

He reiterated that facilitating the business community and resolving their issues are key components of the government's economic strategy.

He also highlighted the issues faced by KCCI, said adding that their concerns will be addressed on a priority basis.

Haroon Akhtar had recently visited Karachi, where KCCI presented their budget proposals aimed at boosting industrial and commercial activity in the region.

He directed all relevant

departments to begin immediate work on the proposals presented by the KCCI.

Ensuring ease of doing business and providing necessary support to the business community is a core responsibility of his Ministry, he added.

"Accelerating economic growth requires swift and effective resolution of business-related challenges," "Under the Prime Minister's vision, we are committed to driving investment, promoting industry, and supporting sustainable economic development across the country," he said.

PAA launches e-gates feasibility and project



F.P. Report

KARACHI: A delegation from M2P Consulting, comprising local and international experts, visited the headquarters of the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) to formally launch the planning, design, and installation of e-gates at Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi airports.

Prior to the signing, talks were held to discuss key technical and operational aspects of the project, presided over by Deputy Director General Airports Sadiq ur Rehman and Deputy Director General

Works and Development Sumair Saeed.

An agreement signing ceremony followed, where the agreement was inked by Mr. Christophe Mostert, Managing Partner of M2P Consulting, and Mr. Kashif S. Jillani, Director Engineering Services, PAA.

The entire process-including planning, design, implementation, and installation-is scheduled for completion within 24 months. The consultants will provide technical supervision and guide contractors selected through a competitive tendering process.

Key discussions includ-

ed the integration of the e-gate system with ICAO protocols and local airport agency systems. Once implemented, the e-gates will significantly enhance passenger security, introduce automated control, and reduce reliance on manual processing, ensuring a smoother travel experience.

Surveys at Lahore and Islamabad airports are complete, while the survey at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport begins tomorrow. The event was attended by senior PAA officials including Directors of Planning, Development, and Engineering Services.

State Life conducts free diabetes screenings, reaching 113,000 people

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a mighty demonstration of its commitment to public health, the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) successfully conducted a nationwide diabetes screening initiative, offering free health check-ups in collaboration with over 450 hospitals across Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan provinces.

Shoaib Javed Hussain,

CEO of SLIC, stated, "This initiative reflects State Life's deep-rooted commitment to the people of Pakistan. By partnering with healthcare institutions, we are actively addressing preventable diseases and promoting early diagnosis - efforts that can save lives and reduce long-term healthcare costs. I am truly grateful to our healthcare workers and the 450 hospitals that stood with us in this national effort. Their hard work on the ground

enabled us to reach thousands of families, uplift communities, and create long-term impact."

This large-scale initiative reached nearly 113,000 individuals, screening them for diabetes - a rapidly growing and serious health concern in Pakistan. The drive identified nearly 10% as newly diagnosed diabetic cases, while among the already diagnosed population, over 70% were found to have poorly controlled sugar levels, highlighting

the urgent need for awareness and continuous care.

As Pakistan's largest life and health insurer, this initiative is part of SLIC's broader ESG-driven community outreach efforts, aimed at supporting national health and wellness goals and raising awareness on non-communicable diseases. Through its sustained investment in health, financial protection, and inclusion, State Life continues to serve over 180 million of Pakistanis.

BOP registered growth in operating profit of 353%

F.P. Report

LAHORE: In a meeting held on Tuesday, the Board of Directors of The Bank of Punjab (BOP) reviewed and approved the un-audited financial statements for the first quarter ended March 31, 2025. The Board lauded the exceptional performance of the Bank, which has not only exceeded expectations but also delivered unprecedented financial results across all key performance areas.

Despite facing a challenging economic landscape and intensifying competition within the banking sector, BOP has achieved a phenomenal

353% growth in operational profit before provisions and gains as compared to the same period last year. Profit before provisions rose to an impressive Rs. 5.09 billion, up from Rs. 1.72 billion in Q1'24-representing a remarkable 197% increase in profit before provisions.

The Bank's Net Interest Margin (NIM) witnessed a stellar growth of 76%, reaching Rs. 15.04 billion compared to Rs. 8.55 billion in Q1 2024. The Bank's operating cost structure remained in line with

industry norms. The Bank's cost-to-average deposits ratio stood at 3.3%, whereas the Cost-to-Income Ratio reduced by 12% over the 1st quarter of the year 2024.

As a result, the Bank's Profit Before Tax rose to Rs. 4.01 billion, up from Rs. 3.51 billion, reflecting a 14% growth. Despite a challenging tax regime, after absorbing an increased tax rate of 53%, the Bank's Earnings per Share (EPS) still rose to Rs. 0.55, up from Rs. 0.52, underscoring the efficiency and profitability of its operations.

As compared to the 1st quarter of 2024, Total Assets grew by 12%, reaching Rs. 2,334 billion, while Deposits surged by 21% to Rs. 1,718 billion with a growth of 22% in current deposits, affirming strong public trust and sustained deposit mobilization efforts.

The Bank's capital position also remains exceptionally strong. Tier-1 Equity increased to Rs. 81 billion, with Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) stood at a healthy 16.93%.

In addition to its stellar financial performance, the Bank continues to play a

pivotal role in supporting national development and social uplift. The Bank has successfully managed multiple Government of Punjab (GoPb) initiatives including the revolutionary CM Punjab Asaan Karobar Scheme, CM Punjab Kissan Card, CM Punjab Livestock Card, and Apni Chaat, Apna Ghar Scheme. Furthermore, during Q1 2025, the Bank most-efficiently managed one of the largest targeted subsidy program of GoPb Nighaban Ramzan Program" using its cutting-edge technology.

The Bank was the only commercial bank honored with two awards at the State Bank of Pakistan's "Pakistan Financial Literacy Week Awards 2025" for the priority-sectors - Agriculture and SME.

This remarkable performance is a resounding testament to the Bank's strategic foresight, execution excellence, and unwavering commitment to creating value for all stakeholders. With continued innovation, expansion, and focus on digital transformation, BOP is well-positioned to sustain its upward momentum in the quarters ahead.

Cutlery exports increase 4.60 per dent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of cutlery witnessed an increase of 4.60 percent during the first nine months fiscal year 2024-25, as against the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

The cutlery exports from the country were recorded at US \$45.783 million during July-March (2024-25) against the exports of US \$43.768 million during July-March (2023-24), according to the Pakistan

Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the cutlery exports witnessed a decline of 19.57 percent during the month of March 2025 as compared to the same month of last year.

The exports of cutlery from the country during March 2025 were recorded at US \$4.595 million against the exports of US \$5.713 million in March 2024.

On a month-on-month

basis, cutlery exports also decreased by 6.81 percent during March 2025 when compared to the exports of US \$4.931 million in February 2025, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data revealed.

It is pertinent to mention here that the overall exports from the country increased by 7.69 percent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

Lost Passport

I lost my original passport # BJ6978184 in the name of Akkash Haider S/o Akhtar ali R/o mohallah Fatumandi, dabgari, Peshawar. If someone found please contact 03219080825

Court Notice

In the Court of Ahmed Ihsanullah Qureshi , ADSJ-Topi, Swabi, Safdar Khan VS. Iqbal etc. Suit number: 22 /13, Institution date: 22-05-2025, Hearing date: 22-05-2025, Subject: Civil Appeal, Notice to: (1) Iqbal son Abdur Raheem, (2) Qayum son Abdur Raheem, (3) Nasir son Sahibzada, (4) Wajid son Gharib Ullah, (5) Tahir, (6) Fida son (8) Wazir Ullah, (9) Muhammad Tahir son Junaid, (10) Muzamil son Shah Nazar Khan, (11) Noor Zahid son Noor Jalal , R/o Menai, Teh, Topi, District Swabi. The service through ordinary means is difficult , so you are informed to attend the court on 22-05-2025 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.

Court Notice

In the Court of Javeria Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge II /Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Camp Court Totalai Buner. Appeal. No.18/CR . Institution 15/11/2024. Date of hearing. 25/4/2025. Ahmed Aftab VS Muhammad Akram. Notice to No.5/2.Shakir Khan s on 5/3.Mstz Romena. 5/4.Hasena. 5/5. Mehnaz daughters of Khan Sher resident of Panjitar Khadukhel tehsel Totalai district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will /shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 25/4/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Javeria Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge II /Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Camp Court Totalai Buner. Appeal. No.57/13 Institution 7/9/2024. Date of hearing. 2/5/2025. Khan Farosh etc VS Hakim Khan etc. Notice to No.7.Abdul Waiz Khan s/o Mured. 10.Kukam Khan. 11.Qasim Khan.12. Tamrez alias Mulla sons. 16.Mst Taslem d/o Malak Aaman Sharia Heirs Mst Husna d/o Feroz resident of Qasam Kheel Khadukhel Buner. 21.Muhammad Jan.22.Fazal Akbar.23. Taj Muhammad 24.Mian Gul Jan sons.25.Mst Kinkhaba.26.Mst Sakena. 27.Mst Mehtaba daughters of Sharia Heirs of Mst Banu d/o Feroz Khan resident of Phalo Dhand. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will /shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 2/5/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III/judicial Magistrate II. Matta district Swat.Case #.156/1. Institution 19/10/2024. Next Hearing date 03/05/2025. Muhammad Ali etc. VS Niaz Ali. Notice to: 1/2) Muzafar Hussain.1/3) kaleem ullah. 1/4) Bacha khan.1/5) Usman Ali sons. 1/6) Bakht Zareena widow.1/7) Msts.Bakht Nawaba.1/8) Hussan Zeeba. 1/9) Noor Jehan. 1/10) Azat Begum. 1/11) Raham Nisa. 1/12) Naseeb Zeeba.1/23) Naseem akhtar daughter.6) Hameed Ullah.5) saeed ullah sons Hassan zaib. 6/1) Amir Zadaig widow. 6/2) Mst- Bakht Begum daughter.6/3) Gul Muhammad khan.6/4) tufail son Muhammad khan sons Juma khan.7) Abdul wadood s/o Rahim shah.11) Dedan gul s/o sawal.12) Gul Muhammad s/o gul shah r/o Lail Banr tehsil matta.13) Amir zada.14) Bakht zada through Legal Heirs. 14/1) Pervez.14/2) Abdul wahab.14/3) Kashwar sons. 14/4) Sher Rahmat.14/5) Kulsoom.14/6) Muneeba 14/6) Sumaira daughter.15) Luqmania daughter Mst. Mehar Humayun through legal Heirs.15/1) Alam khan Husband. 15/2) Muhammad Ghani son.16/1) Bakht Rahim.16/2) Sahibzada.16/3) Rahim Ullah.16/4) Abdul Kabir.16/5) Shakir Ullah.16/6) Qasim sons.16/7) zaibun Nisa.16/8) Hidayat.16/9) Razia.16/10) Riyasat.16/12) Nargas daughter Kharo r/o Lail Banr Tehsil Matta district Swat. Whereas the above named defendant cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 03/05/2025. at 8.00 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.



In brief

O'Sullivan holds narrow lead over Carter

SHEFFIELD (Agencies): Ronnie O'Sullivan made his return to snooker and secured a one-frame lead over Ali Carter after the opening session of their World Championship first-round match. O'Sullivan, 49, had not played competitively since January when he snapped his cue and threw it in the bin following four losses in five matches at the Championship League event. He subsequently withdrew from a number of tournaments, including the Masters, the Welsh Open and the Grand Prix, saying he "needed to prioritise his health and wellbeing". But the seven-time world champion recovered from losing the opening frame to take a 5-4 advantage, needing five more frames for victory when the match resumes on Wednesday afternoon (14:30 BST). He hit a break of 107 to move 3-1 in front with the 1,283rd century break of his career and his 208th at the Crucible. He had a chance for another century, only to falter at 85 after missing a red into the middle pocket. O'Sullivan looked on course to gain a 6-3 advantage, but missed a long red when 46-5 ahead, with Carter recovering to take the last frame of the session. Before the tournament, O'Sullivan told BBC Sport "to come here is an achievement in itself for me" as he documented his mental health struggles. No player has won the world title on eight occasions in the modern era, with O'Sullivan aiming to move clear of Stephen Hendry's seven successes.

Mbappe aiming for Copa del Rey final return

MADRID (AFP): Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said striker Kylian Mbappe is poised to return from injury to face rivals Barcelona in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday. Mbappe missed Madrid's win over Athletic Bilbao on Sunday in La Liga and will not be available for the visit to face Getafe on Wednesday. The French superstar was substituted with an ankle problem during Madrid's Champions League elimination by Arsenal last week, but along with compatriot Ferland Mendy, should be fit for the Clasico. "For tomorrow's game they will not be ready, but they will train on these days, and I think they will be available for the game on Saturday," Ancelotti told a news conference on Tuesday. Mbappe was whistled by some Madrid fans when he appeared on screens at the Santiago Bernabeu during Madrid's 1-0 win against Athletic, which kept them four points behind leaders Barcelona in the title race. "Mbappe is hurting because of his injury, because he cannot help the team -- he's doing everything he can to be ready for Saturday," continued Ancelotti. Without Mbappe, their top scorer this season with 33 goals, and using an extra midfielder, Madrid were more solid defensively against Athletic. "I think the problems we have had this season have been quite evident," said Ancelotti. "We have changed the way we play a bit because we have players with different characteristics. "We've found it difficult to find this balance, and I hope we can find it in the run-in, because we've got a lot on the line... in the games that are left, if we don't have it, it will be hard to win."

Multan Sultans end losing streak in PSL 10 with win over Qalandars

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): Multan Sultans finally opened their account in PSL 10 by defeating Lahore Qalandars by 33 runs in the 12th match of the tournament.

The thrilling contest, held in Multan, marked the Sultans' first win in this season of the Pakistan Super League.

Batting first after winning the toss, Multan Sultans posted a massive total of 228 for 5 in their allotted 20 overs. Opener Yasir Khan led the charge with a blistering 87 off 44 balls, while captain Mohammad Rizwan contributed 32 runs.

Usman Khan added 39, and Iftikhar Ahmed played a key role at the end with a quickfire 44 off just 18 deliveries. Ashton Turner chipped in with 15 runs.

In response, Lahore Qalandars fell short, managing 195 for 9 by the end of their innings. Despite fighting knocks by Sikandar Raza (50) and Sam Billings (43), Lahore couldn't keep up with the required run rate. Fakhar Zaman (22), Mohammad Naeem (11), and Daryl Mitchell (19) were dismissed cheaply. Multan's bowling attack stood strong, with Ubaid Shah picking up 3 wickets, and Usama Mir taking 2. Rashid Hussain also contributed with 2 dismissals, while Shaheen Shah Afridi and Asif Afridi claimed one wicket each.

This match was crucial for Multan

Sultans, who had lost their previous three games in PSL 10. Captain Mohammad Rizwan, after winning the toss, expressed confidence in his team's record at home, saying, "We'll try our best to win in Multan."

His prediction proved right as the Sultans delivered a dominant performance. PSL 10 has been a tough ride for Multan so far, but this win boosts their morale and moves them up the points table.

Lahore Qalandars, on the other hand, have already secured two wins earlier in PSL 10, but this defeat will push them to reassess their strategy. In PSL 10's head-to-head history between the two sides, Multan Sultans now lead with 10 wins out of 19 encounters, while Lahore Qalandars have won 9. As PSL 10 progresses, fans can expect more fierce clashes as teams battle to qualify for the playoffs.

Lahore Qalandars Playing XI: Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Naeem, Abdullah Shafique, Daryl Mitchell, Sam Billings, Sikandar Raza, Shaheen Afridi (c), Rishad Hossain, Haris Rauf, Zaman Khan, Asif Afridi.

Multan Sultans Playing XI: Mohammad Rizwan (c), Yasir Khan, Usman Khan, Kamran Ghulam, Michael Bracewell, Iftikhar Ahmed, Ashton Turner, David Wiley, Usama Mir, Ubaid Shah, Joshua Little.



MULTAN: Yasir Khan was severe on Zaman Khan in the powerplay.

Michael Slater sentenced for domestic violence

MELBOURNE (INP): Former Australia test batter and TV commentator Michael Slater was sentenced to four years' prison on Tuesday after pleading guilty to domestic violence charges but will walk free after serving more than a year in custody. Michael Slater's prison sentence was partly suspended, a registrar at the Maroochydhore District Court said.

Slater was refused bail by the court just over a year ago after being remanded in police custody and charged with multiple domestic violence offences on Queensland state's Sunshine Coast between December 5, 2023 and April 12, 2024.

The charges included allegations of assault, strangulation, burglary and

stalking in relation to multiple incidents against a woman in the Noosa region. In sentencing on Tuesday, Maroochydhore judge Glen Cash told Michael Slater it was obvious he was an alcoholic, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

"Your rehabilitation will not be easy -- alcoholism is part of your make-up," Slater played 74 tests from 1993-2001 and became a successful cricket commentator before being axed by the Seven Network in 2021.

He has been charged with multiple domestic violence offences in recent years and struggled with mental health issues. Slater was sentenced to a two-year community corrections order by a

Sydney court in late-2022 after pleading guilty to charges including common assault and attempted stalking of a woman. A community corrections order is a non-custodial punishment in Australia.

Earlier, Slater was dumped from the Seven Network's cricket commentary team after three years with the Australian broadcaster. The 51-year-old caused controversy after a furious tirade against Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on social media. Slater said Morrison had "blood on (his) hands" after the government temporarily banned Australians from returning home from India as the Asian nation battled a major COVID-19 outbreak.

Saka injury 'nothing serious' as Arteta weighs Arsenal options

LONDON (AFP): Mikel Arteta says Bukayo Saka has a "good chance to play" in Wednesday's Premier League game against Crystal Palace after confirming the Arsenal winger's injury is "nothing serious".

Saka was seen limping after being substituted in the second half of Sunday's 4-0 win at Ipswich following a first-half foul from Leif Davis that led to the defender's dismissal. Although Saka played on for a while after the injury, there were concerns he could be in danger of missing next week's Champions League semi-final first leg against Paris Saint-Germain.

But Gunners boss Arteta eased those fears as he said Saka was in contention to face Palace at the Emirates Stadium. "We have to wait and see how he reacts after (the training) session, but it's nothing too serious," he told reporters on Tuesday.

"If we want to, I think he would have a good chance to play tomorrow," Arteta suggested he would be willing to send out a full-strength team, including Saka, against Palace, even though Arsenal have little to play for in the Premier League.

The north Londoners are 13 points behind leaders Liverpool, who will be crowned champions if Arsenal lose to Palace or if they beat Tottenham at Anfield on Sunday. "We cannot think in those terms. When the players are fit and available and want to play, they have to play," Arteta said of his selection dilemma.

"They are at their best when they are playing and they have consistency in their performances and physically they are good, emotionally they are good, their understanding and their rhythm and the way they make decisions is at their best."

Hockey legend Bovelandt to visit Pakistan for training clinic

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dutch hockey icon Floris Jan Bovelandt is set to arrive in Pakistan next week on a goodwill visit, during which he will conduct a special training clinic at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium, Islamabad.

The 59-year-old Bovelandt is one of the most celebrated drag flickers in the history of field hockey and a member of the 1990 World Cup-winning Dutch side.

"He will hold an exclusive session with young players of the Khawaja Junaid Hockey Academy (KJHA) and different clubs from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium on the evening of April 28," head of the KJHA Olympian Khawaja Muhammad Junaid told APP on Tuesday.

According to Junaid, the event will draw a large number of hockey enthusiasts, former Olympians, current national players, sports officials and ambassadors of various countries.

He said the clinic was part of efforts to revive the



"Such international interactions help rebuild our image and establish people-to-people contact through sports diplomacy. It's not just training; it's a celebration of hockey," he said.

"I'm thankful to the Embassy of the Netherlands in Islamabad for facilitating Bovelandt's visit.

"Similarly, I'm grateful to Pakistan Sports Board, particularly its Director General Yasir Pirzada, who always backs the steps for uplift of the national game.

"It's a great step towards bridging global hockey communities," he added. Junaid said that Pakistan's Netherlands-based former woman footballer Kayanat Bukhari would also be accompanying the Dutch hockey great.

Bovelandt, who has previously worked in development projects in South Asia will also meet top officials of Prime Minister Office and Pakistan Hockey Federation and share insights on grassroots development and infrastructure improvement.

Jamal fined for breaching PSL code of conduct

KARACHI (INP): Karachi Kings' allrounder Aamir Jamal has been fined by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for breaching Pakistan Super League (PSL) code of conduct during a match against Peshawar Zalmi at the National Bank Stadium Karachi.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the PCB confirmed that Aamir Jamal was fined 5% of his match fee for a Level 1 breach of the HBL PSL's Code of Conduct during the HBL PSL X fixture on Monday night.

According to PCB, Aamir was found to have violated Article 2.5 of the HBL PSL Code of Conduct, which prohibits "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during a match".

The incident happened in the 15th over of the first innings, when Aamir after dismissing Hussain went close to the batter and made a remark. Aamir Jamal pleaded guilty to the charges and accepted the sanction proposed by match referee Iftikhar Ahmed. The charges were imposed by on-field umpires Faisal Khan Aafreedi and Paul Reiffel.

Earlier, Karachi Kings beat Peshawar Zalmi by two wickets in a last-over thriller of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 at National Stadium, 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.

Karachi King's Aamir fined for violation

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Kings' Aamir Jamal has been fined five per cent of his match fee for Level 1 breach of HBL PSL's code of conduct during their side's HBL PSL X fixture against Peshawar Zalmi at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on Monday night.

Aamir was found to have violated Article 2.5 of the HBL PSL Code of Conduct, which reads as: "Using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during a match", a Kings Spokesman said.

The incident happened in the 15th over of the first innings, when Aamir after dismissing Hussain went close to the batter and made a remark.

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The charges were imposed by on-field umpires Faisal Khan Aafreedi and Paul Reiffel.

Skipper Shanto leads Bangladesh fightback in Zimbabwe Test

SYLHET (AFP): Najmul Hossain Shanto's batting heroics on Tuesday pushed Bangladesh's second innings lead to 112 on the third day of the first Test against Zimbabwe, with the home team on 194-4.

Bangladesh skipper Shanto, who scored 40 in the first innings, remained unbeaten on 60 when bad light stopped play in Sylhet. He was ably supported by Jaker Ali, who was unbeaten on 21, and the duo will be looking on day four to stretch their team's lead beyond 200 against an impressive Zimbabwe batting line-up.

The hosts ended the second day on a strong note after a disappointing first day, when Zimbabwe bowled them out for a modest 191. An impressive spell by spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who took five wickets, helped Bangladesh restrict the visitors to 273 -- a lead of only 82.

The entire morning session on the third day was washed out by rain, making only 44 overs possible through the day's play.

Bangladesh started the day at 57-1 and added 60 runs in a solid second-wicket stand between Mominul Haque (47) and opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy (33).

Zimbabwe speedster Blessing

Muzarabani, who took three wickets in the first innings, added three more to his tally and closed the day at 3-51. Muzarabani removed both Bangladesh openers Shadman Islam (4) and Joy. He also took the key wicket of Mushfiqur Rahim (4). The right-arter was supported by Victor Nyauchi, who was the only other Zimbabwe bowler to take a wicket in Bangladesh's second innings.

Bangladesh have long been formidable on their slow and spin-friendly home pitches, but have several veterans missing this series. They have won eight out of 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.

Scores after third day: Bangladesh: 191 (Mominul Haque 56, Najmul Hossain Shanto 40; Blessing Muzarabani 3-50, Wellington Masakadza 3-21) and 194-4 (Najmul Hossain Shanto 60 not out, Mominul Haque 47; Blessing Muzarabani 3-51).

Zimbabwe: 273 (Brian Bennett 57, Sean Williams 59; Mehidy Hasan Miraz 5-52, Nahid Rana 3-74).

Bangladesh lead by 112 runs.

Azhar regrets playing cricket after name removed from stadium

HYDERABAD (INP): Former Indian cricket captain and batting legend Mohammad Azharuddin has expressed strong disappointment and anger over the removal of his name from a pavilion at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad.

The Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) Ombudsman directed that Azharuddin's name be removed from the stand and not appear on match tickets. In a strongly worded response, Mohammad Azharuddin stated that the move was disrespectful and announced his intention to challenge it legally.

"There was no element of conspiracy or personal gain in naming the stand after me," he said. "I don't want to comment extensively on this controversy or stoop to that level. The cricketing

world is laughing at this association." He even questioned his decision to play cricket.

"I played cricket for 17 years and captained the Indian team for nearly a decade. I passed with distinction as a captain. Is this how Hyderabad treats its cricketers? It is deeply painful. I sometimes regret having played cricket," he said. "We will definitely go to court, and I'm confident that justice will prevail." Azharuddin criticized the current state of cricket administration, stating that individuals with little understanding of the game are now in positions of power.

"It's heartbreaking to see individuals with little to no understanding of the game now in positions to teach and lead. It's a complete disgrace to the sport," Azharuddin remarked. The former skipper requested the

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to intervene and take appropriate action.

"I am determined to pursue legal action against this injustice, and I urge the BCCI to intervene and take appropriate action". The decision has sparked criticism, with many viewing it as another instance of victimization of the Muslim community in India.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Critics state that his unceremonious removal is not merely a sports-related matter, but a politically charged act reflecting deeper ideological shifts in Indian society. Analysts contend that the move reflects the broader influence of the Hindutva-driven political narrative in India that has gained dominance under the current Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government.

Bumrah, Mandhana win top Wisden cricket awards

LONDON (AFP): India paceman Jasprit Bumrah has been named as the Leading Men's Cricketer in the World in the 2025 edition of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, with compatriot Smriti Mandhana picking up the women's award.

Bumrah was given the honour by the sport's "bible" after a stunning 2024 in which he excelled in red-ball and white-ball cricket. The 31-year-old picked up 71 Test wickets at an average of less than 15 and was named player of the tournament as India won the T20 World Cup in the West Indies. Wisden editor

Lawrence Booth described Bumrah as "quite simply the star of the year".

Reflecting on Bumrah's astonishing efforts during India's Test series in Australia, Booth wrote: "He was so lethal, so uniquely challenging -- a staccato of limbs somehow forming a symphony -- that runs scored off him should have counted double.

"And while taking 32 Australian wickets at 13 each, he laid a claim to be considered the greatest of all time, becoming the first with 200 Test wickets at an average below 20."

Despite Bumrah's heroics, Australia won the five-Test series, which finished

in early January, 3-1.

Mandhana, 28, made it an Indian double by being named as the Leading Women's Cricketer in the World. The batter scored 1,659 runs across all formats in 2024 -- the most by a woman in a calendar year of international cricket.

West Indies batter Nicholas Pooran was named as the game's leading T20 cricketer.

In the almanack, which is published on Thursday, Booth is scathing about Jay Shah's smooth transition from the most powerful figure in Indian cricket to chairman of the International Cricket Council.



In brief

Police arrest 9 illegal arm holders

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested nine illegal arm holders and recovered weapons and ammunition from their possession during crackdown here on Tuesday. According to police spokesman, Sadiqabad Police held two illegal arm holders Hamza and Aftab and recovered 02 pistols 30-bore from their possession. Similarly, Civil Lines Police arrested Shan and recovered 01 pistol 9-mm from his custody. While, Taxila Police nabbed Saifullah and recovered 01 pistol 30-bore from him while 01 pistol 30-bore was recovered from Basit. Saddar Barooni Police arrested Bilal and Farooq and found with 03 pistols 30-bore whereas, Dharmyal Police arrested Abdul Wahab and recovered 01 pistol 30-bore from him. Police have registered separate cases registered against the accused and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs praised the efforts of police teams said that strict action will be continued against those possessing illegal weapons.

Anti-encroachment drive continues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) district administration is actively conducting operations against illegal encroachments in various areas including Garden Avenue, Pakistan Town and Srinagar Highway, on Tuesday. According to DC office, during these operations, authorities have taken action against individuals who have established temporary encroachments along the roads. A total of three individuals were arrested for violating regulations. Encroachments that were causing disruptions to traffic flow have been removed and transferred to the local police station. The Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad has urged traders to cooperate with the ongoing anti-encroachment campaign, emphasizing that the beauty of the city cannot be compromised by illegal structures. "Citizens trapped in traffic due to encroachments suffer greatly," stated Irfan Memon, highlighting the impact of these illegal activities on daily commuters.

19 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police apprehended 19 outlaws involved in various criminal activities including drug peddling and illegal possession of weapons. A large quantity of drugs and arms was also recovered from their possession, on Tuesday. A public relations officer told APP that the Koshar, Karachi Company, Shams Colony, Noon, and Bara Kahu police teams conducted separate operations and took legal action against those involved in criminal activities. Police teams arrested 15 suspects and recovered 776 grams of heroin and six pistols along with ammunition. Cases have been registered against the accused, and further investigations are underway. He said that during an ongoing crackdown on court absconders and proclaimed offenders, four individuals wanted in cases of murder, attempted murder, and land grabbing were also apprehended. SSP Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan said that the Islamabad Police are committed to ensuring the safety of citizens' lives and property, adding that no one will be allowed to disrupt peace in the federal capital. "Protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens is our top priority," he added.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Nassar Abdulrahma Jasser Almutairi, Ambassador of Kuwait, called on Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif. —APP Photo

Earth's protection shared responsibility: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday said that the protection of the Earth is a collective responsibility, urging all segments of society to adopt eco-conscious practices and promote environmental stewardship.

In his message issued on the occasion of International Earth Day, Gilani said, "Earth is our mother, and it is our duty to preserve its natural treasures for future generations."

He stressed the importance of the prudent use of natural resources, noting that the day serves as a powerful reminder of

humanity's shared obligation to safeguard the planet.

Reaffirming the Senate's commitment to eco-friendly legislation and sustainable development, he said Parliament continues to prioritise environmental initiatives and policies aligned with global best practices.

Calling upon the youth to take the lead in environmental conservation, Gilani emphasized that raising awareness and adopting sustainable habits are critical in the face of growing ecological challenges.

"The responsibility of protecting the Earth does not lie with the government alone. Every individ-

ual must contribute to building a greener and more sustainable future," he said.

He also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling its international obligations under environmental protection agreements, underscoring the importance of preserving ecosystems and combating climate change through collaborative global efforts.

On the Day, Chairman Senate Gilani expressed his resolve to work for a cleaner, greener, and more resilient Pakistan, calling for national unity and proactive engagement in environmental preservation.

Names of citizen's family members removed from ECL

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) was informed on Tuesday that the names of the family of citizen Usman Khan who was recovered after being kidnapped, has been removed from the exit control list (ECL) on the direction of the court.

IHC's Justice Babar Sattar heard the case regarding action against those responsible of the kidnapping of the accused.

Additional Attorney General Sardar Umar Aslam appeared before the court. The court questioned that why was the order not implemented? The AAG said that the names have been removed from the ECL as per the court order. The Additional Attorney General sought time from the court to prepare the case.

Justice Sattar said that I will give you time but give final arguments at the next hearing, I will decide the case. He remarked that the petitioner's son was kidnapped and the accusation was made against the sensitive institution. The government took the position that the petitioners' names were placed on the ECL on the recommendation of the institution due to false allegation, said, Justice Babar Sattar sought final arguments in the case at the next hearing. The hearing of the case was adjourned.

Police pays tribute to its heroes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second day ceremony of "Ghazi Week", organized by the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police was held on Tuesday at Rescue 15 Field Office to honor Islamabad Police officers who rendered extraordinary services in the line of duty.

An official told APP that the event was organized to acknowledge the courage and sacrifices of officers who played a vital role in establishing peace and raising the prestige of the police force. Senior officers including DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq, SSP Investigation Muhammad Usman Tariq Butt, SSP Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan, SSP Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Hamza Humayun, zonal SPs, and several police Ghazis attended the event.

DIG Tariq said that officers who turned Islamabad into a peaceful city and elevated the image of the force are the pride of the department and will always be remembered. "Benefits given to those who fought the war against terrorism can never truly compensate for their sacrifices," DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq remarked while addressing the ceremony.

The DIG said the ceremony was not only a moment of pride and gratitude but also a renewal of commitment. "Only the bravest sons of the nation are blessed with the spirit of sacrifice for their homeland," said SSP Investigation Muhammad Usman Tariq Butt, adding that the families of those who served with valor also deserve the highest respect.

He said that those who sacrificed their today for the secure tomorrow of others will always be remembered in history.

Pakistan's first underpass to be completed in 35 days: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a historic first for Pakistan, an underpass is set to be completed within just 35 days as part of a major infrastructure project in Islamabad.

The Jinnah Square Murree Road Underpass, which is part of the signal-free corridor from Islamabad Airport to Murree will make travel significantly easier for both residents and tourists. "This project will resolve the long-standing issue of traffic jams in Islamabad and ease access to Murree," the minister noted.

He added that the project will also help reduce congestion near Kashmir Chowk and improve the overall traffic system in the city. "In addition to saving time, the project will also help save fuel," he said. Chairman of the Capital Development Authority

Minister Naqvi also instructed relevant authorities to ensure uninterrupted traffic flow through alternative routes during the construction phase to minimize inconvenience for commuters.

He said the signal-free corridor from Islamabad Airport to Murree will make travel significantly easier for both residents and tourists. "This project will resolve the long-standing issue of traffic jams in Islamabad and ease access to Murree," the minister noted.

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Chairman of the Capital Development Authority

(CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, briefed the Interior Minister on the progress of the project. He shared that work on the structure and road network is advancing rapidly and expressed confidence that the project will be completed within the set timeline.

According to the briefing, the underpass will be 479 meters long and is designed to accommodate three traffic lanes. The project also includes widening the adjoining bridge by adding two lanes on each side. Additionally, four nearby slip roads will be expanded to further ease traffic flow.

This ambitious initiative is expected to bring lasting relief to the city's residents and tourists, setting a new benchmark for fast-paced and high-quality urban development in the country.

Khalsa appreciates govt's Baisakhi initiatives for pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Sikh Council's Patron-in-Chief, Ramesh Singh Khalsa Tuesday expressed gratitude to the government for its hospitality and visa facilitation, enabling thousands of Sikh pilgrims to visit Pakistan's holy sites.

In a one-on-one conversation with a news channel, the Pakistan Sikh Council's Patron-in-Chief lauded the government's initiatives to attract Sikh pilgrims, emphasizing the importance of the over 6,000 visas issued and demonstrating Pakistan's eagerness to welcome visitors from diverse backgrounds.

Ramesh Singh Khalsa praised the government's initiatives to ensure the smooth arrival and accommodation of Sikh pilgrims, allowing them to celebrate 'Baisakhi festival' with reverence and joy.

By facilitating Sikh pilgrims' visits to Pakistan's historic gurdwaras and sacred sites, the government is not only showcasing its commitment to interfaith harmony but also highlighting the country's rich cultural heritage, he added.

The government's initiative to issue visas to Sikh pilgrims is a commendable effort to promote cultural exchange and people-to-people diplomacy, he mentioned. He stated that Sikhs from all corners of the globe are now freely visiting Pakistan to pay homage at their revered sacred sites, without any fear or apprehension.

The Pakistan Sikh Council looks forward to continued collaboration with the government to promote religious tourism and strengthen people-to-people ties between

Pakistan and the global Sikh community, he added. This development, he noted, is a testament to the government's unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of minority communities and international visitors alike, he added.

Ramesh Singh Khalsa further emphasized that the warm hospitality extended by the government and the local population has made Sikh pilgrims feel at home, allowing them to focus on their spiritual pursuits without any hindrance.

By providing a secure and welcoming environment for Sikh pilgrims, the government has demonstrated its dedication to promoting interfaith harmony and cultural exchange, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and diverse society, he concluded.

Govt has done record development work in health sector: Abbasi



RAWALPINDI (APP): Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi on Tuesday said that the present government had carried out record development work in the health sector in Punjab.

It is evident from the fact that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had been in power for 17 years have all the way come to the hospitals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad for treatment, he added.

Hanif Abbasi was talking to the media after laying foundation stone of a new OPD Block here at the Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology (RIC).

He said that the RIC was established 13 years ago, and thousands of people had benefited from the health facility since then. He said the Out Patient Department Block was being built at a cost of Rs 400 million at the RIC. The project had the full support of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The OPD block after completion would help provide the best health facilities to the people, the minister said. He also thanked the Sadiq Foundation, for providing assistance in the establishment of waiting area at the RIC.

The minister said that Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif had restored the confidence of the nation by working round the clock for the country's development.

He said that the PM had decided to give the benefit of reduction in petroleum product prices to Balochistan. The bloody thirsty (dilapidated) road would be reconstructed (from the money saved on that count), which would benefit not only Balochistan but the whole of Pakistan, he added.

The minister said, "We have launched an anti-encroachment campaign in Rawalpindi, inspired by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. Many important steps have also been taken in Sindh and Balochistan, which are appreciable."

"However, when we look at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, we do not see any work. What benefits have the people of KP received during the (PTI) government in the last 17 years?" he asked.

The minister said that Maryam Nawaz could rightfully be called the "daughter of Rawalpindi" as she had played a significant role in solving the city's problems since 2016.

He added that kidney and liver transplants were going to start during the current year at the

Rawalpindi Institute of Urology, which was good news for the people.

The minister also discussed the security of the country. "It is the duty of all of us to protect the country. Politicians, officers, and journalists must all work together. Whoever does not accept the Federation of Pakistan is not a Pakistani."

The minister said no one would be allowed to do politics at the cost of Pakistan. "We will not allow anyone to harm the federation." He said those who had pursued the expatriates not to send remittances to Pakistan had not been heard because "for us all, Pakistan comes first".

There were positive indicators from international institutions about promising improvement in the national economy, he added. Hanif Abbasi said the talks with Afghanistan were not started on the behest of the KP chief minister. It was the Federal Government which decided to initiate negotiations with the neighbouring country, and whatever issues there were with Afghanistan were being looked at by Islamabad. The minister said that a major operation was underway across the country to recover railway land from the occupants.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers are busy painting bridge at Peshawar Morr Interchange in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

University student died

FAIZABAD (Pajhwok): A young man died after a vehicle plunged into Kokcha River in Badakhshan, an official said on Tuesday. Police spokesman Ehsanullah Kamgar said the accident took place as a vehicle veered off the road and fell into Kokcha River due to a technical problem in Sina village of Juram district. He said a 24-year-old man, who was a fourth-grade student of mining geological engineering faculty at Badakhshan University, drowned in the river.

2 arrested on murder charges

SAR-I-PUL CITY (Pajhwok): Two individuals have been arrested on murder charges in northern Sar-i-Pul province, an official said on Tuesday. Police spokesman Hafiz Naqibullah Alamyar told Pajhwok Afghan News a young man had stabbed to death another man in the Alqani area of the provincial capital. The alleged killer was detained by security forces. Preliminary investigation suggested the incident stemmed from a domestic dispute, he said.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Power supply network activated in Torkham camp



JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) has launched a 1.5-megawatt electricity network in the Omari Camp for returning refugees in Torkham town in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan.

The project, valued at over seven million afghanis, was officially inaugurated on Tuesday, according to local officials.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Nangarhar Deputy Governor Maulvi Azizullah Mustafa

said the new power network will benefit around 4,000 families and help light up the camp area.

The network is currently supplying electricity to 220 tents and houses through four generators.

Mustafa emphasized the

government's commitment to supporting returnees, saying, "From ministers to workers, everyone is actively serving here. That's why almost all basic services are now available in the camp."

He added that providing for returning compatriots is a shared responsibility for the entire nation, and the provincial administration remains dedicated to delivering essential services across all sectors.

Abdul Bari Omar, head of DABS, highlighted that this is not the first initiative undertaken for returnees. "We have announced 150 job positions specifically for returnees and will ensure their placement in suitable roles," he said.

Omar also revealed plans for additional projects aimed at creating employment opportunities for thousands, with returnees prioritized for these opportunities.

'More than 100,000 passports issued'

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): The Passport Office in northern Balkh province distributed more than 100,000 passports and issued visas to over 400 foreign citizens during the past one year, an official said on Tuesday.

Deputy Director Passport Office Esmatullah Asim told Pajhwok Afghan News about 100,000 passports were distributed and they generated nearly 550 million afis revenue.

He said: "The Passport Office distributed 100,000 passports in 1403 solar year and earned more than 550 million afis".

Additionally, the office issued visas to 411 foreign nationals, Asim added.

According to Asim, there are no obstacles or delays in the distribution of passports, and residents could easily fill out forms and apply.

Residents said more facilities in obtaining passports have been made available compared to previous years.

In the first years of IEA takeover, it took months to obtain a passport, but now people could obtain the document in a short period of time.

Temporary camp set up in Balkh

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): A temporary camp has been set up in the capital of Balkh province for families returning from neighbour country.

Located in the Gorimar area on the eastern outskirts of Mazar-i-Sharif, the camp was set up by the Department of Refugees and Repatriation in coordination with a joint commission.

In a statement, the refugee department said the camp would offer temporary accommodation, three meals a day, clean drinking water, healthcare facilities, a 24-hour ambulance and other services.

Returning families are expected to stay at the camp for up to a month. After receiving initial support, they will be resettled in various parts of Balkh, as well as Jawzjan, Faryab and Sar-i-Pul provinces.

Similar camps and facilities have been established in other provinces of the country as well for the families returning from neighbour country.

400 Afghans return home

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) says 400 more Afghan citizens returned to their homeland on Tuesday after being released from prisons in Pakistan.

Citing border officials in Kandahar's Spin Boldak town, the ministry wrote on X the 400 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, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation added.

China pledges to start trade via Wakhan with completion

KABUL (TOLONews): Local officials in Badakhshan said that Chinese authorities have assured them that the country will open its trade route with Afghanistan once the construction of the Wakhan road is completed.

According to Badakhshan local officials, the second phase of the Wakhan road project with China will be completed within the next two months, and at the same time, China will begin its trade activities with Afghanistan.

Mohammad Ayoub Khalid, the governor of Badakhshan, stated, "We have reached the Chinese border, where the barbed

wire is located. The road has been connected, and work on its development is ongoing. It will soon be operational."

Khan Mohammad, head of the governor's office in Badakhshan, said, "Work on the road construction and other facilities is ongoing, and we hope that it would be ready for use in a short time. The Chinese ambassador has fully assured us that the trade route will be opened and the road will be operational."

The reopening and commencement of activities through the Wakhan Corridor will have a positive impact on the country's economic and trade

processes. Saleh Mohammad Alok-ozai, an Afghan businessman in China, discussed the importance of this road, saying, "This route could affect prices in Afghanistan's markets, and it is a short and efficient route for exporting fresh and dried fruits from Afghanistan."

According to officials in the Islamic Emirate, the connection with China through the Wakhan Corridor will significantly enhance the country's trade and economic activities. They added that the construction of trade and security infrastructure at the border with China is also nearing completion.

Artifacts from Mes Aynak to be returned to Logar once museum built

KABUL (TOLONews): The head of information and culture in Logar said that due to the lack of a proper museum in the province, around 3,000 historical artifacts from Mes Aynak have been moved to Kabul for exhibition at the National Museum.

The Logar provincial museum has only a small room to store and display historical artifacts, most of which have been donated by locals.

Rafiullah Samim, head of information and culture in Logar, told TOLONews: "The artifacts we have

received from Mes Aynak, numbering about 3,000, are placed in the Mes Aynak section of the National Museum. Once a museum is built in Logar, the transferred artifacts will be brought back to Logar."

However, some cultural activists and residents of Logar said that the historical artifacts should be stored and displayed in the province itself. They are calling for the construction of a proper museum in the province.

Bashir Sahil, a cultural activist in Logar, said: "It

would be great if a place under the name of a museum is established in Logar. The goal is not just to keep the artifacts in Logar, but this will attract tourists both from within Afghanistan and abroad."

Mohammad Amin Naseri, another cultural activist from Logar, said: "When people go to the National Museum to see artifacts, why not come to Logar? When the artifacts are in Logar, it will lead to an increase in tourists, which in turn will boost the economy of Logar and its

people."

The head of information and culture in Logar also stated that several acres of land have been allocated for the construction of a museum in the Mohammad Agha district of the province, and work on it will begin next solar year.

The previous government began the construction of a special museum to store artifacts from the Mes Aynak mine on 30 acres of land in Mohammad Agha district. However, after the political changes, construction was halted.

Construction work on health center building starts in Badghis



KABUL (Pajhwok): Construction work has been launched on a health center

that will cost more than 500,000 US dollars in southern Badghis province,

the Ministry of Public Health said on Tuesday. On its X handle MoPH

wrote a building for health center is being constructed by the Public Health Department and with financial support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It said the project valued more than 500,000 US dollars.

Public health director Maulvi Khan Mohammad Himmat said the project would help improve health services in the province and solve more than 70 percent of people's problems in Ghormach district.

The Public Health Department emphasized that efforts to improve health services for other areas in the province will continue.

Ex-Parliamentarian Zahir Qadir arrested in Kenya

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ex-parliamentarian Abdul Zahir Qadir has been arrested in Kenya and could be extradited to US, a media report said on Tuesday.

Prosecutors say Qadir arrived in Nairobi on April 14 aboard a Qatar Airways flight. He was detained at a

hotel in the city, with a local court upholding his continued custody, The Nairobi Times reported.

A US district court in New York had issued a warrant for his arrest on March 2, charging him with conspiracy to import narcotics and possession of

heavy weapons.

According to the report, the US government formally requested his extradition by sending a diplomatic note to Kenyan authorities.

The prosecution has formally authorised the initiation of Qadir's extradition process to the US.

Kenyan judges agreed to his detention, citing a risk of flight. Reasons for the former lawmaker's travel to Kenya remain unclear.

Qadir had served as a parliamentary representative for eastern Nangarhar province in the previous government.

Jawzjan families patch up decade-long feud

SHIBERGHAN (Pajhwok): Two families in Shiberghan, the capital of northern Jawzjan province, have patched up a decade-long feud -- thanks to mediation by a tribal jirga.

Members of the families embraced one another, shedding tears of joy as they put their hostilities behind them and chose the path of reconciliation.

Local officials say 110 similar disputes have been resolved in the past year alone through tribal jirgas -- a longstanding tradition that often yields encouraging results in testing times.

From revenge to reconciliation

On a peaceful spring day during a tribal jirga in Jawzjan, two fearful middle-aged men embraced each other. One was the father of a murdered girl

and the other was the father of the boy who had accidentally killed her. Through the jirga, they they buried their decade-long hatchet.

The families hail from the Yanga Kint village of Shiberghan. Before the feud erupted, the boy and the girl from the two families were playing together.

In a tragic accident, another boy from one of the families fired his father's firearm, fatally shooting the girl in the heart.

Allauddin, the victim's father, recalled he had lived in conflict with his neighbour for 10 years. Their lives were marred by frequent arguments and simmering hostilities.

"The desire for revenge robbed me of my peace of mind. At times, I feared the situation would spiral out of control," he said. "Thank

God, we have now reconciled. From now on, we shall live in peace as brothers."

Noorullah, the father of the boy who fired the shot, said: "Before the tragedy, we were close friends. No one ever wanted such a thing to happen. Over the past 10 years, our families lived in constant fear."

Role of clerics, tribal elders

Abdul Khaliq Haqyar, a tribal elder who played a key role in reconciliation, commended the forgiveness and patience shown by the victim's family. He urged other feuding families to follow the example.

"We've seen that conflict only destroys homes and divides generations, while jirgas bring people closer. Today, we are united because we chose forgiveness," he commented.

Reflecting on his long mediation experience, he said, "Over the past 20 years, we've resolved many disputes - though some still remain. "But recently, we've seen greater unity. When people come together, they can overcome problems more effectively and work towards realising shared goals."

Haji Mohammad Alam, another tribal elder, also echoed Haqyar's views: "We've learnt from experience that enmity leads only to devastation."

"But today, someone we once considered an enemy stands beside us today as a brother. We find peace and dignity. The path to resolution is forgiveness. Jirgas and reconciliation have been the cornerstones of lasting peace in this land."

Maulvi Abdul Salam



Haqjo put an Islamic perspective on the patch-up: "Islam is a religion of peace and brotherhood. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that reconciling people is more virtuous than praying and fasting."

"Wherever enmity happens, it can be uprooted through honesty, dialogue

and justice. Conflict among Muslims is a wound on the body of the Ummah, and healing it is an act of worship that earns reward in this world and the Hereafter."

He concluded, "We have witnessed a trail of death and destruction over the past two decades. Now, we must unite to end this cycle of enmity. Tribal jirgas

have proven to be one of the most effective solutions to ongoing tribal disputes."

Dozens of feuds resolved last year

Director of Borders and Tribal Affairs Maulvi Ghulam Nabi Sameem said 110 family feuds were resolved through jirgas in the past year.

He explained the cases

included disputes related to land, murder, inheritance, traffic accidents, debts and domestic issues. Some had even escalated into severe violence and killings.

"These traditional mechanisms," he said, "have once again demonstrated their effectiveness in restoring peace and unity to our communities."

Pact for KP's flagship Safe Cities Project signed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has signed an agreement to implement another major initiative — the Safe Cities Project. The agreement was signed between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police and the National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC). A formal signing ceremony was held on Tuesday at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar, where Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur attended as the chief guest.

The event was also attended by provincial cabinet members Syed Qasim Ali Shah and Muzammil Aslam, elected representatives from Peshawar, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, IGP Zulfiqar Hameed, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Muhammad Abid Majeed, and other relevant officials. During the briefing, officials informed the Chief Minister that the flagship project aims to transform the provincial capital Peshawar, all divisional headquarters, and other sensitive districts into "Safe Cities."

In the first phase, the project will be implemented in Peshawar at a cost of Rs. 2.2 billion and is expected to be completed within six months. This phase will involve the installation of 710 high-resolution surveillance cameras at 125 strategic locations across the city. The second phase will see an additional 600 sites equipped with surveillance infrastructure, to be completed over a year at a cost of Rs. 5 billion. A state-of-the-art Command and Control Center will also be established as part of the initiative.

Subsequent phases will extend the project to Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan, and Karak, with an estimated cost of Rs. 6 billion and a completion timeline of one year for the southern districts. Eventually, the Safe Cities Project will also be rolled out in Mardan, Kohat, Nowshera, Swat, and Abbottabad. To give the Safe Cities Network a legal foundation, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Safe Cities Authority Act will be enacted. Under this law, it will be mandatory for all commercial projects to integrate their surveillance systems with the Safe City network. The project will utilize Artificial Intelligence to establish a robust and automated monitoring and identification system.

Additional features of the Safe Cities Project include an emergency response system, e-challan (electronic ticketing), and digital forensic evidence capabilities. The initiative will also consolidate data from the police and all other relevant departments into a unified system.

Due to its advanced features, the KP Safe Cities Project is set to become the most modern system of its kind in



the country. In his address, Chief Minister Gandapur emphasized that ensuring peace and protecting the lives and property of citizens is the government's top priority. He said that significant resources are being invested in strengthening and modernizing the police force.

He further stated that the Safe Cities Project represents a key milestone, noting that the use of modern technology for security purposes is the need of the hour. The initiative, he said, will not only enhance public safety but also boost citizen confidence in the state's security apparatus. The Chief Minister concluded by reaffirming his government's commitment to improving governance and law and order through innovative and practical use of modern technology.

Meanwhile, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has marked another significant milestone in the digitization of public services with the official launch of the Public Works Management and Information System (PWMIS) under the Communications and Works (C&W) Department. The system was formally inaugurated by Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur at a special ceremony held on Tuesday at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar. The event was attended by members of the provincial cabinet, MPs, and relevant government officials. During the briefing at the launch, it was told that the new system will fully digitize all processes related to development projects.

This initiative aims to ensure that projects are completed within the approved PC-I timelines and specifications. The digitization will help prevent delays that previously led to financial burdens on the public exchequer, as project tracking and management will now be carried out through an automated system, minimizing human error. Moreover, all information related to development projects will be accessible online at all times. The system will enhance seamless communication between departmental staff and contractors, enabling real-time monitoring of ongoing projects to ensure quality standards are maintained. Payments will only be released upon verified completion of

work according to specified standards, eliminating unnecessary advance disbursements.

The Chief Minister highlighted that the implementation of this digital system will significantly improve departmental efficiency and restore public trust. He congratulated the C&W Department team for the successful rollout, emphasizing that the initiative aligns with the provincial government's broader vision of promoting paperless governance and transparency. He added that the system will play a crucial role in curbing corruption within the department by closing existing loopholes. "In line with the vision of our founding chairman Imran Khan, we are committed to ensuring transparency, eliminating corruption, upholding merit, and improving service delivery through the effective use of information technology," Gandapur stated.

The Chief Minister stressed that the effective use of IT in public departments is the need of the hour, and his government has been taking practical steps towards digital transformation from day one. "Ensuring good governance, effective management, and transparency are fundamental responsibilities of the state," he remarked.

Reflecting on the province's progress since assuming office, Gandapur shared that his administration inherited a situation where only 18 days of salary reserves were left. Today, the province has funds for three months' worth of salaries in advance. He noted that the backlog of over 2,400 development schemes and a 13-year throw-forward in the development program are now being addressed. "In the first year, we have reduced the throw-forward to seven years and aim to reduce it further," he said. He criticized previous practices of launching projects without ensuring the availability of services and facilities in completed buildings, which led to losses of around Rs. 450 billion. "We have reformed policies and now only initiate projects that can be completed on time. Due to our reforms and commitment to good governance, we have saved an additional Rs. 250 billion that was previously being wasted," he claimed.

Political parties have right to protest, says Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that political parties have a constitutional right to peacefully protest over the canal issue. However, any party intending to hold demonstrations, rallies, processions, or other forms of protest should notify the government in advance and ensure that such activities take place in open areas or designated locations where the public is not inconvenienced.

In a statement, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, said that protests and dissent are the essence of every democracy; however, demonstrations should not create inconvenience for the public. He noted that road closures are also disrupting the transport of cattle and livestock, leading to food supply issues for the animals.

He said that the public is already facing numerous challenges. Therefore, all organizations and groups are respectfully urged not to block roads. Protests should be conducted in a manner that ensures the safety of people's lives and property, and that ordinary citizens do not encounter any kind of hardship or inconvenience.

Sharjeel Inam Memon further stated that actions which obstruct patients on their way to hospitals, children going to school, or individuals commuting to work should be strictly avoided.

Court rejects alleged murderer bail

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Sessions Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar Mirza Muhammad Kashif has rejected bail plea of alleged murderer Zahir Bacha involved in famous Hayatabad in which a young man from Buner was killed on 27th Ramzan while distributing wedding cards, on Tuesday.

The complainant counsel Sultan Muhammad Khan advocate argued that the victim Abrar was shot dead on 27th Ramzan in Hayatabad, Peshawar, while distributing his wedding cards, which was scheduled to take place on 6th April after Eid.

The police registered a case against unknown culprits, but later nominated Zahir Bacha as the accused. The investigation revealed that the accused had fired a shot at the victim's head, which resulted in his death, the lawyer added.

The police recovered three bullet shells from the crime scene, and the forensic report of the shells is available. The police also recovered the weapon used in the crime from the alleged murderer.

The counsel for the complainant, Sultan Muhammad Khan, Advocate, argued that the accused had a motive to kill the victim as he wanted to marry the victim's fiancée. The counsel submitted that the CDR report and CCTV footage are available, which show that the accused was driving the vehicle used in the crime.

The counsel argued that the alleged culprit Zahir Bacha had confessed to the crime, stating that he had committed the murder at the behest of the girl. The court rejected the bail application and observed that the accused was not entitled to bail at this stage, given the strength of the prosecution's case.

Khan's bail hearings delisted

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has canceled the cause list for hearings on former prime minister Imran Khan's bail petitions in eight May 9-related cases due to the unavailability of a two-member bench.

The bench, headed by Justice Shahbaz Rizvi, could not be constituted, leading to the postponement of proceedings. A new date for the hearings would be announced later. The bail pleas were initially scheduled for hearing on April 23, and the court had summoned arguments from the lawyers. Imran Khan has sought bail in eight cases, including the Jinnah House attack case.



WASHINGTON: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Aurangzeb shaking hands with Managing Director, IMF, Kristalina Georgieva prior to a meeting.

Indian PM lands in Jeddah on official visit

JEDDAH: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has landed in Jeddah on Tuesday as he embarks on a two-day official visit to Saudi Arabia. Modi's plane was escorted by Saudi Royal fighter as it entered Saudi airspace, Indian newspapers reported.

"India deeply values its long and historic ties with Saudi Arabia that have acquired strategic depth and momentum in recent years," said Modi in a statement released by his office. "Together, we have developed a mutually beneficial and substantive partnership." This is Modi's third trip to Saudi Arabia overall following visits in 2016 and 2019.

The prime minister was invited by Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman. During the two-day visit, Modi is scheduled to meet members of the Indian community, according to his office. The visit is expected to see several memorandums of understanding being signed. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has praised the "limitless potential" of India's growing ties with Saudi Arabia as he arrives in Jeddah for

a two-day visit, his third to the Kingdom since 2016. In an exclusive interview with Arab News, he described the Kingdom as "a trusted friend and strategic ally," emphasizing how bilateral relations had expanded significantly since the creation of the Strategic Partnership Council in 2019.

"Our partnership has limitless potential," Modi said. "In a world full of uncertainties, our bond stands strong, as a pillar of stability." He praised Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman's leadership, calling him "a strong advocate of our bilateral ties" and a visionary who has inspired global admiration through the reforms under Vision 2030. "Every time I have met him, His Royal Highness has left a deep impression on me. His insights, his forward-thinking vision, and his passion for fulfilling the aspirations of his people are truly remarkable," he said.

Highlighting shared economic ambitions, Modi noted that trade between the two countries had grown even amid global challenges, with energy,

agriculture and fertilizers as key sectors. He welcomed deeper integration of Saudi and Indian businesses, particularly in emerging sectors like green hydrogen and technology. "Indian companies have also maintained a strong presence across various sectors in Saudi Arabia," he said. Modi congratulated the Kingdom for winning the bids to host World Expo 2030 and FIFA World Cup 2034, describing the dual successes as a matter of "immense pride." He also pointed to growing defense cooperation and landmark joint military exercises as signs of increasing strategic trust.

On the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC), launched during the G20 Summit in September 2023, Modi said the project would be "a key catalyst of commerce, connectivity and growth in the entire region." In a statement, the Indian government said the visit "reflects the importance India attaches to its bilateral relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." — Arab News

Putin discusses US-Iran N-talks with Oman's leader

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has discussed Iran's nuclear programme with the visiting leader of Oman, Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, the Kremlin has said, as the diplomatic shuttling around the edges of Iran-US nuclear talks continues apace.

Oman has been mediating between Iran and the United States as US President Donald Trump seeks an agreement that would curb Iran's nuclear programme, which Washington believes is aimed at developing a nuclear weapon — something that Iran denies. "This topic was touched on ... in the context of mediation efforts by Oman," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters during a briefing at the Kremlin on Tuesday.

Kremlin foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov also said both sides "discussed the progress of negotiations between Iranian and American representatives",

according to remarks carried by Interfax. "We will see what the result will be. We maintain close contact with our Iranian colleagues. Where we can, we help," Ushakov was quoted as saying.

Trump has threatened to bomb Iran unless a deal is reached. Iran has said there can be no deal under threat of bombardment. Russia signed a strategic partnership treaty with Iran in January and is also trying to improve relations with the Trump administration.

Moscow has a role in nuclear talks with Iran as a signatory to a previous landmark 2015 nuclear deal that Trump abandoned during his first term as US president in 2018 — a move that prompted Iran to breach its terms a year later. Russia has warned that any US military action against Iran would be illegal.

In televised comments, Putin was shown telling the sultan that Russian energy companies were interested

in developing relations with Oman. Meanwhile, Putin announced plans to stage a summit with the Arab League group of states later this year as Moscow searches for new partners as it continues its three-year offensive on Ukraine.

Slapped with sweeping Western sanctions after sending troops into Ukraine, Russia has turned towards Asian, African and Arab countries for political and economic ties. "We plan to hold a summit between Russia and Arab countries this year," Putin told the Omani leader. "Many of our friends in the Arab world support this idea," he added, inviting Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said to the summit, without specifying the date and location. The visit comes days after Putin hosted Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Moscow for talks on Syria and the besieged and bombed Gaza Strip. — Aljazeera

PM arrives in Ankara

(Continued from Page 1)

Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar, SAPM Tariq Fatemi and Pakistan's Ambassador to Türkiye Dr Yusuf Junaid. President Erdogan also hosted a banquet in honor of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the accompanying delegation.

Pakistan require special financial assistance to cope with climate change: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that Pakistan and other countries affected by the climate change, require special financial assistance from international financial institutions to address the challenges posed by climate change.

Talking to Secretary General International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Luc Triangle here at the PM House, the prime minister said that Pakistan

was among the countries most affected by the climate change. "The 2022 floods alone caused losses amounting to \$30 billion." He noted that due to these climate-related challenges, workers and laborers in Pakistan had faced significant employment difficulties and suffered losses.

He said the government was ensuring that efforts for climate adaptation and mitigation in vulnerable communities also protect the livelihoods of economically disadvantaged groups. The prime minister appreciated the efforts of the International Trade Union Confederation for advocating workers' rights at global level.

He emphasized that Pakistan, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, was working towards the protec-

tion of the rights of laborers and workers. The government is expanding the scope of Employees Old-Age Benefit and Worker Welfare Fund so that maximum number of employees and workers can benefit from them, the prime minister remarked.

Furthermore, the prime minister pointed out that the National Vocational Technical Training Commission at the federal level and Vocational Training Institute at the provincial level, were organizing several training programme to equip the youth with the market relevant skills. The ITUC Secretary General Luc Triangle commended Pakistan's commitment to democratic values and appreciated the measures taken to improve the welfare of workers and laborers in the country.

Death toll rises to 16 in Jamshoro road accident

F.P. Report

JAMSHORO: The death toll in Jamshoro road accident jumped to 16 as three more injured victims succumbed to their injuries at a hospital in Hyderabad.

The ill-fated bus was carrying workers from the Bheel community who were returning home after completing the wheat harvest work in Balochistan, said Deputy Commissioner Ghazanfar Qadri. The tragic incident occurred close to the Bola Khan police station that left over two dozen passengers injured.

Jamshoro Deputy Commissioner Ghazanfar Qadri told that the passengers were returning to Badin from Balochistan and most of them were members of the Kohli community. He said that the tragic accident took place at the Taung area of Thana Bula Khan in Jamshoro district. He said that it appeared that the vehicle's brakes failed and the driver lost control.

The DC said that rescue workers reached the scene and retrieved the bodies and shifted some of the injured persons to a nearby basic health unit. PPP MNA Malik Asad Sikandar told that rescue workers were facing difficulties due to darkness but all-out efforts were being made to shift the injured to nearby hospitals.

Meanwhile, the bodies of 16 members of the Kohli community, who were victims of the Balochistan incident, have been transported to their ancestral village, Sahib Khan Laghari. The accident resulted in the deaths of over 16 individuals, including men, women, and children, and injured more than 15 people.

According to a statement from the Pasban Democratic Party, the accident occurred when laborers were returning to their village by bus after working in Balochistan, and the bus met with an accident near Jamshoro.

Among the deceased were young children and women. The names of the deceased include Raja, Dalo, Vani, Neelam, Poni, Bachu, Vejani, Kavita, Samu, Ramchand, Krishan, and Anil.

Pak Navy hosts Indian Ocean Naval syposium

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy hosted the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Preparatory Workshop (IPW) in Karachi. The workshop was attended by 42 foreign delegates representing 23 IONS member nations including Australia, Bangladesh, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, UK etc. Moreover, 6 countries, including India and UAE, attended the meeting via Zoom Link.

The workshop serves as a key lead up event to the upcoming IONS Conclave of Chiefs (CoC), providing a vital platform for participating nations to deliberate on regional maritime security and collaborative initiatives. Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

In his address, the Chief Guest welcomed all delegates and reaffirmed Paki-



stan Navy's commitment to strengthening maritime security through dialogue, collaboration, and mutual understanding. He expressed hope that, with the cooperation and support of all participating delegations, the Preparatory Workshop would achieve its aims and objectives in the best interests of the region.

During the workshop, various speakers shared their insights on key issues related to regional maritime security. The speakers highlighted the emerging challenges to maritime security and emphasized the need for a collaborative approach to address them. Participants were also briefed on Pakistan Navy's roles

and initiatives in promoting peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.

The workshop aimed to enhance regional maritime collaboration and strategic coordination. It provided a vital platform for participating delegates to engage in constructive dialogue on a wide range of issues critical to the safety, security, and stability of the Indian Ocean Region.

The successful conduct of the workshop reflects Pakistan Navy's resolve to play an active role in promoting maritime security and prosperity in the region by further strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties among participating nations.

Israeli attacks kill 28 in Gaza

GAZA: Israeli forces have killed at least 28 Palestinians in Gaza since dawn, including 11 people who burned to death inside their home in Khan Younis, and carried out air strikes that destroyed equipment used to retrieve the dead from under rubble.

Seven members of a family were also killed on Tuesday by an air raid on the home where they were sheltering in western Gaza City. Three civilians, including two girls, were killed when Israeli warplanes targeted a group of people in the Nuseirat refugee camp. Philippe Lazzarini, the commissioner-general of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, warned that more than two million people — mostly women and children — were being collectively punished.

"Gaza has become a land of desperation," he said on X. Nearly 3,000 trucks of UNRWA supplies and humanitarian aid remained stuck outside Gaza, unable to enter while food and medicine inside the strip are quickly running out. "Hunger is spreading," Lazzarini warned.

"Humanitarian aid is being used as a bargaining chip — a weapon of war."

The UN's special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territory, Francesca Albanese, warned that withholding humanitarian aid constitutes a war crime. "This action would further aggravate conditions of life calculated to destroy the Palestinian population of Gaza," Hamas slammed Israel's ongoing blockade, which began on March 2. "The Gaza Strip is facing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe," the group said in a statement, citing severe shortages of food, water, fuel and medicine.

It added that the siege as well as daily attacks on shelters, hospitals and residential areas amount to a "premeditated crime" by the Israeli leadership. Hamas also blamed the situation on a "political, moral, and humanitarian failure" on the part of the international community and called on the UN and other institutions to pressure Israel to lift the blockade on aid.

Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Deir el-Balah in central

Gaza, said: "The situation is unfolding rapidly here on the ground. What we are seeing is truly extraordinary in terms of very huge momentum of air strikes and artillery bombardments that have been seen over the course of the past 24 hours." "What we understand is that the Israeli military has launched huge and heavy waves of air strikes with the latest targeting a group of Palestinians — three were confirmed killed in the strike, including two girls under the age of 14," he added.

"It has been quite obvious that these attacks are focused on eradicating entire families (as in Khan Younis attack) — we're talking about four generations being wiped out — and also a more systematic escalation has been taking place on targeting heavy machinery that has been allowed to enter Gaza during the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal," Abu Azzoum said. Gaza's Civil Defence said Israel also targeted bulldozers used in humanitarian operations, including rubble removal and the recovery of bodies. — Aljazeera